

Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic

Improvement actions

Recommendation 1

The Law on State Statistics should use the term “official”, rather than “state”, statistics.

Recommendation 2

The scope of the Law on State Statistics (section 1) should be broadened from “the assessment of the socio-economic development [of the Republic and its parts]” to “to meet the needs of users in a democratic society”.

Recommendation 3

The Law on State Statistics should be amended to enhance the role, status and identity of the Statistics Council, broaden its membership, and appoint members for fixed terms.

Recommendation 20

The Law on State Statistics should stipulate that statistical information should be disseminated free-of-charge to all users.

Situation

The Act No. 540/2001 Coll. on State Statistics has been amended several times during the last years with the aim to solve first of all application problems of statistics in the Slovak Republic. Since the recommendations aim at ensuring a more modern legislation for statistics in the Slovak Republic, this can be realised by elaboration of a new act and not by another amendment of the current act.

Improvement action (for recommendations 1-3 and 20)

Elaborate a new legal act on statistics covering, among others, issues taken up in recommendations 1 – 3 and 20 of the Peer Review Report and submit it to the legislative process.

T: 31.12.2017

Recommendation 4

The Law on State Statistics should be brought into line with latest European thinking about best practice in the appointment and dismissal procedures of the President.

Situation

Process of dismissal and appointment of the President of the SOSR is based on the professional competence and independence. It is in line with broader legislative framework in force in the Slovak Republic for organisation of activities of government and organisations of the central state administration (Act no. 575/2001 Coll.). The Act No. 540/2001 Coll. on State Statistics only specifies provisions of the Act 575/2001 Coll. It is expected that the problem will be clarified by the Regulation of the EP and of the Council amending Regulation (EC) No 223/2009 on European Statistics. After adoption of the Regulation the relevant provisions will be directly effective in the legal framework of the Slovak Republic.

Improvement action

Support the adoption of Regulation of the EP and of the Council amending Regulation (EC) No 223/2009 on European Statistics by active participation in relevant CWPS (EU Council Working Party Statistics) meetings.

T: according to timetable of relevant meetings of CWPS.

Recommendation 5

Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic's responsibility for coordinating other producers of official statistics – including in relation to methodology, standards and classifications – should be strengthened and made more explicit in the Law on State Statistics.

Situation

The SOSR implements the recommendation by latest amendment of the Act No. 540/2001 Coll. on State Statistics (provisions 5, 8, and 11). On 22.8.2014 the amendment proposal was submitted to the National Council of the Slovak Republic; after adoption it should enter into force on 1.1.2015.

Improvement action

None; recommendation met as explained above.

Recommendation 6

Consideration should be given to funding a post in the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic to lead on coordination across the National Statistical System (NSS).

Situation

The recommendation was fulfilled by funding a post to lead on coordination across the NSS (in force as of 1.7.2014). The tasks are defined in the Organisational Order of the SOSR and are performed by the unit General Methodology and Registers.

Improvement action

None; recommendation met as explained above.

Recommendation 7

The Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic (SOSR) should enhance the system of permanent user groups and their remit to include: compiling information about the uses made of Slovakian statistics; documenting and prioritising unmet user needs; providing formal advice on the State Statistical Survey Programme (SSSP); and providing a user perspective on quality.

Situation

Within the action programme focussing on learning about the needs and expectations of key customers and on supporting a better interpretation and better use of statistical products (one of action programmes of the SOSR Development Strategy) the SOSR communicates by suitable forms (working meetings, presentations, consultation) within permanent groups with key users from bank and financial sector, foreign trade a construction industry, as well as within ad-hoc groups with representatives from other areas. Evaluation of the activities is presented in a summary report discussed in the top management meeting and feasible and adopted requirements are reflected in statistical activities.

Improvement action

Based on the review of the structure of existing permanent user groups establish permanent user groups covering business sector and science, research, and universities. Focus remit of user groups on compiling information about the use of statistics in their environment, on documenting and prioritising unmet user needs, on formal advice on the SSSP and on providing a user perspective on quality of statistical products. Reflect this enlargement in the summary report of the action programme.

T: 31.12.2016

Recommendation 8

The Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic should strengthen the existing working level arrangements to enable data suppliers to engage more effectively with the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic.

Situation

Cooperation with business suppliers in order, among others, to eliminate possible problems in data collection is a regulated process (meetings with key data suppliers, specialised seminars, etc.) and is supported by the action programme “Activities focussing on learning about expectations of key data suppliers as well as on improvement of their readiness to provide data of required quality” (one of the action programmes of the SOSR Development Strategy).

Improvement action

In order to strengthen and improve the systematic and regular cooperation with business sector (in the role of data suppliers) extend the SOSR Statistical Council by including representatives of business to ensure contacts with businesses.

T: 31.12.2015

Recommendation 9

The Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic should be given immediate access for statistical purposes to data held on the population register.

Situation

Population register was used by the SOSR for population census 2011 – namely within preparation and imputation. At present the negotiations with the register owner are continuing with the aim to use the register regularly as administrative data source first of all for the needs of demographic statistics. The intention is reflected in the SOSR conception of administrative data sources adopted in June 2014 and supported by the latest amendment to the Act No. 540/2001 on State Statistics.

Improvement actions

1. Within implementation of the adopted SOSR conception on administrative data sources ensure official access for statistical purposes to data held on the population register.

T: 31.12.2015

2. Within the working group on census create and introduce questionnaire in order to evaluate in regular intervals changes and status of the population register having in mind its potential use in population census 2021. Use the results to make decision on the way of conducting census in the Slovak Republic.

T: 31.12.2014 (questionnaire); **31.12.2017** (preliminary decision on the way of conducting census)

Recommendation 10

The State Statistical Survey Programme should indicate clearly those surveys and administrative sources that are used for (i) European purposes, (ii) European and national purposes, and (iii) for national purposes only.

Situation

Within elaboration of the State Statistical Survey Programme the SOSR annually identifies emerging new user needs (taking into account limited resources for the production of statistics) and surveys that should be stopped (suspended), reduced or simplified.

The Programme for each survey describes, among others, purpose of the survey; how the survey results will be used and cites related legal acts. The information is used in negotiations on financial resources from the state budget as well as in reviewing user requirements for statistics.

Improvement action

In the draft decree on State Statistical Survey Programme for the years 2015-2017 revise the characteristics of surveys and of used administrative data sources by adding in each characteristic in Annex 1 of the Programme the text indicating whether the survey results are used:

- I. for national purposes
- II. for European purposes
- III. for both European and national purposes

T: 31. 10. 2014

Recommendation 11

Consideration should be given to the transfer of responsibility (and associated resources) for the production of European statistics from small organisations to the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic.

Situation

Within the ESO programme¹ in the Slovak Republic the SOSR initiated discussions about transfers of responsibility and resources for the production of European statistics from small organisations to the SOSR, but it has not yet received a response.

Improvement action

Based on feasibility analysis submit proposal to the government of the Slovak Republic that the SOSR will become the only producer of the European Statistics supported, however, by adequate financial and human resources.

T: 31.12.2015

Recommendation 12

The possibility of further centralising the responsibilities of the Regional Offices should be explored.

Situation

Within optimisation of the division of labour between the SOSR Regional Offices and Headquarters many statistical activities have been centralised (statistical registers, field-work, dissemination). In the past (before the centralisation of statistical activities) majority of the supporting processes concerning managing human resources and economical activities in Regional Offices were centralised too.

Improvement action

Explore the possibility of further centralisation of responsibilities and of conduct of some processes allocated to the SOSR Regional Offices to Headquarters.

T: 31.12.2015 (exploration)

¹ Efektívna, Spoľahlivá a Otvorená verejná správa (Effective, reliable and open public administration)

Recommendation 13

The Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic should review whether the work it commissions from the Institute for Informatics and Statistics (INFOSTAT) in support of the production of European statistics should be brought into the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic.

Situation

Within optimisation of the SOSR processes and after establishment of the new department of mathematical-statistical methods the transfer of tasks conducted by INFOSTAT to the SOSR has started. The transferred tasks prevailing concerned preparation of new statistical surveys, design or implementation of new methodological approaches in seasonal adjustment of time series, etc. The process continues systematically with the aim to transfer step-by-step tasks related to production of statistics to the SOSR.

Improvement action

Identify other parts of the remaining tasks performed by INFOSTAT that are directly related to statistical production and could be brought to the SOSR; after creating suitable conditions (resources) for their successful transfer ensure realisation of the transferred tasks by the SOSR.

T: annually by 31.12.2017 (within preparation of the contract with INFOSTAT)

Recommendation 14

Work on the implementation of the Integrated Statistical Information System should continue.

Situation

In the time the recommendation was formulated the new Integrated Statistical Information System (ISIS) was developed and set up and step-by-step implementation for particular statistical domains has started. The process continues at present together with step-by-step migration of historical data and integration with other information systems of public administration of the Slovak Republic (registers, administrative data sources). The process will continue in the future with parallel further development of the system to fulfil new needs.

Improvement actions

1. Bring all statistical surveys into ISIS environment.

T: 31.12.2015

2. Ensure step-by-step integration of ISIS with relevant IS of administrative data sources owners.

T: 2014 and continuously further

Recommendation 15

Work on the implementation of Quality Management System should continue, and Quality Reports should be produced for all statistical domains.

Recommendation 17

The Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic should prioritise the production of user-oriented Quality Reports.

Situation

The SOSR elaborates producer oriented quality reports for statistical domains on the basis of sectoral EU legislation or requirements of Eurostat. At present the quality reports structure is not harmonised among statistical domains (by Eurostat), the structure of each quality report is identical with the structure required by Eurostat for particular domain.

Improvement actions (for recommendation 15 and 17)

1. Map coverage of statistical domains by quality reports.

T: 31.12.2014

2. Ensure elaboration of user oriented quality reports for all domains in line with ESMS (Euro SDMX Metadata Structure) and in relevant cases (required by Eurostat) elaboration of producer oriented quality reports in line with ESQRS (The ESS Standard Quality Report Structure) by incorporating the elaboration of reports into annual plans of statistical activities; publish the user oriented reports on the SOSR internet site.

T: 31.12.2017

Recommendation 16

Consideration should be given to enhancing the Quality Management System (QMS) to enable more transparency about trade-offs between different dimensions of quality.

Situation

The SOSR is a customer oriented institution. In line with its QMS documentation within the first phase of the statistical process, it identifies in communication with users the purpose and intended use of the required statistics. At present the communication implicitly covers issues regarding quality dimensions preferences, however it is not explicitly stated in the documentation regarding production and related monitoring and analysis (process, product, internal audits) incl. impact on other (not preferred) quality dimensions.

Improvement action

Modify the QMS documentation by adding explicitly the obligation to identify preferences regarding quality dimensions related to intended use of statistics within the first phase of the statistical process (GSBPM, specification of user needs) in detailed communication with users (user groups). Take into account the resulting trade-offs between different dimensions of quality as well as priorities resulting from importance of the intended use of statistics in subsequent phases of the process. Adapt the system for monitoring and analysis accordingly; reflect it in the QMS documentation.

T: 30.9.2016

Recommendation 17

Please see above.

Recommendation 18

Systematic input from external experts in quality and methodology should be sought.

Situation

The SOSR integrated into its existing quality management system self-assessments of statistical surveys and methodological audits. In contrary to already conducted system audits the methodological audits are performed by internal auditors only.

Improvement action

Involve external experts preferably from academic field into conduction of methodological audits.

T: 31.7.2015

Recommendation 19

Response burdens (on data suppliers) should be reported upon in terms of the time taken to provide statistical data.

Situation

The SOSR has been measuring and evaluating respondent time burden since 2008. In surveys in enterprises „the time needed for filling out statistical form based on accounting or on keeping on statistical files“ has to be recorded by respondent. In case of household surveys, the time of interviewing is recorded. In contrary to household surveys, considerable differences are found out in particular reporting units in enterprise surveys. Modification of the question should help achieve more reliable results.

Improvement action

Modify the question regarding time needed to fill in statistical form so that it is in line with the Quality Assurance Framework (indicator 9.2, method 6). In statistical surveys stated in the State Statistical Survey Programme for 2015 modify the question in the following way: “time needed for keeping files of statistical data in addition to accounting system, for retrieving the required information, for consultations with internal or external experts when filling in the form”.

T: 31.12.2014

Recommendation 20

Please see p. 1.

Recommendation 21

The results of custom-designed (bespoke) analyses (or a list of such analyses to help others to access the analyses) should be published on the website.

Situation

The SOSR elaborates non-standard (custom-designed, bespoke) statistical outputs; they are recorded centrally in the SOSR. In line with the Principles for publishing and providing statistical data of the SOSR, the outputs are charged according to a pricelist. Neither the non-standard outputs nor the list of them are made public.

Improvement action

Publish and up-date quarterly the list of non-standard (custom-designed, bespoke) outputs on the SOSR internet site.

T: from 2015, quarterly

Recommendation 22

The explanation of statistical messages, in bulletins and reports, should be improved.

Situation

Within the action programme “Submission of suggestions for elaboration of value added products and their realisation”, the SOSR creates products including knowledge interpretation and visualisation of data for some selected areas. Evaluation of the programme is presented in a summary report discussed in the top management meeting.

Improvement action

Broaden creation of the value added products to other areas; improve information value by improving (deepening) data interpretation.

T: 2015 – 31.12.2017

Recommendation 23

The results of User Satisfaction Surveys should be published alongside SOSR's plans to address the issues raised.

Situation

In line with its strategic goals the SOSR conducts biannually „Survey on the customer satisfaction with the SOSR statistical products and services“. The survey results are published on the SOSR internet site. Detailed evaluation is discussed in the top management meeting and the realisation of feasible and adopted recommendations resulting from the survey is integrated into the SOSR plans of statistical activities.

Improvement action

Publish detailed evaluation of the user satisfaction survey (by question) on the SOSR internet site; use references to link feasible and adopted recommendations of users with plans of statistical activities published on the SOSR internet.

T: 31.12.2015 (then biannually)

Recommendation 24

The ways in which confidentiality protection is assured in relation to microdata analysed both in the Safe Centre and in off-site facilities should be documented on the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic's website.

Situation

Based on agreement, the SOSR provides universities and scientific research institutions with confidential microdata by sending protected file or by allowing access to data via the SOSR safe centre. In the first case in the file provided the methods of protection of confidential statistical data are applied so that the risk of indirect identification is minimised. In the second case only the risk of direct identification is eliminated since the confidential data do not leave the SOSR area. A brief description of the protection methods of confidential data is published on the SOSR internet site, however not in the part where researchers apply for microdata.

Improvement action

Document the statistical disclosure control methods applied in both on-site and off-site access including the impact on information value of data; publish the methods on the SOSR internet site in the part where researchers apply for microdata.

T: 31.12.2014
