EUROPEAN COMMISSION

EUROSTAT

Report

on the results of the first self-assessments carried out by the statistical authorities of the European Statistical System

against the principles and indicators of the European Statistics Code of Practice

Eurostat, 19 Mai 2006

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At its meeting in November 2005, the ECOFIN Council confirmed the importance of adequate practices, resources and capabilities to produce high quality statistics at the national and European level with a view to ensuring the independence, integrity and accountability of both national statistical offices and Eurostat. The Council further noted that the Commission intended to set up a reporting system to monitor adherence to the European Statistics Code of Practice of the European Statistical System (ESS) in line with the proportionality principle.

With a view to improving their independence, integrity and accountability, statistical authorities have demonstrated strong commitment to taking quick action to make the self-regulatory approach - launched with the adoption of the Code of Practice - work.

The first step comprised a comprehensive self-assessment carried out by the National Statistical Institutes and Eurostat on the basis of a common questionnaire. While it was always recognised as a time-consuming exercise involving major parts of the organisations and top management, Eurostat and the National Statistical Institutes considered it an important investment in order to address concerns about the integrity of the ESS. At the same time it will provide a valuable basis for the future steps in the implementation of the Code of Practice, among them peer reviews to be carried out during 2006-07.

This report is based on the results of the self-assessments. It gives

- a first insight to adherence to the European Statistics Code of Practice
- allows some good practices in the ESS to be highlighted,
- describes progress made so far by the ESS in implementing the Code of Practice and gives an overview on next steps.

A preliminary analysis of the self-assessments suggests the ESS having a strong profile in the areas covered by the following principles of the Code of Practice:

- Principle 1 Professional Independence (with some reservations with regard to issues requiring a more thorough assessment of the actual situation),
- Principle 2 Mandate for data collection,
- Principle 5 Statistical Confidentiality,
- Principle 6 Impartiality and Objectivity,
- Principle 7 Sound Methodology,
- partly Principle 13 Timeliness and Punctuality (as far as dissemination practices and procedures are concerned, however reservations with regard to timeliness of data in some domains on which more information is to be collected and analysed).

While a majority of statistical authorities report high standards in these areas, improvements are certainly possible and necessary. However, rather than covering the ESS as a whole they are to be directed towards single statistical authorities and/or specific issues and statistical domains.

Among areas for which full compliance with the Code require action on a broader scale are those covered by Principle 4 Quality commitment and parts of Principle 8 Appropriate Statistical Procedures and Principle 12 Accuracy and Reliability.

This report constitutes a basis for further discussion at national and ESS level in positioning each statistical authority within the ESS and in identifying areas for improvement. They will be taken up in the peer review process which will yield as an important output a consolidated list of improvement actions covering all areas of the Code detailing national schedules for improving compliance. The Peer Reviews are now underway.

2. INTRODUCTION

In replying to the respective Council's invitation of June 2004 and February 2005, the Commission adopted on 25 May 2005 a Communication on the independence, integrity and accountability of the national and Community statistical authorities and a Recommendation promulgating the European Statistics Code of Practice elaborated by statistical authorities and adopted by the Statistical Programme Committee (SPC).

In its meeting on 25 May 2005, the SPC supported a stepwise monitoring procedure for the implementation of the Code over three years during which countries' self-assessments should be paired with elements of peer review, benchmarking and monitoring on the basis of the Code's explanatory indicators added to each principle.

On the basis of a common questionnaire developed by a Task Force of the SPC on the implementation of the Code of Practice, National Statistical Institutes (NSIs) and Eurostat undertook to carry out a first self-assessment against the principles and indicators of the Code. This report provides a first glimpse on the situation of the European Statistical System. It is based on the replies received from all NSIs of the EU Member States, Eurostat and in addition the NSIs of Bulgaria, Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein. To allow for a more easy reading, the text singles out Eurostat only where considered useful. Otherwise it talks about statistical authorities (SA) comprising Eurostat and NSIs.

The report broadly follows the structure of the questionnaire which had been divided into two parts for each principle: A first part containing questions putting the Code's indicators into concrete and a second part devoted to individual strengths and weaknesses and in particular a list of improvement actions envisaged. It should be noted that this second part has not (yet) been filled in (for all principles) by all NSIs, thus this report can give a partial picture only.

The questionnaire has been primarily designed to assist statistical authorities in structuring their self-assessments and to identify possible issues to be followed-up. For several indicators, statistical authorities considered supplementary information necessary to explain their choices in the questionnaire and for others a profound analysis would require a domain-based approach looking in depth into main statistical areas rather than the kind of meta-information on general procedures obtained through this exercise. In so far this report is limited in scope, detail and in the degree to which the aggregated information presented has been really based on comparable input. Nevertheless it can be considered as a first step in monitoring the ESS compliance with the principles and indicators of the Code providing some information which allows a NSIs to position itself in the ESS and which provides an orientation for the peer reviews to be carried out.

Paragraph 3 describes in detail the main findings and improvements by principle and paragraph 4 sets out the envisaged next steps with regard to the implementation of the Code of Practice in the ESS. Annex 1 gives an indicative overview on the results obtained from the self-assessments and Annex 2 summarises the approach by the National Statistical Institutes and Eurostat in carrying out their self-assessments.

3. MAIN FINDINGS AND IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS BY PRINCIPLE

Institutional Environment

Principle 1: Professional Independence
The professional independence of statistical authorities from other policy, regulatory or administrative departments and bodies, as well as from private-sector operators, ensures the credibility of European statistics.

The Code of Practice establishes the Principle of Professional Independence and a number of indicators aiming at monitoring the application of this Principle including the (i) specification

in law of the elements of independence, (ii) the status and the functional responsibilities of the Heads of Statistical authorities, (iii) methodological guarantees, such as programming the statistical work, the press releases contents and the power for commenting independently. This understanding of professional independence covers not only production but also dissemination of statistics, so that a review of the European Statistical System's professional independence should not be restricted to the information obtained under principle 1 but include as well aspects of professional independence covered by other principles, like e.g. principles 2 mandate for data collection, principle 3 adequacy of resources, principle 6 impartiality and objectivity. Further information on some key elements of the ESS' institutional set up – going beyond the principles of the Code - is available in an Eurostat overview of 2005 published on the Eurostat quality website[1] which is based on information provided by the National Statistical Institutes in the forerun of the adoption of the Code.

In the European Statistical System independence from political and other external interference in the production and dissemination of official statistics is specified by legislation for all but four statistical authorities. Out of these four, three NSIs reported corresponding legislative initiatives to be underway. With regard to the role of the head of the statistical authority, provisions differ among members of the ESS in terms of hierarchical level and term of office: the head of 17 SAs is appointed for a fixed term being non-renewable in only one case.

Out of the total 30 SAs, all but one report that neither content nor timing (all SAs) of statistical press releases are subject to Ministerial approval nor is the choice of statistical methods, standards and procedures. In case they are defined through legislation, Eurostat and one NSI remind that the latter are to be adopted through a political decision making process.

All but two SA have a publicly available statistical programme, of which 20 publish as well its progress status.

Statistical releases are issued separately from political statements and are clearly identified as products of the SAs by means of a logo (29 SAs), the design (25 SAs), a copyright (24 SAs) or other means (6 SAs), like e.g. naming the SA as a source.

All but 6 SAs have a specific policy to intervene publicly on statistical issues in the case of misuse and misinterpretation of official statistics and all but 5 in case of official statistics being criticised.

Improvement actions: professional independence

Several SA flag the need for strengthening their statistical law or align current practices to be fully compliant with principle 1 "professional independence" of the Code. Improvements are expected in particular in the area of the definition of a policy to intervene on public criticism or misuse of official statistics (3 SA), a reinforcement of some elements contributing to professional independence of the SA (9 SAs) through a revision or amendment of the statistical law, like e.g. to extend the SA's independence in the area of dissemination of statistics, or other legal instruments and development of strategies to strengthen the statistical authorities' co-ordination function vis à vis other producers of official statistics (2 SAs).

Several NSIs mention the implementation of the Code of Practice as reinforcing national strategies with regard to the promotion of NSIs' professional independence and some point to the foreseen revision of the European "Statistical Law" as an opportunity for progress in this area.

Principle 2: Mandate for data collection
Statistical authorities must have a clear legal mandate to collect information for European statistical purposes. Administrations, enterprises and households, and the public at large may be compelled by law to allow access to or deliver data for European statistical purposes at the request of statistical authorities.

All statistical authorities have a legal mandate to collect information for the production of official statistics and the permission to use administrative sources for statistical purposes granted by legislation and in addition other forms of agreement (10 SAs). However, this is in

[1] http://europa.eu.int/comm/eurostat/quality

only 11 countries matched with legal provisions allowing ministries and institutions as a rule to provide data for statistical purposes, in 15 countries ministries and institutions are granted this permission sometimes and in 3 countries never.

All NSIs can rely on legislation to compel response to some (16 NSIs) or even all (13 NSIs) surveys covering at least all enterprise surveys in 15 out of these 16 NSIs. Accordingly, only 2 NSIs do not have a system of sanctions in place in case enterprises reject the obligation to reply to a survey and another 5 NSIs do have a system but never employ it.

The picture is more divided with regard to sanctioning households for non-response where 19 NSIs have a system in place which is however used only sometimes (9 NSIs) or never (9 NSIs).

Case study: CSO Ireland legal mandate
Example: CSO Ireland has been given a broad legal mandate for data collection comprising the general function for the production and co-ordination of the production of official statistics, access to administrative data and an explicit mandate for assessing and developing the potential of administrative records for statistical purposes.

Statistics Act 1993

Section 10 Functions of the Office
"(1) The functions of the Office shall be the collection, compilation, extraction and dissemination for statistical purposes of information relating to economic, social and general activities and conditions in the State.
(2) The Office shall have authority to co-ordinate official statistics compiled by public authorities to ensure, in particular, adherence to statistical standards and the use of appropriate classifications.
(3) The Office shall have authority to assess the statistical potential of the records maintained by public authorities and, in conjunction with them, to ensure that this potential is realised in so far as resources permit".
Section 23 gives the Director General the authority to collect data
"The Director General may prepare forms, questionnaires and other records for the collection of information under this Act and the instructions necessary for their proper completion, and specify the date or period within which these completed forms, questionnaires and other records or the required information should be returned to the Central Statistics Office".

Section 30 Access to records of public authorities
Section 30(1) For the purpose of assisting the Office in the exercise of its functions under this Act, the Director General may by delivery of a notice request any public authority to -
(a) allow officers of statistics at all reasonable times to have access to, inspect and take copies of or extracts from any records in its charge, and
(b) provide the Office, if any such officer so requires, with copies or extracts from any such record, and the public authority shall, subject to subsection (2) of this section, comply with any such request free of charge.
(2) Subsection (1) of this section -
(a) shall not apply to records pertaining to a Court, the Garda Síochána, the prison administration or the Ombudsman or any of his officers;
(b) shall apply to medical records which are not publicly available only with the agreement of the Minister for Health;
(c) shall in all other cases have effect notwithstanding anything contained in any enactment other than provisions for the protection of public order or the security of the State.

Section 31 Co-operation of public authorities with the Office.
31(1) The Director General may request any public authority to consult and co-operate with him for the purpose of assessing the potential of the records of the authority as a source of statistical information and, where appropriate and practicable, developing its recording methods and systems for statistical purposes, and the public authority shall comply with any such request, in so far as resources permit.
(2) If any public authority proposes to introduce, revise or extend any system for the storage and retrieval of information or to make a statistical survey it shall consult with the Director General and accept any recommendations that he may reasonably make in relation to the proposal.
(3) The Director General or any public authority may request the National Statistics Board to arbitrate on and, when agreement cannot be reached, to make recommendations to the Taoiseach for his decision on proposals

made by the Director General under subsection (1) or (2) of this section.
(4) Subsections (1) and (2) of this section
(a) shall not apply to records pertaining to a Court, the Garda Síochána or the prison administration;
(b) shall in all other cases have effect notwithstanding anything contained in any enactment other than provisions for the protection of public order or the security of the State.

Improvement actions: mandate for data collection

While many NSIs expressed their satisfaction with the current set-up, some would like to see the access to administrative data for statistical purpose extended by means of legislation or co-operation. This would involve as well to better position the NSIs to influence the concept and design of administrative sources. Some NSIs point to an amendment or revision of statistical legislation underway to take into account these aspects. Others consider action necessary to improve the handling of non-response by enterprises either through improved internal processes, the enforcement of sanctions or an intensified dialogue and co-operation with enterprises.

Principle 3: Adequacy of Resources
The resources available to statistical authorities must be sufficient to meet European Statistics requirements

Resources in the European Statistical System seem to be broadly adequate to carry out the European Statistical Programme, notably in terms of magnitude and in particular quality of staff. The same holds for computing resources for which only one SA flagged severe problems (magnitude of computing resources). At the same time only 4 SAs indicated their full satisfaction with the current resource situation. A slightly more pessimistic view yields the self-assessment with regard to financial resources; however no SI has marked them as completely inadequate. Compared to NSIs' equipping to meet national statistics needs, no major differences have been reported by NSIs.

Other indicators of principle 3 relate to issues to be addressed at ESS level for which the NSIs represented at the Statistical Programme Committee have adopted a common position. As Eurostat had a different understanding of some of the issues covered, its deviating position is given in brackets, where applicable. Compared to users' needs, European Statistics are considered by the NSIs as adequate in scope but excessive in detail. (Eurostat considers the information available on users' needs not sufficient to be in a position to assess in general terms the adequacy of scope and detail of European Statistics against them.) The NSIs and Eurostat considered that they lack the information to be in the position to assess costs of European Statistics in relation to users' needs. Procedures to assess and justify demands for new European Statistics against their costs as well as to assess the continuing need for European Statistics (negative priorities), were deemed by the NSIs as non-existent at European Parliament level and as inadequate or insufficient at Commission, Council and SPC level, although work is under way in the framework of the Eurostat Task Force on Priority setting. Eurostat took a more positive position here and considered the procedures at Commission and Council level as adequate (through use of impact assessment and the EU Net Cost model, evaluation activities, Better Regulation initiative).

Improvement actions: adequacy of resources

Actions foreseen by many statistical authorities cover the introduction of tools and processes to improve resource allocations and training of staff, up to the establishment of a school for official statistics. Some NSIs raised the need to reconsider statistical requirements in particular for small countries. Eurostat foresees to address the scope, detail and cost of European Statistics in the framework of the evaluation of the 2003-2007 multi-annual statistical programme.

On European level, once, the ESS Task Force on priority setting has developed the method and the practical procedures for improved priority setting with regard to European Statistics, the method will (1) be incorporated into the ex-ante evaluation / analysis of consequences of such projects resulting in actions feeding into the statistical work programme and (2) be applied to assess existing requirements in order to pursue cost-effective reductions and simplifications with a view to freeing resources for higher priority statistics.

Principle 4: Quality Commitment
All ESS members commit themselves to work and co-operate according to the principles fixed in the Quality Declaration of the European Statistical System.

This principle reminds the commitment by the SPC fixed in the "Quality declaration of the European Statistical System" of 2001. Thus, this report to some extent follows-up the annual Eurostat reporting on the Leadership Group on Quality implementation status. It should be noted that some of the monitoring indicators included under this principle have been further detailed under other principles of the Code (e.g. quality monitoring processes are covered as well under the principles relating to "statistical output" and the indicator on output review is at least partly incorporated in principle 11 "relevance").

With 10 SA having introduced a Total Quality Management System and another 11 planning to do so and 22 SA having established a long-term Strategic Plan or Business Plan, quality in management is on the European Statistical System's agenda. Only 3 SA have not nor do they plan to implement either of these tools. Accordingly, 11 SA have appointed a quality manager for their organisation and 18 have unit or department or some other entity dealing with quality management. All but 3 SA report that they internally promote the European Statistical System Quality Declaration.

The picture is, however, more divided in terms of monitoring product and process quality in line with the Code's indicators, especially when looking at statistics from a rather aggregated point of view as had been done for the purpose of the self-assessment. A more detailed analysis better distinguishing between national and European statistics and singling out certain areas may yield rather different results.

Only 7 out of the 30 SAs regularly monitor quality according to the ESS quality components for more than 75% of their statistical output, but only 4 do not monitor output quality at all, despite one SA out of these 4 has both a quality manager and a unit dealing with quality management. One SA reports that the results of the quality monitoring are neither internally nor externally disseminated but made available to top management, like it is the case in 24 SAs. However, less than 25% to none of the key statistical outputs are subject to comprehensive regular reviews in most SA with only the 3 SAs reporting to regular reviewing more than 75% of its key output. Another 8 SA review 25-75%. All SAs having (parts of) their output reviewed claim that at least some of the findings resulted in an action plan. Table 1 gives an overview on the practices.

Table 1: ESS practice with regard to quality monitoring

Number of statistical authorities		% of statistics regularly monitored according to ESS components of quality									
		>75%			25-75%			<25%			None
		Results disseminated			Results disseminated			Results disseminated			
		Only internally	As well externally	Nowhere	Only internally	As well externally	Nowhere	Only internally	As well externally	Nowhere	
Are the results made available to top-mgmt for action?	Yes	1	4	-	3	9	-	2	3	1	4
	no	-	2	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	

Some kind of quality monitoring of the various production processes is reported by all but 2 SAs for data collection, capturing and processing, analysis and dissemination. Survey design is monitored in all but 4 SAs. Methods employed range from internal audit (15), self-assessments (22), quality reports (27), quality indicators (21) or other (7), like more sophisticated monitoring systems and all but 1 SA report they use more than one procedure. Planning of new (*existing*) surveys is guided by office policies (*quality monitoring*) in 17 (*22*) SAs. However, only 10 SAs report having formal processes in place to deal with quality considerations, including tradeoffs within quality.

As regards documentation of quality guidelines, only 3 SAs do not dispose of internal handbooks/guidelines/recommendations for the statistical production process but 18 SA have

them for most (10) or all (8) processes and in 18 SAs they are made available as well to external users. 18 SAs offer specific training programs to address quality issues and another 5 intend to do so.

15 SAs have been subject to a Data Review of Standards and Codes (ROSC) by the International Monetary Funds (IMF) during the last three years. Thus, the peer reviews to be carried out in the European Statistical System can be based on an already solid information basis making as much as possible use of the results obtained by the IMF.

Improvement actions: Quality commitment

Many SAs announce to fill gaps identified in the area of quality commitment, either through implementing the EFQM or CAF model, a long-term strategic plan, an explicit quality policy or by introducing an ISO-certified quality management system. Appointing a quality manager/creation of a unit, more systematic and comprehensive quality reporting, internal audit, streamlining of data production processes or the creation of training programmes in this area are mentioned by several SAs.

Some NSIs explicitly ask for benchmarking with other NSIs having a broad experience in the area of quality management. Further stimuli are expected from various Eurostat projects carried by (consortia of) NSIs aiming at developing guidelines and good practices related to quality in statistics. Eurostat Working Groups may cover more systematically all statistical areas, considering where appropriate further investments to improve main quality features.

Good practice: Eurostat quality profiles for structural indicators

As a major step towards disseminating quality information, Eurostat undertook during 2004 to issue so called quality profiles, providing a user-oriented summary of the main quality features of structural indicators, a set of indicators agreed at European political level to underpin the Commission's analysis in the annual report to the Spring European Council.

The quality profiles target (sets of) indicators to establish in how far they are suited for the intended policy process drawing upon the quality features of the underlying statistics as well as their relevance. They cover (1) a description of the objective and relevance and give a list of relevant European legislation, (2) an overview on timeliness and coverage and (3) a description of data accuracy and comparability summarised in a grade. To allow for an assessment at one glance of the fitness for use of a structural indicator, the most important quality features are summarised in (4) an overall assessment following a standardised grid. Finally, the quality profiles attempt to describe (5) in how far a single indicator contribute to the quality of the set drawing upon its potential for an integrated policy analysis and include information on (6) the development perspective for improving the quality of an indicator and as far as possible the related costs.

Following a procedure involving user-consultation, Eurostat closely co-operates with national statistical institutes in delivering the quality profile, involving various rounds of expert assessment. So far quality profiles for 23 structural indicators have been released on the Eurostat structural indicators website[2] with another 15 quality profiles in the pipeline to be released by mid 2006.

Quality profiles have been very well received by users and are in some areas considered an integral part of the political selection procedure of indicators at highest political level. Equally producers in the European Statistical System value them for the assessment process leading in several cases to quality improvements through the establishment of an explicit user-producer-dialogue as well as for granting national statistical institutes and Eurostat a new role in the information market in quality profiling as well those structural indicators stemming from non-official data sources. As a result, Eurostat has extended this approach to cover as well sustainable development indicators, for which first quality profiles will become available during the second half of 2006.

Principle 5: Statistical Confidentiality
The privacy of data providers (households, enterprises, administrations and other respondents), the confidentiality of the information they provide and its use only for statistical purposes must be absolutely guaranteed

[2] **http://europa.eu.int/comm/eurostat/structuralindicators**

The self-assessments reveal highest standards are applied within the European Statistical System with regard to ensuring statistical confidentiality based on an encompassing legal framework complemented by procedural and cultural elements. All SAs are required by law to protect statistical confidentiality. All but five SAs demand their staff to sign legal confidentiality commitments upon appointment and all but one SA prescribe penalties for wilful breaches of statistical confidentiality for their employees and all but 5 SAs as well for other persons. Penalties may comprise non-legal and/or legal action including e.g. imprisonment for up to three years in one country.

Accordingly, all but one SA have drawn up instructions and guidelines for the protection of statistical confidentiality in the production and dissemination processes directed to employees and in addition to other stakeholders, like data producers (22 SAs) or the scientific community (25 SAs) or to users, of which about half are made known to the public.

Regarding the protection of the security and integrity of the databases containing confidential data, all SAs invest in technical (28 SA) or legal provisions (28 SAs) and/or established a specific organisational entity devoted to this task (23 SAs). 20 SAs report to have introduced all these measures. Three SAs employ in addition complimentary safeguards, like e.g. by establishing a direct responsibility of the heads of departments for statistical confidentiality.

Issues related to granting microdata access for research purposes covered under this principle, are being dealt with under principle 15 "Accessibility and Clarity".

Improvement actions: Statistical confidentiality

The positive picture given above can be put into more concrete on the basis of the improvement actions foreseen by the SA. While a majority do not consider specific improvements necessary, some SAs either point to a need for enhancing (the attention paid to) internal rules and procedures (5 SAs) or announce further investment in the methodology or technology of disclosure control (7 SAs). 3 SAs announce a revision of their national statistical law in the area of statistical confidentiality.

Principle 6: Impartiality and Objectivity
Statistical authorities must produce and disseminate European statistics respecting scientific independence and in an objective, professional and transparent manner in which all users are treated equitably.

Public perception of the SAs' impartiality and objectivity is nothing to be taken for granted. Indeed 12 SAs recall occurrences in the past where they had to defend their methodological choices against accusations by the media that they were influenced by government and 2 SAs remind the public questioning of national consumer price indices in many countries after the introduction of the Euro.

As safeguards of the SAs' objectivity,

- all but one SA have a policy in place stating that data sources and statistical techniques are selected by statistical considerations only, with one SA reporting on recent violations against this policy.
- all but two have policies to require objectivity in the content of statistical releases, press conference statements or the like, with one SA reporting on a rare exception.

23 SAs have established internal procedures to record information on serious errors discovered in published data and again 22 SAs have rules on how corrected data should be announced to users. Only 2 SAs have no active approach towards the correction of errors.

18 SAs publish metadata explaining methods and procedures used by the statistical authority for more than 75% of the statistical output, while only 1 SA report that information is available for less than a quarter of its output and not updated on a regular basis, .

Out of the total 30 SAs all but two publish in advance a release calendar for its main statistical output and all have a procedure for revising it.

20 SAs ensure equal access to statistical releases at the same time for all users. Out of the 10 SAs serving privileged users first under embargo, only half SA report to publicise this fact.

Practices of pre-release access seem to differ substantially between SAs with regard to the kind and scope of data submitted as well as the period prior to release. 5 out of the 6 SAs that report on occurrences of information divulged prior to its official release allow for pre-release access of privileged users. 26 SAs have procedures in place to prevent leaks.

Improvement actions: Impartiality and Objectivity

The improvement actions listed under this principle address specific weaknesses of individual SAs as identified above, like the need to pro-actively deal with serious errors discovered (2 SAs), improve statistical metadata (3 SAs) or review privileged pre-release access practices (2 SAs).

Good practice: Statistics Denmark impartiality provisions

The political impartiality is the basic element of Statistics Denmark's independent status, including the use of professional considerations and scientific principles in connection with compiling statistics. The Board of Statistics Denmark has laid down the following 8 criteria in order to ensure the trustworthiness of official statistics:
•Statistics must be impartial. Figures, analyses and comments must be prepared on an objective basis, independent of specific political and economic interests.
•Statistics must be produced by sound scientific methods, implying that professionalism and academic regard are our principal criteria in selecting methods for the collection, processing, storing and dissemination of data.
•The picture of social and economic trends provided by the statistics must be reliable.
•Statistics must be published without any delays, when they are finally compiled. Political considerations must not be taken into account.
•Times of publication must be announced in advance.
•All users must be able to gain access to the statistics at the same time.
•Statistics Denmark puts forward comments on any erroneous mention of the statistical results.
•Information on individuals and enterprises is treated confidentially and is not passed on for administrative or similar purposes

The criteria are crystallized by a number of concrete policies. Together, the criteria and policies constitute an important basis for the strategic work performed by Statistics Denmark. An overall description of the strategic work is given in "Strategy 2010", which is Statistics Denmark's general and long-term plan for producing the best possible official statistics on social and economic trends in Danish society. The strategic objectives in "Strategy 2010" are gradually implemented over the period until 2010, as they are further operationalized and concretized in the annual performance contracts between Statistics Denmark and the department of the Ministry for Economic and Business Affairs and in internal departmental and divisional contracts. The criteria are hereby implemented in a practical context of the day-to-day work.

The political impartiality is the basic element of Statistics Denmark's independent status, including the use of professional considerations and scientific principles in connection with compiling statistics.

For reasons of impartiality, Statistics Denmark does, generally speaking, not express its opinion on whether political objectives have been achieved. However, it may be relevant and useful in some cases to shed light on the extent to which goals are realised, e.g. by reporting the content of political objectives and by relating tables and graphs to them. In exceptional circumstances when Statistics Denmark does express its opinion on whether political objectives have been achieved, it must be assumed: that there is a particular reason for doing so, that the objectives are clear and unambiguous, that the data is of high quality and that the National Statistician is of the opinion that these conditions have been fulfilled.

Since 2000, a citizen's survey has been conducted annually as part of the systematic work involved in Statistics Denmark's profile. Among the questions in the survey are the population's impression of whether Statistics Denmark works in an objective and apolitical manner, which is an element of observing whether Statistics Denmark fulfils the general guidelines for political impartiality (the results are very positive, as more than 70 pct. provided an affirmative answer).

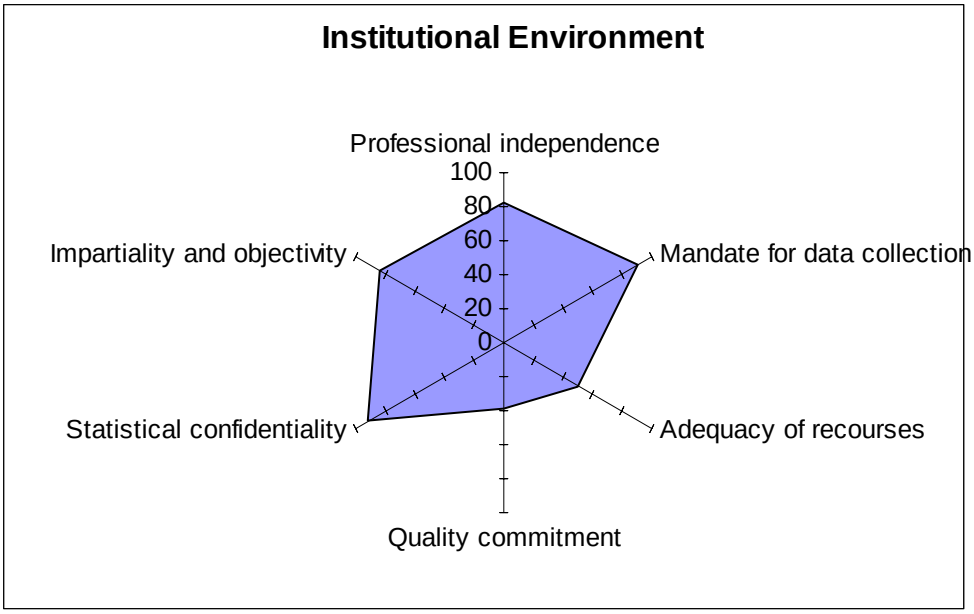
All new statistics are always made public at 9.30 a.m. No outsider has access to the statistics before they are made public. This also implies that ministers are not informed in advance. Theme publications and similar analytical publications may be published at other times during the day. In exceptional cases, the National Statistician may decide that they can be released before the scheduled time, e.g. to the media and other stakeholders.

Furthermore, the National Statistician may also, as an exception, decide that a similar scheduled release of statistics can be conducted for some of the current statistics that are published. In a few cases, other authorities or organisations are, to such a great extent, involved in the production of statistics that they have access to the results before they are published by DST. In such situations, discussions with cooperative partners can also include the results before they are published. These situations and other exceptions from the main rule are to be approved by the National Statistician.

The implementation of the principles of impartiality and objectivity is enhanced by a number of policies, strategies and rules among them:
Statistics Denmark Communication policy (16 April 2003)
Statistics Denmark Media policy (1 January 2001)
Statistics Denmark Publication strategy (25 October 2002)
Guidelines for News from Statistics Denmark (December 2004)
Guidelines for Statistics News (May 2005)

Graph 1 gives a preliminary overview on the compliance status of the ESS with the Code of Practice in the area of the institutional environment.

Graph 1



Entries estimated on the basis of the replies to the self-assessment questionnaire for each principle

Statistical Processes

Principle 7: Sound Methodology
Sound methodology must underpin quality statistics. This requires adequate tools, procedures and expertise.

The European Statistical System operates in a methodological framework dominated by European standards and guidelines applied as well to national statistics with only few exceptions reported by 4 NSIs. The same holds for European classifications for which only 3 NSIs report systematic deviations in their national applications. To ensure that standards are consistently applied within the statistical authority, most (24) SAs have established an internal unit charged with their promotion and 12 SAs have an external body (e.g. Statistical Council) overlooking this task. All but 5 SAs report that specific events are being organised to promote knowledge and application of European and international standards.

While business registers are regularly evaluated and updated throughout the ESS, practices differ with regard to the frame for population surveys, although 21 NSIs claim to have procedures in place to evaluate it.

On average SAs report that about half of their staff (in full time equivalents excluding field staff) are university graduates with some outliers at both ends (3 SAs with 20% or less graduates and 4 NSIs of the new member states with 70% or more graduates). Most (25) SAs have a specific strategy to improve staff expertise and all but one SA actively encourage staff to participate in international conferences. Accordingly, all but two SAs report on co-operation with the scientific community to improve methodology and 23 SAs do this through regular meetings. 16 of the SAs had (parts of) their statistical methods reviewed by external peers, like the IMF Data Review on Standards and Codes.

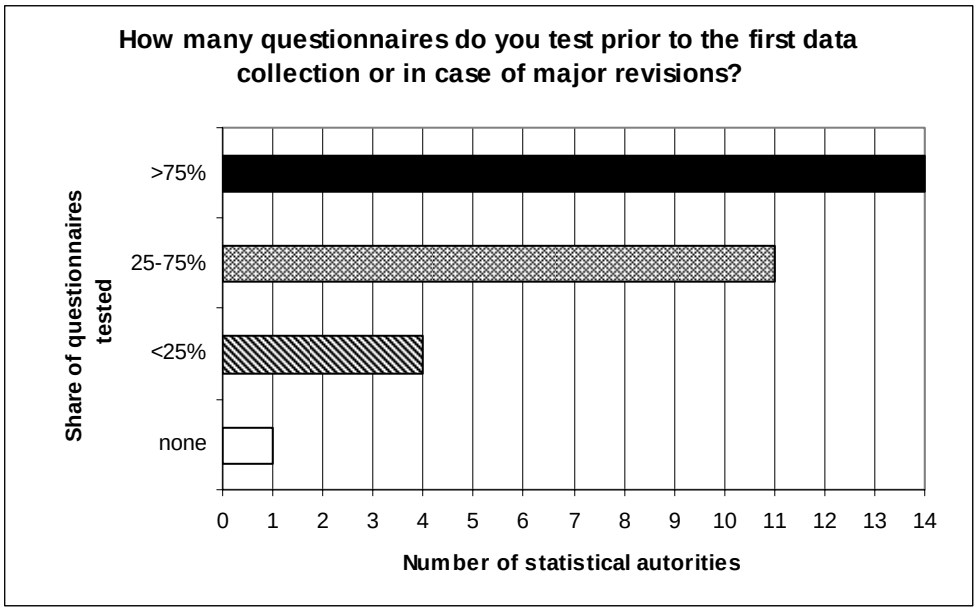
Improvement actions: Sound Methodology

Improvement actions mentioned in the area of statistical methodology cover a range of issues among them further investment in methodological expertise and knowledge transfer with the scientific community (8 SAs) and the improvement of the business register or the frame for household surveys (3 SAs).

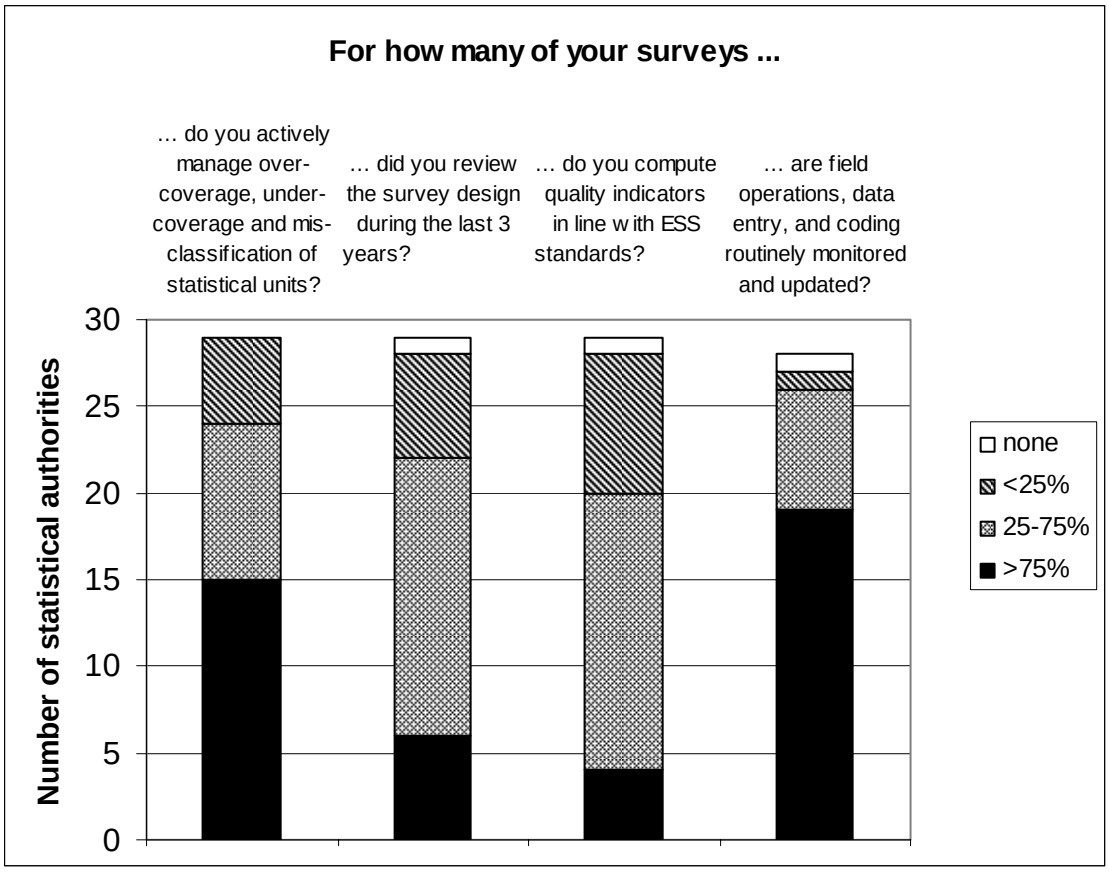
Principle 8: Appropriate statistical procedures
Appropriate statistical procedures, implemented from data collection to data validation, must underpin quality statistics.

With all SAs using – though to a varying degree – administrative sources for statistical purposes and consulting administrations prior to introducing new classifications, 26 SAs in turn report to be only sometimes consulted prior to the implementation of new administrative questionnaires. Only 2 SA inform they are consulted always. As illustrated in graphs 2 and 3, the self-assessments reveal no major problems throughout the ESS with regard to statistical procedures, although 5 SAs systematically underperform with less then a quarter of their surveys being subject to the procedures stipulated in the respective principles of the Code. Room for improvement for the ESS as a whole seems to be in the area of computerised editing and imputation procedures and an assessment of their performance.

Graph 2



Graph 3



Documentation of (all but four SAs) and user information on major revisions is reportedly common practice throughout the ESS as well as an explicit revision policy (11 SA for more than 75% of relevant output and another 12 for 25-75% of the relevant output).

Improvement actions: Appropriate statistical procedures

Several SAs report on longer-term programmes to systematically review statistical procedures for selected domains or processes, among them data editing and imputation methods (3 SAs) and an optimisation of sampling schemes (2 SAs). 3 SAs have foreseen to increase transparency of revisions

Good practices: INE-Portugal quality audits of statistical processes

In 2000 INE-Portugal launched a process of internal quality audits of its statistical processes based on an internal Handbook of Statistical Production Procedures widely disseminated and applied throughout the organisation and taking into account ISO Norm 19011 on guidelines for quality systems auditing.

The aim of these audits is to verify if statisticians are working according to the procedures laid down in the Handbook for this process and to improve the process and its description, thus providing a tool for continuous quality improvement.

On the basis of the internal Handbook of Statistical Production Procedures and in line with ISO Norm recommendations, an internal procedure for the quality audit process was defined and guidelines and checklists to help the auditors were provided. Out of a group of some 14 statisticians from different statistical areas, 2 to 3 auditors formed part of an audit team reviewing a domain during one week.

The audits are based on observation of evidence and on a standardised minimum documentation of statistical production processes (mainly surveys) required by each survey manager in line with the Handbook of Statistical Production Procedures. As a result internal reports are agreed between the audit team and the survey manager and improvement actions defined. Taking into account the findings from the audits, the Handbook of Statistical

Production Procedures was revised and updated and some sub-processes have been included.

During a time period over 3 years 16 surveys have been audited and improvement actions have been identified. At the same time the audits have contributed to improving the definition and basic documentation of the processes and lead to involving a high proportion of staff in the INE's quality programme. Improvement projects were developed further and follow-up up by quality teams across the organisation.

In 2006 a new round of quality audits will be launched taking into account the latest edition of the Handbook.

Principle 9: Non-excessive Burden on Respondents
The reporting burden should be proportionate to the needs of the users and should not be excessive for respondents. The statistical authority monitors the response burden and sets targets for its reduction over time.

Operating in dispersed national statistical systems, the large majority of NSIs (20) either has to rely upon a strong co-ordination function (19 NSIs) and/or other co-ordination mechanism (8 NSIs) to avoid a duplication of surveys at national level. Accordingly, all but 4 NSIs report to have formal provisions in place allowing for data sharing among statistical authorities and practice it at national (23 NSIs) and/or regional (6 NSIs) or even within Europe (10 NSIs).

With regard to the integration of European and national statistical systems, the fact that 19 NSIs report at least to sometimes propose to insert additional questions into draft European statistical legislation because of national needs, gives a first indicative picture.

While all but one SAs claim to be required to reduce response burden on enterprises by external pressure (15 SAs) and/or internal targets (19 SAs), in 6 SAs no requirements for measuring burden exist and 10 SAs have not introduced any targets to reduces the response burden. In fact only 12 SAs have a definition of response burden for both individual respondents and enterprises and only 13 SAs report to assess the response burden for more than 75% of its surveys.

Allowing enterprises to reply electronically to surveys seems yet to be established on a broad scale in only 7 NSIs, while 11 NSIs provide this opportunity for less than a quarter of its surveys. However, 9 NSIs report attempts to adapt questionnaire designs to the accounting system of the relevant enterprises for more than 75% of their surveys and another 11 for 25-75%. All SAs have completed some kind of assessment of suitability of administrative sources for statistical purposes with 14 SAs having carried out a full assessment.

Improvement actions: Non-excessive burden on respondents

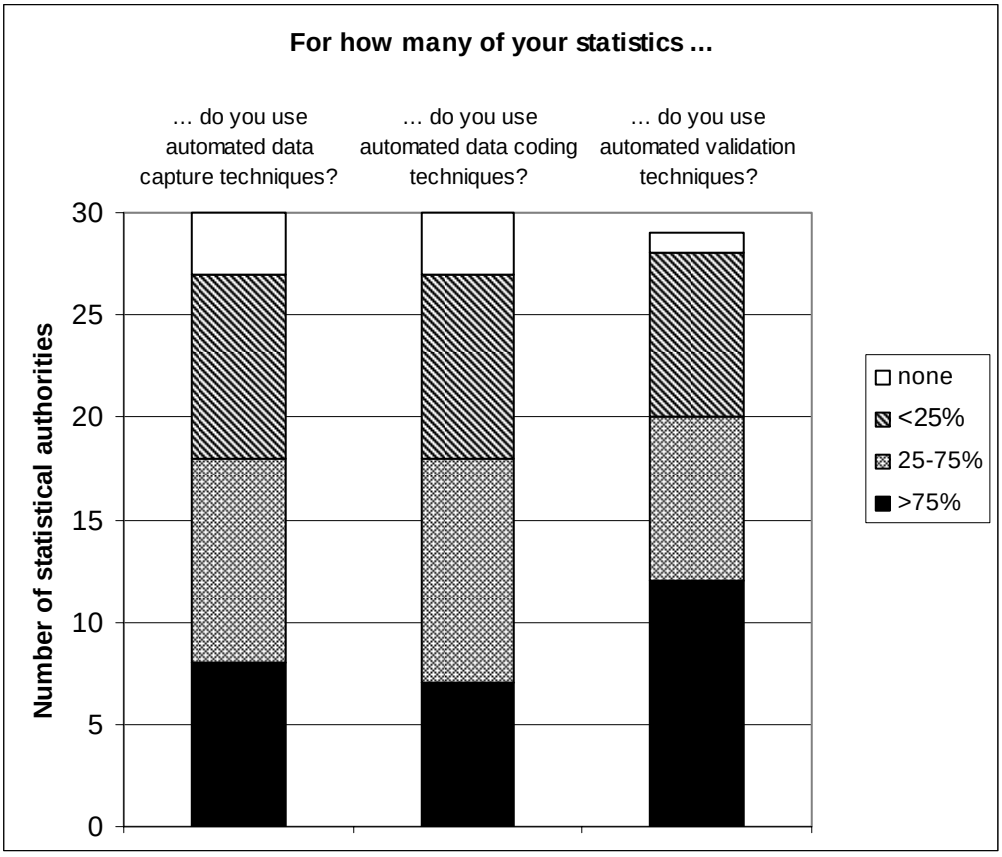
In their self-assessment questionnaires, most SAs which have replied to this part, report on broader-scale initiatives ongoing or planned aiming at a reduction of response burden. Activities range inter alia from a better exploitation of administrative sources (7 SAs), employing electronic questionnaires on a broader scale (5 SAs), improvements with regard to assessing response burden (5 SAs) to the use of more sophisticated sampling techniques (6 SAs). In addition, the ongoing Eurostat/European Central Bank project aiming at a harmonisation of accounting standards taking on board as far as possible statistical considerations as well the promotion of European level sampling techniques in selected areas have been mentioned.

Principle 10: Cost effectiveness
Resources must be effectively used

With only 4 (3) exceptions, all SAs internally monitor their allocation of human (financial) resources and in many SAs allocation is in addition monitored by an external body, other than an audit function, for human (10 SAs) and financial (18 SAs) resources. Likewise, all but 6 SAs conduct periodic reviews of individual staff performance.

Graph 4 gives a heterogeneous picture with regard to the degree to which routine clerical operations are automated in the ESS. One (two) NSI(s) reported not to employ any automated techniques in (two out of) the three areas mentioned.

Graph 4



Almost all NSIs point to a lack of specialised IT human resources and IT resources as the main obstacles hindering greater use of technology to improve statistical processing. Some mention as well – among other things – limited diffusion of internet in their country.

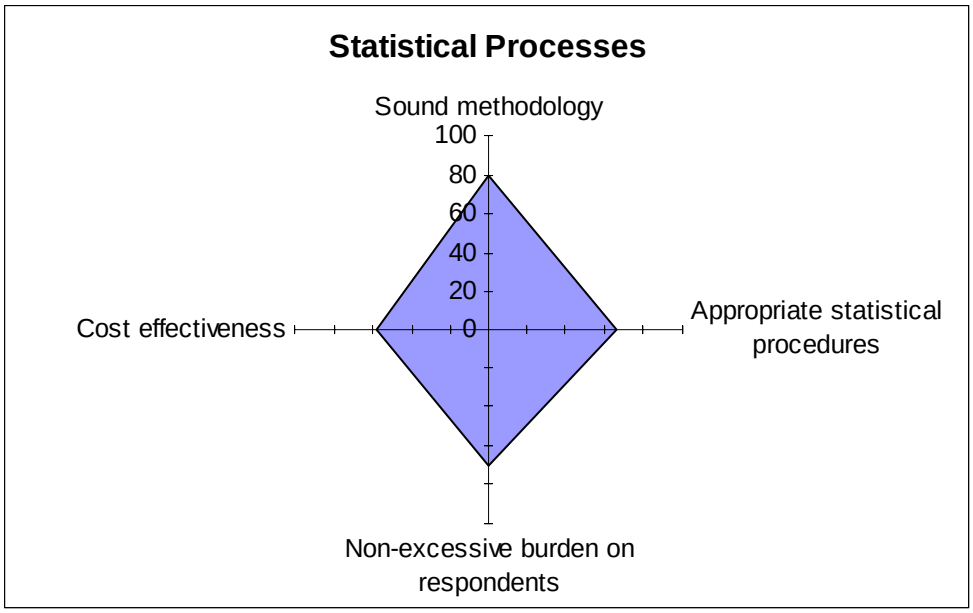
The majority of SAs can partly (21 SAs) or even fully (6 SAs) influence the statistical potential of administrative records to avoid costly direct surveys.

Improvement actions: cost-effectiveness

Improvement actions basically refer to projects mentioned already under principles 8 "appropriate statistical procedures" or 9 "non-excessive burden on respondents".

Graph 5 gives a preliminary overview on the compliance status of the ESS with the Code of Practice in the area of statistical processes.

Graph 5



Entries estimated on the basis of the replies to the self-assessment questionnaire for each principle

Statistical Outputs

Principle 11: Relevance
European statistics must meet the needs of users

Identification of users' needs and consultation with users seems to be ranking high on the ESS agenda with all but 6 SAs reporting to identify and profile their users across domains and all but 3 (small) SAs having formal processes to consult users about their statistical needs as required by law for 14 SAs. 25 SAs have a council/committee representing the main users. More details on the composition and tasks of these bodies in the Member States and Eurostat are summarised in the Eurostat overview of 2005 on the ESS institutional set-up.

22 SAs claim to have procedures to prioritise between different users' needs in their work programme and more than half regularly carry out customer satisfaction surveys or studies with an office-wide scope. 8 SAs report to compile a user satisfaction index.

Improvement actions: relevance

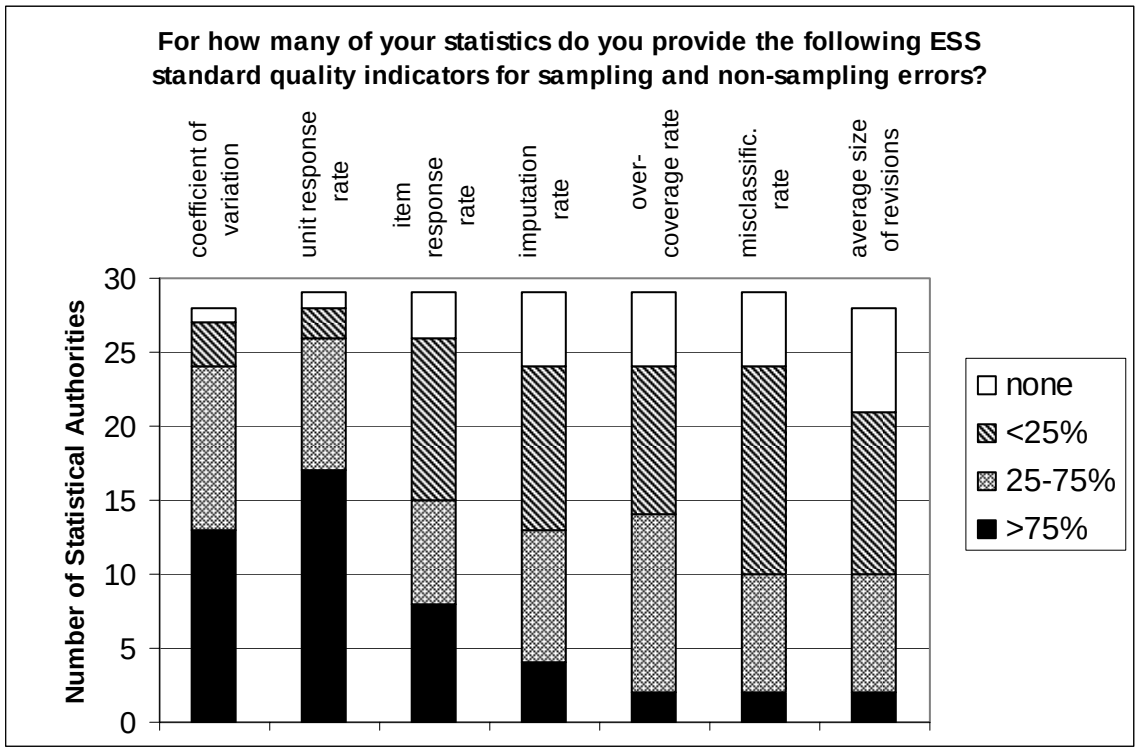
12 SAs intend to extend their user consultation, 3 SAs plan to introduce a user satisfaction index and another 3 SAs to invest in the management of their customers' relations. One SA intends to amend its statistical law to include an obligation to consult with users.

Principle 12: Accuracy and Reliabiliy
European statistics must accurately and reliably portray reality

With only 1 SA using for less than 25% of its outputs and intermediate results a systematic assessment of accuracy, and all other SAs systematically assessing as well the accuracy of source data, reliability of European Statistics is a priority for the ESS. However, the information given in the self-assessment is limited to a snapshot only, as differences reported among SAs with regard to the percentage of domains covered by the accuracy assessments would have to be analysed by statistical domains to substantiate the overview. 19 SAs report they validate accuracy for more than 75% of final results. More than half of the SAs have rules to forbid the dissemination of statistical output due to accuracy considerations, like e.g very low data quality. Graph 6 gives more details on ESS practices with regard to error

measurement and documentation.

Graph 6



10 SAs systematically analyse revisions for more than 75% and another 9 SAs for 25-75% of the relevant statistics.

Improvement actions: Accuracy and Reliability

Improvement actions listed under this principle are basically targeted to specific domains. Overarching projects focus on an extension of error measurement and documentation (5 SAs) and the development of best practices at ESS level.

Principle 13: Timeliness and Punctuality
European Statistics must be disseminated in a timely and punctual manner

Concerns expressed by Eurostat on timeliness of data in selected areas are reflected as well in the self-assessments of several NSIs, one claiming that punctuality sometimes has been overemphasized at the costs of timeliness being stretched out. However, a more meaningful analysis going beyond this first self-assessment exercise, would have to distinguish between domains. Information though seems to be readily available as almost all (26/25) SAs collect information on timeliness/punctuality for more than 75% of its outputs. Only one SA reports not to collect this information at all, although having subscribed to the International Monetary Funds Special Data Dissemination Standard like have all, but two SAs of the EU Member States.

In line with the standard, all but one SAs operate a release calendar for which all but three SA have set a daily time for the release of official statistics. 21 SAs publish in advance divergences from the pre-announced time and in this case announce a new release time.

Though a vast majority of European Statistics are based on European legislation in which periodicity has been defined by the legislators (European Parliament and Council), consultation e.g. on the release calendars could be extended to other user groups which is currently being done in selected areas only, involving mainly the relevant Commission Directorates General and the European Central Bank.

Following the Code of Practice, dissemination of preliminary results of acceptable quality is widespread practice in the ESS, with only three SAs reporting not to do so.

Improvement actions: Timeliness and Punctuality

Improvement actions mentioned comprise efforts directed to single areas to improve timeliness in the short term (3 SAs) or more encompassing programs addressing the efficiency of the statistical production chain (5 SAs). In addition, 5 SAs envisage progress with regard to incorporating more statistical domains in a release calendar-based monitoring of timeliness. Investment in model-based estimates is mentioned by 2 SAs as well as improving timeliness by means of joint ESS steps discussed in the context of "First for Europe" and priority setting (3 SAs).

Principle 14: Coherence and Comparability
European statistics should be consistent internally, over time and comparable between regions and countries; it should be possible to combine and make joint use of related data from different sources.

Coherence of published results is actively addressed throughout the ESS, though practices differ across domains. 5 SAs claim to compare, systematically document and analyse differences between annual and short term and provisional and final results for more than 75% of its statistics while the majority of SAs cover part of its output in respective analyses. The self-assessments reveal a similar picture with regard to comparability over time. 13 out of the 30 SAs systematically document and analyse breaks in time series for more than 75% of its statistics. Table 1 gives an overview.

Table 2: Selected ESS practices with regard to coherence and comparability

Number of statistical authorities	>75% of statistics			25-75% of statistics			<25% of statistics			None of the statistics
	Differences over time documented and analysed?			Differences over time documented and analysed?			Differences over time documented and analysed?			
	Fully	Partly	No	Fully	Partly	No	Fully	Partly	No	
Comparison of annual and short term results	6	11	1	-	9	-	-	2	1	-
Comparison of provisional and final results	5	12	1	-	8	-	-	1	-	3
Comparison with national accounts	5	7	-	-	14	1	-	2	1	-
Documentation of breaks in time series	11	9	-	1	4	-	-	4	1	-

Application of European standard concepts, like e.g. the definition of statistical units, is extended to national statistics in the ESS with only 4 NSIs reporting some divergences. Full concordance is ensured in the area of classifications, where all but one NSI base national statistics on European standards.

Comparability across countries is systematically addressed by 14 (15) SAs in regular (ad hoc) comparisons of international flow statistics with 5 SAs having explicit guidelines to reconcile large differences observed.

Improvement actions: Coherence and Comparability

With regard to improvement actions, joint ESS efforts to be co-ordinated by Eurostat are being called for with regard to methodological work to improve in particular enterprise statistics with national accounts (4 SAs), establish a database at European level to facilitate the comparison of international flow statistics and to address concerns related to comparability over time following revisions of classifications. In addition, 1 SA calls for a revision of the legal framework allowing to a larger extent to exchange information among SAs. The ESS project on profiling of multinational enterprises is mentioned by 2 SAs as a way to enhance coherence at European level. In addition 4 SAs announce to extend their comparative analyses and 3 SA to improve the respective documentation. 4 SAs mention domain specific projects targeted to improving consistency. 2 SAs announce to address coherence and comparability of data by changes in their organisational structure.

Principle 15: Accessibility and Clarity
European statistics should be presented in a clear and understandable form, disseminated in a suitable and convenient manner, available and accessible on an impartial basis with supporting metadata and guidance

Across the ESS, almost all statistical output is today available via the internet, with only 6 SAs disseminating less than 75% of its output via internet. Almost all (26) SAs provide as well

explanatory texts to accompany statistical tables with 23 SAs using a standard metadata format, like e.g. the IMF special data dissemination standard (20 SAs). 12 SA follow with their metadata presentation international guidelines on metadata interoperability out of which 7 employ explicit measures of metadata quality.

All but two SAs invite user comments on the content and presentation of the statistics, which most SAs (20) actively follow-up. However, improvements seem to be possible with regard to systematic testing the SAs' website. While half of the SAs (14) report to regularly test its usability for different groups of users, only 10 SAs' websites have been tested and comply with international guidelines for improving the accessibility of websites.

A vast majority of SA's invest in staff training to writing press releases (24 SAs) and/or dealing with the media (25 SAs). Custom-design analyses are provided by 27 SAs and made always (or at least sometimes) generally available by 6 (19) SAs.

Microdata access for research purposes is granted on a wide scale – usually restricted to specific organisations or institutions on the basis of legal provisions and/or protocols - throughout the ESS with only two SAs not having introduced this opportunity. Procedures slightly differ across the ESS, with most SAs granting access on the basis of formal written requests (25 SAs) and/or by online facilities (7 SAs) and/or other means (11 SAs), like e.g. on-site facilities.

Improvement actions: Accessibility and Clarity

Several actions mentioned by SAs refer to improvements in the content and presentation of the website (6 SAs). 9 SAs intend to invest in metadata improvements. With regard to microdata access for research purposes 3 SA mention a revision of the corresponding European legislation to harmonise and extend the options throughout the ESS. In addition, 5 SAs envisage own actions to improve the situation for researchers, among them e.g. the establishment of secure centres.

Good practice: Research data centres of the statistical offices of the German Federation and Länder

As an interface between official statistics and the scientific community, the research data centre (RDC) of the Federal Statistical Office and the research data centre of the statistical offices of the Länder allow controlled access to official microdata in various sites around Germany.

Oriented towards user requirements, while observing legal data protection provisions, the scientific community's access to official microdata is further improved.

In addition to offering to the scientific community the use of official microdata also at safe scientific workstations in protected rooms of the statistical offices, the range of scientific use files is continuously extended, following the wishes of scientists.

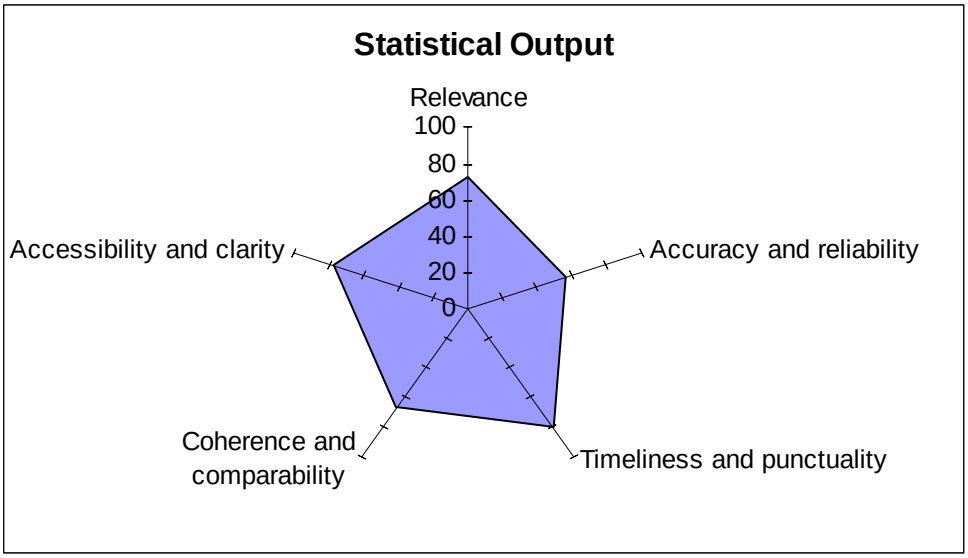
The research data centres of the statistical offices of the Federation and the Länder provide access to individual data as follows:

- *Anonymised microdata files as scientific and/or public use files*
- *Controlled teleprocessing: Using protected data sets through remote data access is a quite recent development which will grow in importance. In that way, it is possible to use the information potential of the individual data by means of self-developed program syntax. Such data access is currently offered through the program packages SAS, SPSS and STATA. For programming, the scientist gets so-called program structure files (data sets without content, just reflecting the structure of the data), which allow him to check the self-developed programs for syntax errors. He then transmits the error-free syntax by e-mail to his RDC contact person, who will apply it to the original data. The results are checked for confidentiality before they are sent to the scientist.*
- *Safe scientific workstations: In the case of microdata sets for which there are no standard scientific use files – which may be due to anonymisation problems or a lack of demand or other reasons –, there is the possibility of controlled data access to scientific use files for on-site use at safe scientific workstations in the protected rooms of the Federal Statistical Office in Wiesbaden, Bonn or Berlin or of one of the statistical offices of the Länder. Such on-site files are tailored direct to the user needs before they are anonymised.*
- *Special evaluations*

In addition, CAMPUS files are offered as special and free public use files for download to be used for teaching purposes. CAMPUS files are public use files – so-called absolutely anonymised microdata files – which are developed specifically for university teachers and students. The purpose of developing CAMPUS files is to enrich practical statistical training with official microdata, and thus to provide universities with a new tool for well-founded empirical teaching.

Graph 7 gives a preliminary overview on the ESS compliance status with the Code of Practice in the area of statistical outputs.

Graph 7



Entries estimated on the basis of the replies to the self-assessment questionnaire for each principle

4. NEXT STEPS

As a next step, starting in 2006, the European Statistical System will carry out peer reviews to review and complement the self-assessments. While targeted primarily to National Statistical Institutes and Eurostat, it is foreseen to address as well the co-ordination function of the NSI where pertinent. In order to keep them manageable, the peer reviews will focus on the principles 1-6 of the Code of Practice, covering the institutional environment, and principle 15 Accessibility and Clarity. In addition, few selected areas could be reviewed in single countries taking into account inter alia their choices in the self assessment exercise.

While the self-assessments will be one input to the preparation of the peer review, they are expected to go beyond this initial exercise adding value by raising issues from a peer's perspective, going more into detail where needed and assessing the situation in a country as a whole. Areas for improvement and related actions identified in the self-assessments will be confirmed with peers contributing to their prioritisation where needed.

Prior to the peer review, National Statistical Institutes which have not yet recently done so, will be asked to conduct a small survey based on a short common questionnaire approximating the perception by users of the trustworthiness of the countries' official statistics. The results of this survey will not only provide useful insight for focusing the peer review and in particular the contact with some main users but built as well a basis for an assessment of the potential impact of the implementation of the Code of Practice in the future.

The results of the peer reviews will yield a report at country level including a refined set of improvement actions which will be used to feed the monitoring process of the implementation of the Code.

With the self-assessments focusing basically on the National Statistical Institutes and Eurostat, compliance of the Code by other providers of Community statistics will have to be addressed as well in the framework of the implementation of the Code. To stimulate corresponding initiatives, National Statistical Institutes are requested to outline by June 2006 a national strategy.

This remains a challenge to be tackled at national level on the basis of an exchange in the respective ESS fora.

In line with the ECOFIN conclusions of November 2005, the Commission proposes to set up a high-level advisory body. Its main tasks will relate to reporting on the implementation of the Code by Eurostat and on general rules and principles of the functioning of the European Statistical System as a whole and to advising the Commission with regard to issues relating to the implementation and communication of the Code of Practice.

Further steps envisaged in the context of the European Statistical System implementation of the Code of Practice include projects at various levels to enhance process and product quality, including progress in the collection of ESS good practices, the organisation of the European Conference on Quality in Survey Statistics in April 2006 and a co-operation project with other international organisations lead by Eurostat on the use and convergence of international quality assurance frameworks. In addition, compliance monitoring established by Eurostat in the area of statistics will allow addressing quality issues at the level of statistical domains. Some areas of the Code will be specified in more detailed protocols as a first step to better allow users to distinguish statistics produced in compliance with the Code. As a basis for further communication about the Code to users of European Statistics, Eurostat has dedicated a section on its website to the European Statistics Code of Practice and issued a brochure in three languages.

A final report by the Commission on the implementation of the Code in the European Statistical System will be submitted to the European Parliament and to the Council in 2008.

ANNEX 1: OVERVIEW ON THE RESULTS OF THE REPLIES BY NSIS AND EUROSTAT TO THE CODE OF PRACTICE SELF-ASSESSMENTS QUESTIONNAIRE

Principles of the Code of Pratice		Indicators of the Code of Practice	Preliminary ESS compliance status on the basis of NSIs/Eurostat self-assessments*
Principle 1: Professional independence	1.1	Independence of the statistical authority from political and other external interference in producing and disseminating official statistics is specified in law	to a large extent more details necessary
	1.2	Senior level access to policy authorities and administrative public bodies by the head of the statistical authority; he/she of highest professional calibre	unclear
	1.3	Responsibility of head of statistical authority for ensuring that European statistics are produced and disseminated in an independent manner	almost fully
	1.4	Responsibility of head of statistical authority for choice of methods, standards, procedures and content and timing of statistical releases	
	1.5	Statistical work programmes published; reports on progress made	partly
	1.6	Statistical releases distinguished from political statements	fully
	1.7	Statistical authority comments publicly on statistical issues incl. criticism and misuses of official statistics	to a large extent
Principle 2: Mandate for data collection	2.1	Mandate for data collection specified in law	fully
	2.2	Permission by national legislation to use administrative records for statistical purposes	fully
	2.3	On the basis of legal act, statistical authority may compel response to surveys	partly
Principle 3: Adequacy of resources	3.1	Adequacy of staff, financial and computing resources both in magnitude and quality	broadly ensured
	3.2	Scope, detail and cost of European statistics are commensurate with needs	Adequate excessive (acc. to NSIs) Not enough information
	3.3	Existence of procedures to assess and justify new demands against their costs	Inadequate or insufficient
	3.4	Existence of procedures to assess need for continuation of statistics	Inadequate or insufficient
Principle 4: Quality commitment	4.1	Product quality is regularly monitored according to the ESS quality components	partly
	4.2	Existence of processes to monitor quality of collection, processing, dissemination	to a small extent
	4.3	Existence of processes to deal with quality considerations, incl. trade-offs within quality, and to guide planning for existing and emerging surveys	to a small extent
	4.4	Quality guidelines are documented and staff is trained. Guidelines are spelled out in writing and made known to the public.	to a small extent
	4.5	Existence of a regular and thorough review of the key statistical outputs using external experts where appropriate	to a small extent
Principle 5: Statistical confidentiality	5.1	Confidentiality guaranteed in law	Fully
	5.2	Legal confidentiality commitments are signed on appointment	to a large extent
	5.3	Substantial penalties for wilful breaches of confidentiality	to a large extent
	5.4	Existence of guidelines on the protection of statistical confidentiality in the production and dissemination processes. Guidelines are spelled out in writing and made known to the public.	almost fully
	5.5	Security and integrity of statistical databases are protected	Fully
	5.6	Strict protocols apply to external users accessing statistical microdata for research purposes.	to a large extent
Principle 6: Impartiality and objectivity	6.1	Statistics are compiled on an objective basis determined by statistical considerations.	almost fully
	6.2	Choices of sources and statistical techniques are informed by statistical considerations.	almost fully
	6.3	Errors in published statistics are corrected at the earliest possible date and publicised.	to a large extent
	6.4	Availability of information on the methods and procedures used by the statistical authority.	to a large extent
	6.5	Statistical release dates and time are pre-announced	to a large extent
	6.6	Equal access of all users at the same time. Limitation, control and publication of any privileged pre-release access. Revision of pre-release access arrangements in the case of leaks.	to a large extent
	6.7	Statistical releases made in press conferences are objective and non-partisan	almost fully
Principle 7: Sound Methodology	7.1	Methodological framework follows European and international standards, guidelines and good practices.	to a large extent
	7.2	Existence of procedures to ensure the application of standard concepts, definitions and classifications	to a large extent
	7.3	High quality of the business register and the frame for population surveys is ensured by regularly evaluation and adjustments if necessary.	to a large extent partly
	7.4	Detailed concordance exists between national classifications and sectorisation systems and the corresponding European systems	to a large extent

Principles of the Code of Pratice		Indicators of the Code of Practice	Preliminary ESS compliance status on the basis of NSIs/Eurostat self-assessments*
	7.5	Graduates in the relevant academic disciplines are recruited	to a large extent
	7.6	Staff continuously improve their expertise	to a large extent
	7.7	Co-operation with the scientific community to improve methodology is organised, external reviews to assess quality and effectiveness of methods and promote better tools.	to a large extent
Principle 8: Appropriate Statistical procedures	8.1	Definition and concepts used for administrative purpose must be a good approximation to those required for statistical purposes	almost fully
	8.2	Questionnaire used for statistical surveys are systematically tested	partly
	8.3	Survey designs, sample selections and sample weights are regularly reviewed, revised or updated.	partly
	8.4	Field operations, data entry and coding are routinely monitored and revised	to a large extent
	8.5	Appropriate editing and imputation computer systems are used and regularly reviewed	to a small extent
	8.6	Revisions follow standard, well-established and transparent procedures	to a large extent
Principle 9: Non-Excessive Burden on Respondents	9.1	The range and detail of European statistics demands is limited to what is absolutely necessary	to a large extent
	9.2	The reporting burden is spread over survey populations through appropriate sampling techniques	to a large extent
	9.3	The information sought from businesses is, as far as possible, readily available from their accounts and electronic means are used to facilitate its return	partly
	9.4	Best estimates are accepted when exact details are not available	partly
	9.5	Administrative sources are used to avoid duplicating requests	to a large extent
	9.6	Data sharing with statistical authorities is generalised to avoid multiplication of surveys	to a large extent
Principle 10: Cost Effectiveness	10.1	Use of resources is monitored by internal and independent external measures	to a large extent
	10.2	Routine clerical operations are automated to the extent possible	partly
	10.3	The productivity potential of ICT is optimised for data collection, processing and dissemination	unclear
	10.4	Proactive efforts are made to improve the statistical potential of administrative records and avoid costly direct surveys	partly
Principle 11: Relevance	11.1	Existence of processes to meet the needs of users, advice on priorities	to a large extent
	11.2	Priority needs are met and reflected in the work programme	to a large extent
	11.3	User satisfaction surveys are undertaken periodically	partly
Principle 12: Accuracy and Reliability	12.1	Source data, intermediate results and statistical outputs are assessed and validated	partly
	12.2	Sampling and non-sampling errors are measured and documented according to the framework of the ESS quality components	partly
	12.3	Studies and analyses of revisions are carried out routinely	partly
Principle 13: Timeliness and Punctuality	13.1	Timeliness meets the highest European and international dissemination standards	
	13.2	A standard daily time is set for the release of European Statistics	to a large extent
	13.3	Periodicity of European Statistics takes into account user requirements	to a large extent
	13.4	Any divergence from the dissemination time schedule is publicised in advance, explained and a new release date set.	to a large extent
	13.5	Preliminary results of acceptable aggregate quality can be disseminated when considering useful	to a large extent
Principle 14: Coherence and Comparability	14.1	Statistics are internally coherent and consistent	to a large extent
	14.2	Statistics are coherent or reconcilable over time	to a large extent
	14.3	Statistics are compiled on the basis of common standards with respect to scope, definitions, units and classifications in the different surveys and sources.	to a large extent
	14.4	Statistics from different surveys and sources are compared and reconciled	partly
	14.5	Periodical exchanges between the ESS and other statistical systems ensure the cross-national comparability of the data; methodological studies are carried out in close cooperation between the Members States and Eurostat.	
Principle 15: Accessibility and Clarity	15.1	Statistics are presented in a form that facilitates proper interpretation and meaningful comparisons	to a large extent
	15.2	Statistics are disseminated using modern information and communication technology	to a large extent
	15.3	Custom-design analyses are provided when feasible and made public.	to a large extent
	15.4	Access to microdata can be allowed for research purposes. This access is subject to strict protocols.	to a large extent
	15.5	Metadata are documented according to standardised metadata systems.	partly
	15.6	Users are kept informed on the methodology of statistical processes and the quality of statistical outputs with respect to ESS quality criteria.	partly

Preliminary ESS compliance status: (95-)100%: (almost) fully; 70-94%: to a large extent; 45-69%: partly; 20-44%: to a small extent; 0-19%: no compliance
Information based on the NSIs/Eurostat self-assessments indicating the share of statistical authorities or statistics covered.

ANNEX 2: SUMMARY OF ESS APPROACHES TO CARRY OUT THE SELF-ASSESSMENTS AGAINST THE PRINCIPLES OF THE EUROPEAN STATISTICS CODE OF PRACTICE

On the basis of a common questionnaire, National Statistical Institutes and Eurostat undertook during October 2005 until January 2006 to carry out a comprehensive self-assessment against the principles and indicators of the European Statistics Code of Practice and submitted the results to Eurostat; some statistical authorities published them on their website.

Out of the 24 statistical authorities which provided information on their approaches for carrying out the self-assessments, all reported top-management involvement at least in a final stage. Individual approaches differed in terms of the degree to which the questionnaires could be filled in centrally by the quality manager or horizontal units (13 statistical authorities) or required collecting information from statistical production units (7 statistical authorities). Another 4 statistical authorities chose a mixed approach during which the central findings have been validated by statistical production units. 4 statistical authorities took the occasion of the self-assessment to already familiarise other national data producers and/or users with the Code of Practice.

Statistical authorities broadly agreed on the process of filling in the self-assessment questionnaire being a valuable exercise for the organisation for it allowed addressing quality related issues in a comprehensive way raising awareness at all levels of the organisation. At the same time limitations of the self-assessment questionnaire became apparent with regard to its suitability to allow for a comparison of the results between statistical authorities. This holds in particular in the area of adequacy of resources and where more explanations of the statistical authorities' choices were considered necessary.

A modified version or an extract of the self-assessment questionnaire could provide the basis for extending the approach to cover other National Statistical Authorities than the National Statistical Institutes.