

Members of the Peer review team:

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Peer review on the implementation of the European Statistics Code of Practice

Country visited: Sweden

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Main findings:

Statistics Sweden is a very ambitious organisation, with the target to be “of world class standard in refining data to statistical information adapted to the customers’ needs”. It adopted the quality management principles earlier than the majority of other European National Statistical Institutes. It has also continuously contributed to the development of the quality criteria of the European Statistical System. Quality aspirations are present in all phases of Statistics Sweden’s activities. The organisation monitors, evaluates and assesses its performance internally and externally. Characteristic of the Swedish system is the existence of strong and long-standing networks with different user groups which have been developed partly because of the decentralisation of official statistics. In this system, users evaluate serviceability and responsiveness of Statistics Sweden highly both in discussions and in measurements. The organisation has very qualified staff and forward-looking management, which has adopted further targets for streamlining production processes in order to reach better efficiency and quality. A new Advisory Council has just been set up (in force from 1st of January 2007) to advise and support the Director General in the managerial matters. This replaced the previous Governing Council.

Statistics Sweden can be considered to fully comply with the majority of indicators in Principles 1-6 and 15 (those assessed in the current peer review). In all other cases it is ‘largely’ compliant. On the request of Statistics Sweden the indicators of Principle 9 (“Non-excessive burden on respondents”) were assessed as well.

The main findings of the review are the following:

- According to the national legislation the professional independence of Statistics Sweden is not fully evident. Although practical independence was partly questioned by some external users, the impression of the peer review team was that Statistics Sweden shows a high degree of independence and objectivity in compiling and publishing its statistics.
- Statistics Sweden has a clear legal mandate to collect data for the purposes of statistics. Households are not obliged to provide data on the basis of the official statistics act.
- Statistics Sweden has sufficient resources to meet European Statistical requirements, although it is dependant on the financing of other authorities, who may commission the compilation of official statistics they are responsible for, to Statistics Sweden or to some other organisation.
- Quality policy is widely implemented at Statistics Sweden. "Sufficient Quality and criteria for official statistics" has been issued in 2006 by the Council for Official Statistics. Based on good methodological expertise of staff, on a regular reporting system and an efficient management team, quality is a common concern and a shared value for the whole organisation.
- Statistical confidentiality is guaranteed by law. The staff has to sign confidentiality commitments. No breaches of statistical confidentiality are known. Guidelines exist for the production and dissemination process.
- All users have equal access to the data released. There is no pre-release to any person or authority. Statistics Sweden has policies to support impartiality and

- objectivity concerning their data output. If errors occur, the users are informed immediately and the errors are corrected as soon as possible.
- Statistics Sweden has a legal obligation to make the response process as simple as possible. It has a policy to reduce the response burden of business operators due to the fact that the Government has fixed the target to decrease the administrative costs of enterprises with 25 per cent by 2010.
 - Statistics Sweden website, which is now the main channel for disseminating statistics to users, is very clear and comprehensive. It provides a systematic link to other statistical authorities. A large part of the contents is translated into English as well. Generally speaking most of the users seem to be very satisfied with the dissemination policy of Statistics Sweden. The peer review team was not able to assess the media response properly, as the organisation of the meeting did not allow this.

The Swedish official statistical system is a decentralised system, in which the decentralisation rationale is the statistical area. There are altogether 25 statistical authorities who are responsible for different subject-matter areas of official statistics. Statistics Sweden is directly responsible for half of the official statistics (multi-sectoral and sectoral) and is the central statistical authority for official statistics and other national statistics according to the Government Ordinance 1988:137. In addition, around 50 per cent of official statistics production under the responsibility of other statistical authorities has been commissioned to Statistics Sweden. The vast majority of the statistics compiled for European purposes is produced by Statistics Sweden. According to the information received during the peer review the current system seems to work reasonably well.

2. INTRODUCTION

With the adoption of the European Statistics Code of Practice, the Statistical Programme Committee (SPC) committed itself to adhering to its principles. At its meeting on 25 May 2005, the SPC endorsed a stepwise monitoring procedure for the implementation of the Code over three years during which countries' self-assessments should be combined with elements of peer review, benchmarking and monitoring on the basis of the explanatory indicators added to each principle of the Code.

During December 2005 / January 2006 the National Statistical Institutes and Eurostat have completed their self-assessments, the results have been summarised by Eurostat in a report submitted to the Economic and Financial Committee in May 2006 which has been published on the Eurostat website.

As a next step towards implementation of the Code, the European Statistical System is organising peer reviews to complement the self-assessments starting with 2006. They are considered a vital element for the implementation of the Code of Practice given their capacity to encourage the sharing of best practice and to contribute to transparency in what is, essentially, a self-regulatory approach. This approach is designed to enhance accountability and to help in building trust in the integrity of the European Statistical System, its processes and outputs.

The Code of Practice peer reviews follow a common methodology focusing on the institutional environment and dissemination part of the Code comprising the following principles: (1)

Professional independence, (2) Mandate for data collection, (3) Adequacy of resources, (4) Quality commitment, (5) Statistical confidentiality, (6) Impartiality and Objectivity and (15) Accessibility and Clarity. On request of the SCB, the peer review team also reviewed practices relating to the principle 9 "Non-excessive burden on respondents". While an assessment is included in this peer review report, it should be noted that it could not draw on a fully developed common methodology but has rather been based on the Code of Practice self-assessment questionnaire and the peers' experience and background in this area. In principle, the peer review is limited to the National Statistical Institute and its co-ordination role within a dispersed national statistical system. A short document provided by the National Statistical Institute which summarises key aspects of the functioning of the national statistical system is published together with this report.

During a three days visit on-site and on the basis of information material provided by the National Statistical Institute and Eurostat prior to the review, peer reviews produce a report assessing compliance with the Code of Practice at indicator level and in principle following a four point assessment scale. The report includes a refined set of improvement actions covering all principles of the Code which are being used to feed the monitoring process of the implementation of the Code in the European Statistical System.

While the peer reviewers will undertake to base their assessment to the extent possible on factual information, it is worth noting some of the limitations of the peer review process. For example, peer reviewers are dependent upon the resources made available to them (though experienced reviewers can be expected to identify where appropriate information is not forthcoming). In addition these reviews are conducted on a strategic, organisation-wide and system wide basis. Accordingly it is not straightforward to ascertain that certain practices or behaviours or systems operate in all statistical domains.

3. FINDINGS PER PRINCIPLE

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.

Overall assessment: According to the national legislation, professional independence from the Government seems not to be fully implemented in line with the requirements of the Code of Practice. There are special external bodies outside Statistics Sweden, which have the right to decide on the methods related to production of corresponding statistics. Professional independence was confirmed by some of the users, whom the peer review team met. A few doubts were raised as well. Based on the reading of extensive documentation in advance and on the impression received during the discussions the peer review team came to the conclusion that Statistics Sweden shows strong professional independence and objectivity when compiling and publishing actual statistical figures.

Indicator 1.1: The independence of the statistical authority from political and other external interference in producing and disseminating official statistics is specified in law.

Assessment: Largely met

Comments: The independence of the statistical authority from political and other external interference in producing and disseminating official statistics is not specified in the national legislation (Official Statistics Act 2001:99 or Official Statistics Ordinance 2000:100). However, according to the information received, there is currently only one specific case (Government decision of 18th of December 1986 on the definition of concepts in the labour force survey) where the Government has explicitly decided the way how Statistics Sweden has to compile and publish its statistics. The mission statement of Statistics Sweden also emphasises that “statistics should be impartial, relevant and of good quality, at the same time as being based on scientific principles”. According to the latest public opinion survey 47 per cent of respondents regarded Statistics Sweden as an objective and impartial Government authority. On the other hand, only four per cent of the respondents regarded Statistics Sweden not as an objective and impartial Government authority.

Indicator 1.2: The head of the statistical authority has sufficiently high hierarchical standing to ensure senior level access to policy authorities and administrative public bodies. He/She should be of the highest professional calibre.

Assessment: Fully met

Comments: The Director General is nominated by the government for a fixed term of six years. His/her nomination can be renewed for three years. The position corresponds to one of the highest rankings in the public sector.

Indicator 1.3: The head of the statistical authority and, where appropriate, the heads of its statistical bodies have responsibility for ensuring that European Statistics are produced and disseminated in an independent manner.

Assessment: Fully met

Comments: According to the Official Statistics Act (section 3) official statistics shall be available for the purposes of public information, investigative activities and research. Official statistics shall be objective and publicly available.

Indicator 1.4: The head of the statistical authority and, where appropriate, the heads of its statistical bodies have the sole responsibility for deciding on statistical methods, standards and procedures, and on the content and timing of statistical releases.

Assessment: Largely met

Comments: The Official Statistics Ordinance (2001:100) section 2(2) states that “Statistical authorities shall determine the contents and scope of statistics in their respective statistical areas, unless otherwise provided by Government decisions”. Regarding the methods used in statistics compilation there seems to be special arrangements. The regulation 1988:137 states that Statistics Sweden shall have external boards for Consumer Price Index and Construction Index. Although the roles of these bodies are mostly advisory by nature, the Consumer Price Index Board and Construction Index Board have the power “to decide on matters of principle concerning application of the index calculation criteria and to promote the development of

methods” for calculating the CPI and Construction Index accordingly. E.g. in 2005 the CPI Board had decided on the choice of methods for income-related charges, telephone services and traffic congestion fees (Annual Report 2005 of Statistics Sweden, Swedish version).

The members of the boards are mostly representatives of important stakeholder groups and nominated by Statistics Sweden for a three years’ term. Statistics Sweden decides on the chairs that have the casting vote. Four members of the Consumer Price Index Board have scientific competence in national economics and/or statistics and are appointed by Statistics Sweden. One member is nominated by the Government.

Indicator 1.5: The statistical work programmes are published and periodic reports describe progress made.

Assessment: Fully met

Comments: The appropriation-based statistical work programme is published in the web. [http://www.scb.se/Grupp/Omscb/ Dokument/verksamhetsplan 2007 extern.pdf](http://www.scb.se/Grupp/Omscb/Dokument/verksamhetsplan_2007_extern.pdf) since 2005. The publication plan of statistical releases is published in the web as well. A biannual progress report is also published in the web. The annual report is compiled both in Swedish and in English. Both are available in the web as well.

Indicator 1.6: Statistical releases are clearly distinguished and issued separately from political/policy statements.

Assessment: Fully met

Comments: There are internal guidelines regarding the publication of statistical releases. No political/policy statements are accepted. Statistical releases are recognised by the special design and the logo of Statistics Sweden as well as by the text and logo of Official Statistics of Sweden. Staff training is offered to those who write statistical releases and deal with the media.

Indicator 1.7: The statistical authority, when appropriate, comments publicly on statistical issues, including criticisms and misuses of official statistics.

Assessment: Fully met

Comments: Statistics Sweden has a policy to react if statistics are misused or misinterpreted. There is a clear procedure determining the organisation’s public approach to this kind of situation. The procedure seems to work properly in practice.

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.

Overall assessment: Statistics Sweden has a clear legal mandate to collect data for the purposes of statistics. Households are not obliged to provide data on the basis of the official statistics act. European statistical requirements are not explicitly mentioned in the national legal provisions.

Indicator 2.1: The mandate to collect information for the production and dissemination of official statistics is specified in law.

Assessment: Fully met

Comments: The Official Statistics Act (2001: 99) sections 7-13 stipulate the obligations of business and other operators, foundations, non-profit organisations, municipalities and county councils to provide data to statistical authorities. In the Official Statistics Ordinance (2001:100) there are some clarifying sections regarding the data collection rights of the statistical authorities. According to section 4, "Data for official statistics shall be collected in such a way as to make response process as simple as possible for data providers". To make the response as easy as possible, different modes of provision are offered for delivery of data and there are several development projects to tackle the issue even more strongly.

Indicator 2.2: The statistical authority is allowed by national legislation to use administrative records for statistical purposes.

Assessment: Fully met

Comments: Official Statistics Ordinance, section 6 gives all statistical authorities the right to receive data from government agencies. The priority use of administrative data is, however, not mentioned in any legal regulation. In practice Statistics Sweden aims to exploit administrative data increasingly in the production of statistics.

Indicator 2.3: On the basis of a legal act, the statistical authority may compel response to statistical surveys.

Assessment: Fully met

Comments: Statistical authorities (Official Statistics Act 2001:99, sections 25-26) can compel response to statistical surveys in the case of business and other operators. If data providers cannot comply with the obligation or they give incorrect information, they can be ordered to pay a fine. The policy of Statistics Sweden is not to compel respondents by juridical measures. For the municipalities (who are eligible to provide data) or for the households these kinds of sanctions don't exist.

Principle 3: Adequacy of Resources

The resources available to statistical authorities must be sufficient to meet European Statistics requirements.

Overall assessment: Statistics Sweden has sufficient resources to meet European Statistics requirements, although it is dependant on the financing of other authorities, who commission the half of their official statistics production to Statistics Sweden.

Indicator 3.1: Staff, financial, and computing resources, adequate both in magnitude and in quality, are available to meet current European Statistics needs.

Assessment: Fully met

Comments: The Swedish system is an interesting one in the European context, since around 50 per cent of its financial resources have to be negotiated or fixed annually. The Government directly reserves appropriations for the official statistics which Statistics Sweden is responsible for. It is annually around 50 per cent of the whole expenditures of Statistics Sweden. The major part of the other funds comes from the commissioned services provided by Statistics Sweden for the other authorities responsible for official statistics. A minor part of the remaining funds are payments for customised surveys, tailor-made products and services. A recent increase in Statistics Sweden's appropriations was due to the needs for improvement of economic statistics.

In 2005 Statistics Sweden received around SEK 22 million (including grants) from the European Commission. According to its own estimations the actual increase in costs of the adoption of the new EU regulations amounted to SEK 17 million between 2004 and 2005.

The staff of Statistics Sweden is highly educated compared with many European NSIs. Around 60 per cent of the staff has at least 3 years of post-secondary education. The availability of high-skilled statisticians in future was mentioned as the main problem in securing the quality of statistics and the level of statistical professionalism at the office.

Indicator 3.2: The scope, detail and cost of European Statistics are commensurate with needs.

For European level reply

Indicator 3.3: Procedures exist to assess and justify demands for new European Statistics against their cost.

For European level reply

Indicator 3.4: Procedures exist to assess the continuing need for all European Statistics, to see if any can be discontinued or curtailed to free up resources.

For European level reply

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.

Overall assessment: As stated in the Statistics Ordinance (2001:100) "The statistical authorities shall provide documentation and quality declaration for official statistics", Statistics Sweden is highly committed in this area and has implemented a very comprehensive "Quality policy". In particular, a very interesting contribution on "Sufficient Quality and criteria for official statistics" has been issued in 2006 by the Council for Official Statistics (http://www.scb.se/Grupp/Omscb/kvalitetsrapport_eng.pdf). Based on good methodological

expertise of staff, on a regular reporting system and an efficient management team, quality is a common concern and a shared value for the whole organisation. Quality description of statistical products are also part of the dissemination policy. So quality is largely acknowledged by the users as being a strong point of Statistics Sweden. Different kinds of self-assessments and internal audits, external benchmarking etc. are regular practices for the identification of improvement actions in its performance.

Nevertheless, a lack of coordination of all approaches has prompted Statistics Sweden to implement a more formal quality management system as part of a very innovative LOTTA project.

Indicator 4.1 Product quality is regularly monitored according to the ESS quality components.

Assessment: Fully met

Comments: Every year a questionnaire asks product managers for their assessment of user reactions to quality developments using the usual five quality components (and even 27 subcomponents). More than 160 regular products are evaluated. Results are analysed and improvements are implemented.

Indicator 4.2 Processes are in place to monitor the quality of the collection, processing and dissemination of statistics.

Assessment: Largely met

Comments: A great variety of methods are used in order to better assess the quality of the different stages in the statistical production process. Nevertheless, these assessments are not systematically done for all or most of statistics.

Indicator 4.3 Processes are in place to deal with quality considerations, including trade-offs within quality, and to guide planning for existing and emerging surveys.

Assessment: Largely met

Comments: Even if no formal process or policy are currently in place to deal with quality considerations or survey planning for new surveys, the LOTTA project intends to streamline statistical production processes and will lay the foundation for implementing a formal quality management system.

Indicator 4.4 Quality guidelines are documented and staff are well trained. These guidelines are spelled out in writing and made known to the public.

Assessment: Fully met

Comments: Internal documentation for the statistical production process is available for most of them. They are also available for external users on the web and training sessions are organised to address quality issues.

Indicator 4.5 There is a regular and thorough review of the key statistical outputs using external experts where appropriate.

Assessment: Largely met

Comments: A review of activities per product is ongoing, with the strategic objective of having audited all statistical products within a five year time period (2003-2007). These reviews are carried out by a team of three trained persons and proposals for improvements are made. Nevertheless, this programme has been frozen in mid 2006 to free resources for the LOTTA project.

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.

Overall assessment: Statistical confidentiality is guaranteed by law. Breaches of statistical confidentiality are punishable. The staff of Statistics Sweden has to sign confidentiality commitments. No breaches of statistical confidentiality are known. Guidelines exist for the production process, publication and technical support, which should facilitate compliance with the law. The IT security management is implemented according to the ISO/IEC 17799.

Indicator 5.1 Statistical confidentiality is guaranteed in law.

Assessment: Fully met

Comments: In general, statistical information is according to the Swedish Secrecy Act (1980:100) strictly confidential. Additionally, the Personal Data Act (1998:204) covers regulations for the protection of privacy of register data. The Data Inspection Board supervises that authorities, companies, organizations and individuals follow the Data protection Act. Statistics Sweden also has a regular cooperation with the Board. Statistics Sweden is not aware of any attempt to re-identify a person or enterprise from the data they released. The other 24 statistical authorities are responsible for fulfilling all relevant laws and regulations themselves. If a Swedish citizen wants to have information about the data stored concerning his person, he/she receives a standard report that explains all variables stored and their usage as required by the European data protection directive (Sec. 5, 12).

Indicator 5.2 Statistical authority staff sign legal confidentiality commitments on appointment.

Assessment: Fully met

Comments: The staff has to sign commitments. According to information received the staff members of Statistics Sweden have never disclosed confidential data. The only conceivable reasons for doing so would be a court decision (Secrecy Act), but this situation has never arisen.

Indicator 5.3 Substantial penalties are prescribed for any wilful breaches of statistical confidentiality.

Assessment: Fully met

Comments: Breaches are punishable (Swedish Penalty Code, Ch. 20 Sec 3: "A person who discloses information which he is duty-bound by Law or other statutory instrument or by order

or provision issued under a Law or statutory instrument to keep secret, or if he unlawfully makes use of such secret, he shall, if the act is not otherwise specially subject to punishment, be sentenced for breach of professional confidentiality to a fine or imprisonment for at most one year.")

Indicator 5.4 Instructions and guidelines are provided on the protection of statistical confidentiality in the production and dissemination processes. These guidelines are spelled out in writing and made known to the public.

Assessment: Fully met

Comments: Guidelines exist for production processes and dissemination procedures. They cover macro- and microdata protection. They are addressed to employees and scientific community and only partly known to the public, but in general available for all. The scientific community accepts the competence of Statistics Sweden for this task. Therefore the confidentiality protection policies and methods don't lead to problems in relationship with the users. Tau-Argus is used for anonymization in some statistics.

Indicator 5.5 Physical and technological provisions are in place to protect the security and integrity of statistical databases

Assessment: Fully met

Comments: Statistics Sweden is responsible for the functioning and security of their IT. The implementation is based on the code of practice for information security management (ISO/IEC 17799, a derivate of the British standard bs 7799). The networking is outsourced. The internal infrastructure is protected by common systems and mechanisms such as firewalls, virus protection systems, etc. Statistics Sweden has not sought after any certification or audit. The other statistical authorities are responsible themselves for their IT security.

The MONA file distribution system used by Statistics Sweden is reached via internet by external users after a special and individual decision by Statistics Sweden. The system is tested twice a year by the most highly recommended company in Sweden for intrusion and access control and it has not been able to break the system or to get access control so far. The user is provided with the non-identified data (pseudonymized) that the NSI has cleared for the specified research project. The users are notified that Swedish law is applicable. Information about disclosure control and statistical secrecy act is transferred to them.

Indicator 5.6 Strict protocols apply to external users accessing statistical microdata for research purposes.

Assessment: Fully met

Comments: There is an increase in the demand for microdata, anonymized data on separate individuals and enterprises. The limitations are given through the Swedish Secrecy Act. Microdata may be accessed on the basis of legal provisions for universities and officially approved research institutes (approved means that the government has classified the institute as a research institute). The data files provided to the researches are tailor-made. They are only pseudonymized (direct identifiers, like numbers, names etc., are cancelled) therefore the receiving institute has to fulfil all requirements mentioned in the Swedish Secrecy Act. The

researchers have to pay fees for the files depending on the time needed by Statistics Sweden to create them.

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.

Overall assessment: All users have equal access to the data released. There is no pre-release to any person or authority. Statistics Sweden has policies to support impartiality and objectivity concerning their data output. If errors occur the users are informed immediately and the errors are corrected as soon as possible. There is transparency concerning the methods and procedures used in the production of statistics.

Indicator 6.1: Statistics are compiled on an objective basis determined by statistical considerations.

Assessment: Largely met

Comments: Some writers have accused Statistics Sweden of being too closely connected with the government. Statistics Sweden has denied it in written replies, which the newspapers have published. Nevertheless, due to a lack of legal safeguards there are possibilities to influence official statistics and its methods (see indicators 1.1 and 1.4.).

Indicator 6.2: Choices of sources and statistical techniques are informed by statistical considerations.

Assessment: Fully met

Comments: Policies exist that document decisions concerning statistical techniques and methods. Violations against the policies are stated by Statistics Sweden, for example, the shortening of the budget led to the choice of suboptimal methods from the statistical point of view.

Indicator 6.3: Errors discovered in published statistics are corrected at the earliest possible date and publicised.

Assessment: Fully met

Comments: When an error is detected in a publication, it is categorized for possible consequences. Depending on the three-step category (1 = minor error, 2 = error, 3 = major error) different procedures are processed. If the errors were severe (category 3) the users are informed by the website, the known users are informed by subscription lists.

Indicator 6.4: Information on the methods and procedures used by the statistical authority are publicly available.

Assessment: Fully met

Comments: Information about methods and procedures used in producing statistics is available on the website for 90-95 per cent of official statistics. Missing information is added when the statistics are updated.

Indicator 6.5: Statistical release dates and times are pre -announced.

Assessment: Fully met

Comments: A calendar pre-announcing statistical releases and their publishing dates at fixed time is available on the website. If Statistics Sweden is not able to meet the pre-announced publication date, the users are informed through the website. One major reason for not meeting the date is the lack or delay of data, which were not delivered by the respondents.

Indicator 6.6: All users have equal access to statistical releases at the same time and any privileged pre-release access to any outside user is limited, controlled and publicised. In the event that leaks occur, pre-release arrangements should be revised so as to ensure impartiality.

Assessment: Fully met

Comments: All users have access to statistical releases at the same time. There are no pre-releases even to the ministries. This fact can be emphasized as exceptional good practice.

Indicator 6.7: Statistical releases and statements made in Press Conferences are objective and non-partisan.

Assessment: Fully met

Comments: The staff is trained concerning these aspects. Questions of journalists concerning e.g. statements of politicians in press conferences or interviews are never commented on by the staff.

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.

Overall assessment: Statistics Sweden has a legal obligation to make the response process as simple as possible. It has a policy to reduce the response burden of business operators due to the fact that the government has set up the target to decrease the administrative costs of enterprises by 25 per cent by 2010. As one of the steps to reach this target Statistics Sweden aims to use administrative data sources whenever it is feasible. It has also set up a special unit for all data collection from enterprises. Much additional effort is devoted to promoting electronic data reporting and decreasing the response burden.

Indicator 9.1. The range and detail of European statistics is limited to what is absolutely necessary.

For European level reply

Indicator 9.2. The reporting burden is spread as widely as possible over survey populations through appropriate sampling techniques.

Assessment: Largely met

Comments: Special data collection departments (separately for enterprises and households) have been set up from the beginning of 2006. The co-ordinated sampling frame is in use for some enterprise surveys. The target is to extend it to all enterprise surveys. A special group for handling contacts with big enterprises has been formed. The response time is regularly monitored and according to the latest figures there has been a sharp decrease in response time. Enhanced use of administrative data also limits the response burden. At the moment the use of administrative data is not explicitly referred to as a priority or necessity in the legislation.

Indicator 9.3. The information sought from businesses is, as far as possible, readily available from their accounts and electronic means are used where possible to facilitate its return.

Assessment: Largely met

Comments: During 2006 a co-operation between Statistics Sweden, Swedish Agency for Public Management Cooperation, The Swedish Tax authority and Swedish Companies Registration Office started with the aim to get a unified approach to data collection, using the XBRL format. Final target is automatic transmission of data from accounting systems to the statistical system. Electronic means are available for around 40 different surveys. Around 10-15 per cent of the respondents provide data via web.

Indicator 9.4. Best estimates and approximations are accepted when exact details are not readily available

Assessment:

Comments: According to self-assessment questionnaire Statistics Sweden always allows estimations or approximations when exact information is not available. The review team didn't assess the situation in practice.

Indicator 9.5. Administrative sources are used whenever possible to avoid duplicating requests for information.

Assessment: Largely met

Comments: There is no legal obligation to prioritise the use of administrative sources in compilation of statistics, although it seems to be the policy of Statistics Sweden for the major part of data collections.

Indicator 9.6. Data sharing within statistical authorities is generalised in order to avoid multiplication of surveys.

Assessment: Fully met

Comments: Data sharing is possible on the basis of the legal provisions and used as often as needed.

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.

Overall assessment: The Statistics Sweden website, which is now the main channel for disseminating statistics to users, is very clear and comprehensive. It provides a systematic link to other statistical authorities and a great part is translated into English. For all statistics a publication plan is released on the web. More custom designed analyses are provided at cost price for specific demands. Generally speaking users are very satisfied with the dissemination policy of Statistics Sweden. Nevertheless, further improvements intended to provide users with a systematic and fully updated documentation are planned.

Indicator 15.1: Statistics are presented in a form that facilitates proper interpretation and meaningful comparisons.

Assessment: Fully met

Comments: Statistics Sweden Website is very comprehensive and user-friendly. An English version covering a huge amount of statistics is provided. Systematic links to other data producers of official statistics are mentioned. A publication plan for all official statistics can be checked on the web. A lot of methodological information accompanies the dissemination of statistical products. A contact person is always indicated and comments are welcome. In the Customer satisfaction survey (systematically sent to paying customers) the rating for the "easy to understand" dimension was 8.5 on a 10-point scale.

The quality of the website will be further improved under plans to enhance web-accessibility for handicapped and elderly people (reference: web-accessibility, COM(2001) 529 final, <http://europa.eu/scadplus/leg/en/lvb/l24226h.htm>).

Indicator 15.2: Dissemination services use modern information and communication technology and, if appropriate, traditional hard copy.

Assessment: Fully met

Comments: On the web site, users can not only have access to press releases, publications relevant tables and graphs but they have also access free of charge to a big "Statistical data base". They can download most official statistics produced by Statistics Sweden and other statistical authorities. Traditional hard copy publications are also produced, although less in amount. In addition Statistics Sweden publishes e.g. quarterly publications ("Welfare" and "Swedish economy - statistical perspective") presenting social and economic issues in a very user-friendly way.

Indicator 15.3: Custom-designed analyses are provided when feasible and are made public.

Assessment: Largely met

Comments: The SCB website explains how tailor-made statistics and analysis at full-cost price can be provided at request. In some cases SCB makes the results of such analysis publicly available when it is possible due to the legal agreement with the customer. When having an agreement with a business operator SCB works as a consultant on the market.

Indicator 15.4: Access to microdata can be allowed for research purposes. This access is subject to strict protocols.

Assessment: Fully met

Comments: See 5.6 Indicator.

Indicator 15.5: Metadata are documented according to standardised metadata systems.

Assessment: Largely met

Comments: Standard metadata format following international standards is applied for all statistical outputs and published on the website. Nevertheless, these metadata are not always systematically updated.

Indicator 15.6: Users are kept informed on the methodology of statistical processes and the quality of statistical outputs with respect to the ESS quality criteria.

Assessment: Largely met

Comments: As already mentioned, users have access on the SCB website to a lot of methodological information for a large range of statistical products. Moreover, there is a dedicated section on the website devoted to methodology, where users can find all the different handbooks, reports and guidelines as relevant articles of the international "Journal of Official Statistics (JOS)" published by Statistics Sweden. Different methodology seminars with external invitations are regularly organised.

Nevertheless, as the documentation is not complete and fully adapted, Statistics Sweden has launched improvement actions to improve documentation throughout the organisation and better communicate quality to users.

4. CO-ORDINATION ROLE OF THE NATIONAL STATISTICAL INSTITUTE

The reform of Sweden's official statistics in the middle of the 1990s led to the situation that 25 government authorities were given responsibility for official statistics in order to better meet user needs. Statistics Sweden kept the responsibility for multi-sectoral statistics and for some sectoral statistics as well. The other authorities were made responsible for other parts of the statistical system, but could commission Statistics Sweden for statistics production. Additionally, Statistics Sweden was made responsible for the coordination and monitoring of official statistics in Sweden (Ordinance 1988:137, Sec. 2).

The coordination role is fulfilled through providing consultation, guidelines, support, and production to the other statistical authorities and customers. The big challenge is the provision of a homogeneous, timely, coherent and easily accessible statistical system to the users, although 25 authorities participate in the production. To manage this, Statistics Sweden has the mandate to issue regulations to statistical authorities regarding documentation, quality declarations and publication. For example, Statistics Sweden has to communicate the standards and needs of official statistics in Europe and Sweden to the other authorities.

The role of Statistics Sweden is strengthened through additional regulations, for example that all other statistical authorities are requested to submit annual descriptions of their statistical products to Statistics Sweden, where they were compiled and published. Also, the authorities are obliged to inform each other about their planned products to avoid double work and an increase of response burden. Additionally, the Council of Official Statistics (members: one chair (Director General of Statistics Sweden) and six other managers at the statistical authorities) was established in 2002 as further instrument to promote coordination.

Most of the authorities seem to rely on the statistical competence of Statistics Sweden. For more or less half of the production of official statistics they have delegated the production to Statistics Sweden. Besides their methodological competence, one reason seems to be that Statistics Sweden is allowed to access the registers whereas other potentially existing competitors may not.

5. GOOD PRACTICES TO BE HIGHLIGHTED

1. The diversity and the specificities of production processes is an important factor of inefficiency in most statistical institutes. To try to rationalize this diversity, in September 2006 Statistics Sweden embarked on a very ambitious project (named LOTTA) to streamline these production processes by creating common tools and methods at a central level for every cluster of processes. The project is intended to reduce costs and increase quality, thereby also benefiting both customers and data providers. Moreover the LOTTA project aims also at developing staff competence.

2. In order to improve communication (in both directions, top-down and bottom-up) between top management and young officials working at Statistics Sweden, a "Youth Council" has been recently created comprising 14 young statisticians (less than 30 years old). They are appointed for two years on the basis of proposals by each department. This "Youth Council" meets the DG and DDG 3 or 4 times a year and minutes of the debates are put on the intranet.

3. Statistics Sweden has a very clear policy not release statistics to anybody before the fixed release time. No privileged users are accepted. All users have the same access to data at the same time. The time of release is known by the users.

4. Comprehensive web-site (<http://www.scb.se>) includes user-friendly statistical information, metadata, information about Statistics Sweden and contact points. The web-site gives a good picture of the transparent organisation and its procedures. The amount of English material is also impressive. The overall concept of the web-site fulfils in an out-standing way the usability requirements and is self-explanatory.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PEER REVIEW TEAM

1. Recommendations related to legal framework of Statistics Sweden

Clarification of the independent position of Statistics Sweden from the Government influence

There is no clear statement regarding the professional independence in the national statistical legislation. The independence of Statistics Sweden from the political interference is sometimes also questioned by the external stakeholders. For that reason it is recommended to consider the clarifications when revising the legal regulations.

Evaluation and clarification of the roles of different advisory boards

The Consumer Price Index Board and Construction Index Board can according to the regulations decide methods concerning the compilation of corresponding statistics. In order to avoid misunderstanding and confusion it is recommended to limit the tasks of the mentioned bodies purely to advisory ones.

Although Statistics Sweden seems to be satisfied with the current variety of different standing advisory organs, it might be advisable to consider if there are any overlapping competencies. In addition to that it might be worthwhile to assess setting up a body, which represents solely of respondents and enterprises (in particular their corresponding organisations). Many European countries report positive experiences from such arrangements. This could enable Statistics Sweden to explain and justify the needs of the European statistics well in advance.

Priority use of administrative data

According to Official Statistics Ordinance (2001:100, section 6) Government agencies have to provide data for production of official statistics to the statistical authorities. The authorities, in turn, don't have any direct obligation to investigate in advance, whether the data needed for statistical purposes already exists in the data files of other Government agencies, nor do they have any obligation to prioritise the use of administrative data instead of survey data. The change in the legal regulation could make the situation clearer than it is currently. It would compel the authorities primarily to use administrative data, where these exist.

2. Other recommendations

Development of statistical analysis to better meet user requirements and staff commitment

Good statistical analysis is already performed at Statistics Sweden. Nevertheless, some users we met would like Statistics Sweden to increase its commitment in this area. They need quality figures but also some robust comments based on sound analytical work. Moreover, young statisticians or economists working at Statistics Sweden expressed the wish to fully exploit their competencies in doing more economic studies or statistical analyses.

So we would like to recommend that a fraction of productivity gains generated by for instance the LOTTA project should be reinvested in more analytical work. This work which could be done in partnership with universities or economic and social research institutes would also have a positive feedback on quality of statistics.

Securing of high-quality recruitments for the future in the context of increasing of students in statistics

Many European countries like Sweden have the problem that the recruitment of high-quality staff is hampered by the poor coverage of statistics and official statistics as main study areas at

university level. Statistics - as a scientific area – has increasingly tended to become an appendix of other study areas such as business economics, political economics etc. One reason for this is that limited employment prospects restrict the number of interested students so that a special study program cannot be justified. If the perspective is changed from a national view to a European one the situation changes. Therefore it might be a good idea to initiate a European Statistical School. Furthermore, a shared education could lead to better quality in European Statistics.

7. LIST OF IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS BY PRINCIPLE OF THE CODE

Principle 1: Professional Independence	
Improvement actions	Timetable
Statistics Sweden will inform the Government that the Official Statistics Ordinance is not in accordance with the Code in as so far as Section 2. 2. of the Ordinance states that the Government may take separate decisions on the content and scope of official statistics.	2007
Statistics Sweden will inform the Government that the competence of the CPI and Construction Index Board is not in accordance with the Code in as so far as the Boards according to the Ordinance containing directives for Statistics Sweden "...shall...decide matters of principle concerning application of the index calculation criteria and promote the development of the methods for calculating the CPI and Construction Index".	2007

Principle 4: Quality Commitment	
Improvement actions	Timetable
Identification of a quality management system that is best suited for the needs of Statistics Sweden.	2007
Implementation of the chosen quality management system.	2008 onwards
Implementation of a revised auditing approach connected to the quality management system and adapted to the changed environment after the Lotta project.	2008 onwards

Principle 5: Statistical Confidentiality	
Improvement actions	Timetable
An approach to assure that confidentiality is not disclosed for individual surveys will be established as part of the Lotta project. The approach will be based on providing guidelines for a number of frequently occurring situations.	2007
The guidelines developed during 2007 will be built into a common IT system to be used by all surveys.	2008

Principle 6: Impartiality and Objectivity	
Improvement actions	Timetable
See actions under Principle 1.	

Principle 7: Sound Methodology	
Improvement actions	Timetable
Common tools will be developed for the whole production process. The tools will incorporate the current best methods that have been identified internally and externally.	2008 onwards

Principle 8: Appropriate statistical procedures	
Improvement actions	Timetable
The methods referred to under Principle 7 will be well-documented and available to all staff via a system for process documentation on our Intranet.	2008 onwards

Principle 9: Non-excessive Burden on Respondents	
Improvement actions	Timetable
Developing a Respondents Register containing data on respondents and the burden of all enterprise surveys. The register will be used for analysing the response burden in total and in relation to different companies and different surveys. The methods for measuring the response burden will be adapted to the Standard Cost Model.	2007-2008
Cooperation between Statistics Sweden, the Swedish Tax Authority and the Swedish Companies Registration Office has started with the aim of establishing a unified approach to data collection, using the XBRL format for the transmission of accounting data. Cooperation with companies and accountants will also take place in order to simplify data reporting by introducing special accounts.	2007-2008
Statistics Sweden has proposed the Government to introduce in the statistical legislation a provision to statistical authorities to firstly utilise administrative sources for the production of official statistics. Data collection from enterprises and other organisations may take place only when such data are not available.	2007
Further development of the system for electronic data collection (ELIS) to be able to offer an electronic method of reporting data in more surveys including the transmission of data files.	2007

Principle 10: Cost effectiveness	
Improvement actions	Timetable
Efficient methods built into common tools are being developed by the Lotta project. First versions will be available for implementation and as a basis for continuous improvements over time.	2007 onwards

Principle 11: Relevance	
Improvement actions	Timetable
The Council for Official Statistics will work on improving the relevance of the official statistics through projects and cooperation in its working groups as part of ongoing activities.	Ongoing
A report will be provided to the Council for Official Statistics regarding user needs on regional official statistics.	2008

Principle 12: Accuracy and Reliability	
Improvement actions	Timetable
Systems to control and obtain information on quality, including accuracy,	2008 onwards

will be introduced, mainly concerning the data collection process. Process data will be measured and analysed to a greater extent than currently.	
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Principle 13: Timeliness and Punctuality	
Improvement actions	Timetable
Implementing a process so that the rolling 8-day publishing plan available on the website is always up-to-date. This will cover official statistics published by Statistics Sweden and other statistical authorities.	2007

Principle 14: Coherence and Comparability	
Improvement actions	Timetable
Increase the number and length of time series in the National Accounts.	2008

Principle 15: Accessibility and Clarity	
Improvement actions	Timetable
Having more updated "Description of statistics" documentation available on the website in Swedish.	2007

8. ANNEX A: PROGRAMME OF THE VISIT AND LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Participating on all meetings, except on 14 March 15.30-16.30:

Hans Lindblom, Deputy Director General

Matti Niva, Chief International Officer, Director General's Office and/or Magnus Andersson, International Officer, Director General's Office

Participants from Statistics Sweden are listed in italics.

14 March	
Discussion with internal stakeholders	
09.30–10.00	Welcome and introduction of programme, organisational matters <i>Kjell Jansson, Director General</i> <i>Stina Andersson, Director, Director General's Office</i>
10.00–11.30	Meeting with management and senior staff, Principles 1, 2, 3 <i>Per Samuelson, Senior Legal Adviser, Director General's Office</i> <i>Eva Bolin, Director, Data Collection from Enterprises and Organisations Department</i> <i>Gunnel Bengtsson, Director, Macroeconomics and Prices Department</i> <i>Lars Melin, Director, Business and Labour Market Department</i>
11.30–12.00	Meeting with management and senior staff, Principle 5 <i>Per Samuelson, Senior Legal Adviser, Director General's Office</i> <i>Eva Bolin, Director, Data Collection from Enterprises and Organisations Department</i> <i>Lars Melin, Director, Business and Labour Market Department</i>
12.00–12.30	Meeting with management and senior staff, Principle 9 <i>Eva Bolin, Director, Data Collection from Enterprises and Organisations Department</i> <i>Lars Melin, Director, Business and Labour Market Department</i>
12.30–13.30	Lunch break
13.30–14.30	Interview with DG and Quality manager, Principle 4 <i>Kjell Jansson, Director General</i> <i>Mats Bergdahl, Senior Advisor Quality, Director General's Office</i>
14.30–15.00	Presentation of the LOTTA-project <i>Mats Bergdahl, Senior Advisor Quality, Director General's Office</i>
15.00–15.30	Meeting with management and senior staff, Principles 6, 15 <i>Gunnel Bengtsson, Director, Macroeconomics and Prices Department</i> <i>Cecilia Westström, Director, Information and Publishing Department</i>
15.30–16.30	Meeting with junior staff, principles 1-6, 9, 15 <i>Martin Fors, Business and Labour Market Department, Foreign Trade and Industry Indicators Unit</i> <i>Anna Gärdqvist, Population and Welfare Department, Education and Jobs Unit</i> <i>Anna-Karin Nyström, Regions and Environment Department, Environment and Tourism Statistics Unit</i> <i>Alex Teterukovskiy, Macroeconomics and Prices Department, Methods Unit</i>
16.30–17.00	Presentation of the improvement work regarding economic statistics (EMMA) <i>Gunnel Bengtsson, Director, Macroeconomics and Prices Department</i>

15 March	
Discussion with external stakeholders	
09.30–10.30	Meeting other national data producers <i>Anders Grönvall, Swedish Board of Agriculture (Statens jordbruksverk)</i> <i>Jan Östlund, Swedish Institute for Transport and Communications Analysis (Statens institut för kommunikationsanalys)</i> <i>Christina Eurén, National Mediation Office (Medlingsinstitutet)</i> <i>Caroline Hellberg, Swedish Energy Agency (Statens energimyndighet)</i>
10.30–11.30	Meeting with main users / other national data producers (Ministries, National Central Bank) <i>Jesper Hansson, Riksbank (Sveriges Riksbank)</i> <i>Henrik Braconier, Ministry of Finance (Finansdepartementet)</i> <i>Bengt Eklind, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs (Socialdepartementet)</i>
11.30–12.30	Meeting with main users (representatives from university or other)

	Sune Karlsson, Örebro University Erik Mellander, Institute for Labour Market Policy Evaluation (Institutet för arbetsmarknadspolitisk utvärdering) Olof Bäckman, Institute for Futures Studies (Institutet för Framtidsstudier)
12.30–13.30	Lunch
14.00-15.00	Meeting with media Dixie Eriksson, Nerikes Allehanda Jan Keith Hill, Information and Publishing Department, Publishing unit
15.00-16.00	Meeting with main users Mats Larsson, Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO) Galina Pokarzhevskaya, Swedish Confederation of Professional Associations (SACO) Anders Jonsson, Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (Sveriges Kommuner och Landsting) Linnea Källqvist, National Institute of Economic Research (Konjunkturinstitutet)
16.00–17:00	Meeting with representatives of respondents Andrea Femrell, Board of Swedish Industry and Commerce for Better Regulation (Näringslivets Regelnämnd) Karin Nykvist and Hans Ekholm, Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (Sveriges Kommuner och Landsting)
17.00-17.30	Further issues regarding Principle 5 <i>Per Cronholm, Head, Central IT Unit , Research and Development Department</i>

16 March	
Conclusions	
09.30–11.30	Meeting with management to sum-up and detailed review of list of improvement actions for all principles <i>Stina Andersson, Director, Director General's Office</i> <i>Gunnel Bengtsson, Director, Macroeconomics and Prices Department</i> <i>Cecilia Westström, Director, Information and Publishing Department</i> <i>Mats Bergdahl, Senior Advisor Quality, Director General's Office</i>
11.30–12.30	Meeting with top management: conclusions, recommendations and follow-up (improvement actions) <i>Stina Andersson, Director, Director General's Office</i>
12.30-13.30	Lunch hosted by Statistics Sweden for the peer team <i>Hans Lindblom, Deputy Director General</i> <i>Stina Andersson, Director, Director General's Office</i> <i>Matti Niva, Chief International Officer, Director General's Office</i> <i>Magnus Andersson</i>