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

Country visited: Lithuania

Date: 25-27 April, 2007

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Statistics Lithuania (SL) is a modern national statistical institute within the EU. The development of the statistical system of Lithuania is well integrated in the development of the European Statistical System (ESS).

SL is a real authority in statistical matters in Lithuania. This position is strongly rooted by the *Republic of Lithuania Law on Statistics* of 23 December 1999(The Law on Statistics). SL is strongly trusted. The management and staff of SL have succeeded to put into practice the intentions of the law. This means a high level of professional independence, a strong mandate for data collection and well-developed rules for statistical confidentiality. This means also that SL has a strong co-ordination role in the statistical system of Lithuania.

Statistical dissemination takes place in a modern way via the Website of SL:
LITHUANIA: Statistics Lithuania

SL has a very good service culture. The peer review team found considerable evidence with users commenting on the excellent levels of service provided to them.

Since Lithuania became a member of the EU the statistical system of Lithuania has developed dramatically. SL seems to have been able to implement its new tasks by means of gradually increasing financial, computing and human resources.

In a very systematic way Statistics Lithuania (SL) is aiming towards a quality management system of the highest international standard.

SL aims to process-orientate data-collection, data-processing and dissemination of statistics. A major effort is ongoing to establish an Integrated Statistical Information System (ISIS), which will be metadata driven.

SL is working very fast and straightforward to fulfil its ambitions. The peer review team thinks that it is very important that SL continues to involve all staff members in the on-going radical change of the organisation of work. Especially it is important that junior staff is heavily involved and well motivated as the process-oriented production system will become their future working environment.

2. INTRODUCTION

With the adoption of the European Statistics Code of Practice, the Statistical Programme (SPC) committed itself to adhering to the Code's 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 - which started in 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 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. 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 yield a report assessing compliance with the Code of Practice at indicator level and by 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: The independence of Statistics Lithuania (SL) is supported by the *Republic of Lithuania Law on Statistics* (of 23 December 1999, The Law on Statistics). The provisions of the act assure the professional independence on the level of generally valid principles. The legal basis is sound and gives the appropriate authority for SL to operate without external influences. The respect of Statistics Lithuania is considered to be continuously elevating since the country's independence in 1990. The Director General is a highest level civil servant. His position, the conditions of his/her appointment and dismissal are the same as of the heads of other highest level civil service organisations in the country. The functions, mandate and rights of SL are clearly regulated in the act. The Statistical Council is the highest level advisory body to the Director General. Its tasks and composition are also regulated in the act and the approval of the members is the authority of the government of Lithuania.

Improvement action:
To submit to the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania the amendments of the Law on Statistics and other related acts with specification of principles of European Statistics Code of Practice and strengthened coordinating role of SL.
Timing: Before the end of 2008.

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.

Fully met
Comments: The independence of SL is supported by a general principle in the *Law on Statistics* (Article IV. Point 1. – "The organisation of official statistics shall be based on the following principles: *1. objectivity and professional independence from political and other interest groups…*"). And Art. 2.1 defines "Official statistics" as "*a system of the collection and management of statistical data which reflect economic, demographic processes, social factors, public and environmental changes and are intended to meet the national needs of State and local self-government institutions and agencies, and statistical information dissemination in accordance with the work program of Official Statistics.*"

The professional independence of SL has never been questioned by any stakeholders or interest groups, within the office or outside of it. SL's activities are respected by external stakeholders as well. The most significant and several times cited example of uninfluenced operation was the case of the non-fulfilment of the Maastricht Criteria – Lithuania did not join the Euro-Zone by 1. January 2007, as the annual inflation rate was reported by SL to be 0,06 percentage-units higher than required. Although the current regulation satisfies all needs in

general, there is a planned amendment under construction on the Law on Statistics, to comply with the principles of the Code of Practice in an explicit way.

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.

Fully met

Comments: The Director General of Statistics Lithuania is appointed after an official application procedure by the Prime Minister of the country, for a non-fixed term period. The general rules of his / her appointment and the reasons for dismissal are regulated in the Civil Service Act and also apply to other highest level civil servants in the country. Although there was no general need reflected during the interviews, and the present conditions seem to comply with the principles of the Code of Practice, the previously mentioned plan to amend the Law on Statistics would contain a suggestion that the President of the Republic would be authorized to appoint the Director General in the future. This would elevate his or her position to the level of the head of the Board of Auditors or the members of the Constitutional Court. It might be useful to declare in the amended law on statistics that the Director General has the responsibility to guarantee the independent operation of the office.

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.

Fully met

Comments: The interviews with different external stakeholders made clear, that the public confidence in the operation of SL is satisfactorily high and is still growing, citing several times the already mentioned example of the case of non-introducing the Euro. Political parties and government do not interfere with SL and its outputs, and never try to influence the content or timing of the figures published by Statistics Lithuania. There were some isolated attempts to re-schedule some publications in the past years, but these attempts were strongly refused and there are no such attempts for a long time by now. The legal enforcement of the indicator can be deducted indirectly from the mentioned general principle (Article IV. Point 1.) of the Law on Statistics. There is also a subject of the planned amendment to create more direct wording.

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.

Fully met

Comments: There is no explicit definition in the Law on Statistics on the rights, duties and responsibility of the Director General concerning methods, standards and procedures. The right and responsibility to the Director General to approve release calendars and methodologies is rendered by Regulations of SL, approved by the Resolution No 285 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania of 12 March, 2001. On the basis of SL Regulations Director General approves methodologies, annual release calendars for press releases, PDF publications, pre-defined tables published on SL website and release of indicators in the output Database.

Fully met

Comments: Statistics Lithuania produces and publishes mid-term strategic plans (http://www.stat.gov.lt/uploads/1120207943_statistika_ENG_internetui.pdf) and also an annual Work Programme of Official Statistics (http://www.stat.gov.lt/lt/pages/view/?id=1157). The content of the mid-term strategy is known for partners and other producers of statistics in Lithuania. Drafts of SL strategy paper and the Work Programme of Official Statistics are being discussed at the Statistical Council meetings. The Government of the Republic of Lithuania has authorised the Director General of SL to approve the Work Programme of Official Statistics. This means that SL strategy paper and the Work Programme of Official Statistics, covering statistics produced by other institutions, are being approved by the director General of SL. Both documents are published on SL website. A report on the implementation of the Work Programme of Official Statistics is prepared by SL, which organizes discussions at the Statistical Council meeting. The report on the implementation of the Work Programme of Official Statistics is subject to approval by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania.

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

Fully met

Comments: Statistics Lithuania publishes its own publications clearly labelled as official statistics. They never contain such commentary that could be identified as political. Users and media are able to distinguish between political statements and statistical releases.

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

Fully met

Comments: Statistics Lithuania has a common written policy on how to react on criticism and misuses, but the case is very seldom. The office even checks news agencies' edited news content immediately and they interact if there is a misunderstanding or error in them. The general opinion from users and representatives of media was that the public appearance of SL is considered to be very good and that political statements usually do not misuse statistical information.

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 Lithuania has a clear and broad mandate for statistical data collection, based on the *Republic of Lithuania Law on Statistics* (Chapter II., III. and Article 17.). The law contains very detailed rules on managing statistics and also on the rights, duties and liability of respondents; however, the possible sanctions of non-response are not regulated in here, but in the Code of Administrative Offences. The law also contains regulations on how other institutions of official statistics shall prepare their surveys (authorization by the Director General of SL is explicitly required). The law also allows to collect information by phone and to use administrative sources for statistical purposes. There are already 110 such sources in use. In general there is sufficient legal support to implement the activities of official statistics in Lithuania, though penalties are not needed to issue very often. (Usually less than 10 cases per year.) The external stakeholders accept and understand the purpose of statistical data collections, but some of them consider the response burden to be too high.

Improvement action:
To submit to the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania the amendments of the Law on Statistics and other related acts rendering more powers to influence administrative sources to adapt their data for statistical needs and vesting households with more clear responsibility of response to statistical surveys.
Timing: Before the end of 2008.

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

Fully met
Comments: Chapter II. of the Law on Statistics regulates the management of official statistics. The law gives a wide mandate for SL to collect data and also indicates its coordinating role among the other bodies of official statistics in Lithuania. Their activities can only be considered as official statistics, when they are included into the annual Work Program of the Official Statistics, prepared and approved by SL.

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

Fully met
Comments: Article 12. Point 2. of the Law on Statistics defines information systems of the Bank of Lithuania, tax inspectorates, customs, education and health institutions, labour exchange, social security and municipal economy institutions, also state registers as well as data from administrative or personal documents accumulated by county governors, local self-government institutions and agencies as sources of official statistics. There are written agreements between the holder of data sources and SL to use the information on statistical purposes. The number of these is permanently growing. The further objective of SL concerning this area is to enhance

the possibility of changing the content of some administrative sources if statistical purposes require so.

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

Fully met
Comments: The Law on Statistics Chapter III. and Article 17. in Chapter V. contain sound regulation on the duties (and rights) and liability of respondents. The applicable penalties in case of an offence are contained in the Code of Administrative Offences. The Director General and other heads of institutions producing official statistics are authorized directly to start a procedure against organisations in case of an offence, however, these cases are very rare.

Principle 3: Adequacy of Resources

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

Overall assessment: Statistics Lithuania is currently continuously strengthening its position from the budgetary point of view. They obtain more and more financial resources from the state budget year after year. SL was also able to develop its IT infrastructure, by using the opportunities of international development projects. But interviews with management, staff and external stakeholders made clear, that the level of salaries in SL is generally below the level of other central administrational institutions, and even more below the private sector's offers. A significant mobility from SL to the private sector is already experienced especially in the case of the junior staff with relevant college-level education. If a raise of salaries can not be achieved, to avoid a negative effect in the mid-term it would be useful that the Human Resources Strategy would focus on balancing this impact by strengthening the individuals' participation and other motivation tools.

Improvement actions:
To improve system for training of internal trainers in SL.
Timing: To be implemented not later than 2008.

To improve workload assessment system in order to link classification on time use with budget planning.
Timing: To be implemented not later than 2009.

To make an analysis of existing staff competencies to required ones .
Timing: To be implemented not later than 2007 in statistical production divisions and 2008 in administrative and functional divisions.

To gradually replace existing statistical information system by metadata driven integrated statistical information system.
Timing: To be fully implemented not later than 2009.

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

Largely met

Comments: The maximum number of staff units approved by the Government resolution is currently 642 in SL, of which 368 in the headquarters and 274 in the Regional Statistical Offices. This number was approved by the Government Resolution in 2003.

The actual number of approved staff as of 1 January 2007 is 607.75 in full time equivalents , of which there are approximately 14 vacant positions, which are being filled in soon by a centrally managed selection procedure. The actual number of staff working in the central organisation is 347 and there are 216 members of staff working at the 5 regional offices. The composition of the staff is as follows: 69% are in "statistics divisions", 23% are in "administrative/service divisions" and 8% are in "IT divisions". 94 % of staff members have higher education than secondary education.

Survey tasks are implemented with the use of casually employed local personnel (consumer price survey is implemented with 52 enumerators for example, in general there are about 150 casually employed interviewers during the year). A majority of the currently vacant positions will be deployed at regional offices to employ the best interviewers in a full time permanent position.

There is an increasing financial background behind SL. SL seems to be able to implement its current tasks with the existing financial, computing and human resources. The human resource management strategy is focusing on the internal capacity building with training plans. SL is currently running an internal survey on staff competencies, to determine if the tasks, job profiles of staff members are in balance with their educational level and abilities.

There is a suspected tension between the relatively lower expectancies in tasks at regional offices and the relatively high educational level of the staff of these units. Besides, future development plans are leading logically to an expected decrease in human resource needs of elementary data capture tasks, but to achieve this it would require even more investment in infrastructure.

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:

In a very systematic way Statistics Lithuania (SL) is aiming towards a quality management system of the highest international standard. The quality framework of Statistics Lithuania includes from the EU level the Quality Declaration of the European Statistical System, LEG Recommendations, the European Statistics Code of Practice and EU Legislation and from the national level the Strategy of Statistics Lithuania as well as user requirements and expectations. At the end of 2007 SL plans for an independent certification audit of the SL Quality Management System against ISO 9001:2000.

Within the Director General's office there is a post as chief specialist on quality management.

The users of official statistics in Lithuania are on the whole satisfied with the quality work conducted by SL .

Improvement actions:

To fully implement automated recording of process variables in all statistical surveys.
Timing: To be fully implemented before the end of 2007.

To test previously approved questionnaires according to the approved procedures, which are currently applied for new questionnaires.
Timing: To be fully implemented before the end of 2010.

To develop recommendations how to deal with quality trade-offs.
Timing: The recommendations will be decided on not later than 2009.

To introduce internal statistical audits.
Timing: From 2008.

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

Largely met

Comments: Quality is monitored for all quality components and for most of the statistical outputs. Quality reports are published for 70 percent of the statistical products covering a wide range of official statistics. Quality reports for all statistical products will be published in the Lithuanian language before the end of 2007 and in the English language before the end of 2008.

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

Largely met

Comments: SL aims towards a process-orientation of its data-entry, processing and dissemination systems. Survey software is to automatically record quality characteristics on data entry and processing. A regular monitoring of performance of the Regional Statistical Offices is in place. Systematic self-assessment surveys of survey-managers have started from 2007 based on the DESAP checklist. Regular user satisfaction surveys are conducted since 2005 covering general users, web users and specific user groups. The user satisfaction surveys – some outsourced to private opinion institutes - ask for opinions on the following

subjects: visibility and image perception, quality of official statistics, internet accessibility, statistical publications, monitoring of user-requests, alert-me services, library-bookshop in SL head-office and visitors' corners in Regional statistical offices.

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.

Largely met
Comments: Procedures on Planning and monitoring, approved by the Director General, and the Handbook on Statistics production process and its documentation sets rules for survey planning. Systematic user satisfaction surveys provide information about quality priorities set by users. Quality issues are regularly discussed at Senior Management Meetings.

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.

Fully met
Comments: The Handbook on Statistics production process and its documentation sets rules for survey planning. The handbook is supported by procedures approved by the Director General on questionnaire testing and approval, editing, imputation, revisions, rules for the preparation and dissemination of statistical information.

A short description of the SL compliance with the ES Code of Practice as well as the full Statistics Lithuania ES Code of Practice Self Assessment Questionnaire is published on the website of Statistics Lithuania.

There are two types of trainings on quality matters systematically organised by Statistics Lithuania: Introductory training for new employees (once per quarter) and internal training for SL staff including staff at the Regional Statistical Offices (1-2 times per year).

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

Partly met
Comments: A regular review of statistical results - based on DESAP - is performed by survey managers. The most important survey results are discussed at Management Board meetings. Via the quality reporting required by EU legislation there is a regular and thorough review of some of the key statistical products. IMF conducted a ROSC in Lithuania in 2002 covering national accounts, price statistics, household surveys on economic matters, structural business statistics as well as statistics produced by the Bank of Lithuania and the Ministry of Finance.

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 well protected by law and by internal regulations.

Improvement actions:
To submit to the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania the amendments of the Law on Statistics improving provisions to access individual data for research purposes.
Timing: Before the end of 2008.

To update documentation on data security policy.
Timing: Ready before the end of 2007.

To update and approve Manual on Statistical Disclosure Control based on Eurostat Manual on Statistical Disclosure Control (CENEX SDC).
Timing: To be approved not later than 2007.

Indicator 5.1 Statistical confidentiality is guaranteed in law.

Fully met
Comments: The Republic of Lithuania Law of Statistics determines the definition of confidential data, defines the exceptions of confidentiality, sets data dissemination measures and determines obligations of staff working with confidential data. Another legal act referring to data confidentiality is the Law on Legal Protection of Personal Data of the Republic of Lithuania. At the moment, other producers of official statistics have mentioned that the Law of Statistics might be interpreted – on confidential data - too strict; the scheduled revision of the Law on Statistics will therefore also include an amendment (with clarifications) of the point on 'confidential data', which will inter alia be discussed in the Statistical Council.

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

Fully met
Comments: All staff is required to sign a legal confidentiality commitment on appointment. During the discussion with junior staff, all of them confirmed that – upon appointment – they have been informed on the legislation on statistical confidentiality and signed a confidentiality commitment form.

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

Fully met
Comments: The Law on Statistics holds persons breaching the law 'liable'. Precise penalties and procedures for the application of the fine are laid down in the Code of Administrative Offences. During our discussions with users and respondents, all knew about the legal

provisions and were very confident in the proper treatment of confidential data by Statistics Lithuania. Apparently no complaint – with respect to disclosure of statistical information - has ever been raised or registered so there is no documentation on any penalty given.

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.

Largely met

Comments: The Rules and regulations for data acknowledgement as confidential one and its usage' are published on the website; these rules are complemented by other specific internal regulations such as the 'Rules for data copies exploitation and storage'. A more comprehensive and detailed Internal Regulation on 'Data security policy outline' is actually being prepared (and will soon be submitted for signature to the Director General). This Regulation will bring together all existing internal Rules and will foresee some additional requirements such as verification checks on permanent staff, user training on data protection issues and procedures for responding to security incidents.

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

Largely met

Comments: A set of internal regulations is in place on organisational and technological measures ensuring protection of statistical data. A proposed new Internal Regulation on 'Data security policy outline' (see comments under indicator 5.4) will also cover more details on IT and physical and environmental security (such as on remote access).

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

Fully met

Comments: Strict conditions apply for providing access to third parties to micro-data, whereby third parties have to sign a contract and data can only be submitted to these third parties in such a way that the respondent cannot be identified directly or indirectly. Confidential statistical data 'for scientific purposes' could be provided to scientific institutions – also on a contract basis. In this case micro-data shall be submitted (to these scientific institutions) so that it is impossible to directly identify respondents. The rules are available on the website; there is no example of a 'contract'.

Statistics Lithuania is also working on the establishment of a 'secure area' on its premises where access could be given – on specific conditions - to researchers.

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: Impartiality and objectivity are required by the Statistical Law. The requirement for equity of access to data is decided on by the Director General. Users are confident that SL is trusted in these respects.

Improvements actions:
To publish English summaries on statistical methods used for production of all statistical outputs.
Timing: To be fully implemented not later than 2008.

To create database for recording and analysis of discovered errors (on the internal website).
Timing: To be implemented not later than 2008.

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

Fully met
Comments: Lithuanian law on Statistics, Article 4. General Principles of the Organisation of Statistical Work:
"The organisation of official statistics shall be based on the following principles:
      1) objectivity and professional independence from political and other interest groups;
      2) necessity and suitability of statistical indicators to assess economic and
          social situation and dynamics;
      3) use of statistical data for statistical purposes only;
      4) confidentiality of statistical data;
      5) transparency of methods and methodologies applied in statistical surveys;
      6) comparability of statistical data;
      7) compliance with international classifications and standards in accordance with which statistical data are managed;
      8) compatibility of statistical methodologies."

Survey methodologies (including questionnaires) have to get approval from the Methodological Committee, established by the Director General.
The methodologies of statistical surveys are discussed in inter-institutional working groups and committees.

Users highlighted objectivity as a critical value that SL achieved.

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

Fully met
Comments: See indicator 6.1

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

Fully met

Comments: Procedures on correction of errors in published statistical information are defined in the Regulations of Preparation and Dissemination of Statistical Information approved by the Director General. The main principle is that errors detected in the released statistical information are corrected and users are informed about the detected errors. News agencies are immediately contacted to prevent misinterpretation of released data and spread thereof into the media.

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

Largely met

Comments: All statistical publications contain a brief description of methods used in the survey. Reports on methodologies of statistical surveys, approved by the Methodological Committee and the Director General, are published in Lithuanian on the website of Statistics Lithuania. User-oriented brief quality reports are being introduced and disseminated on the website of Statistics Lithuania. At the moment about 100 such quality reports are published, 30 of them in English. About the same number of brief user-oriented reports on survey methodology are published on the website of Statistics Lithuania.

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

Fully met

Comments: Advance annual release calendars for Press releases, PDF publications, Pre-defined tables and Release of indicators in the Output Database are approved by the Director General. Press releases and PDF publications are released at 11 a.m. on the website. The annual release calendars are published on the website and are accessible to all users.

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.

Fully met

Comments: Management of embargo and leaks is regulated in the Regulations of Preparation and Dissemination of Statistical Information approved by the Director General.

All users have equal rights to receive statistical information. Statistical information is announced to all users at one time. The advance receipt of statistical information under embargo could be applied only in case it is required by the representatives of the media when the production cycle of their monthly / weekly publications does not coincide with the officially established date of release of statistical information. This restricted rule is made public. In case of advance receipt of statistical information, an agreement with the concrete media

representatives is signed. In case the obligation not to disseminate the statistical information received in advance prior to the officially established publishing date is violated, the entity that has violated the obligation is deprived of the right to receive the statistical information in advance in the future.

In case of pre-schedule release of statistical information, the procedures of release of statistical information are revised and liability is applied.

So far no cases of release under embargo or leak of statistical information have taken place.

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

Fully met
Comments: Objectivity and impartiality are embedded in the Law on Statistics (see indicator 6.1). Detailed procedures are defined by the Regulations of Preparation and Dissemination of Statistical Information approved by the Director General. All media releases are signed off by the Director General which provides a level of consistency/quality assurance in this area.

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 dissemination of statistical data by Statistics Lithuania - through its website and through paper publications - is clear and in most cases presented in a user-friendly form. All statistical areas are published in the database of indicators, but the statistical information published within the areas will be further expanded. SL has recently updated its Regulations on the preparation and dissemination of statistical information (now harmonised with the CoP principles) and its recommendations for publications, press releases and press conferences. The dissemination service is ready to provide tailor-made replies to specific requests. Regular user satisfaction surveys are conducted (see indicator 4.2) and Website usability tests are carried out on topical issues. A methodology is being prepared for the calculation of a User satisfaction index. SL is also organising training courses for different user groups, such as journalists. Statistical tables are accompanied by metadata; a major effort is ongoing to establish an Integrated Statistical Information System (ISIS), which will be metadata driven and will further improve the statistical output data base.

Improvement actions:
To publish English summaries on statistical methods used for production of all statistical outputs.
Timing: To be fully implemented not later than 2008.

To publish the remaining user-oriented quality reports on SL website in Lithuanian (according to approved time table) and in English.
Timing: To be fully implemented in Lithuanian during 2007 and in English during 2008.

To investigate possibilities on establishment of common portal for official statistics.
Timing: The investigation will be ready during 2009.

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

Largely met

Comments: The dissemination of statistics – through the website of Statistics Lithuania and through paper publications - is clear and well structured. Internal rules exist for the preparation and dissemination of publications and of the dissemination of statistical information via internet; regular training is given to staff. Feedback from users is regularly monitored via different types of internet surveys and a customers' database is being established. Discussions with data users showed that users (academia, media..) are in general pleased with the way data are being disseminated and also with the assistance given when more information is required. In a few cases, users asked to disseminate more 'expert' analysis and more statistics in the social domain. Statistics Lithuania is in the process of further improving its website.

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

Fully met

Comments: More than 75 % of the statistics produced by Statistics Lithuania is available through its website and efforts are ongoing to further raise this figure. Paper publications are still available for all statistical outputs. The dissemination service is keen to provide information and further assistance to users where possible. There is the possibility for users to subscribe to an 'alert me' service. Training is given to groups of users on various statistical literacy issues.

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

Fully met

Comments: Customers can ask for a 'tailor-made' analysis; there are internal rules available for dealing with such requests and there is also a charging policy available. These specific analyses are not automatically made public as such, but other users could obtain these analyses when they ask for it.

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

Fully met

Comments: See indicator 5.6. In order to obtain statistical micro-data, the research organisations have to sign a contract and a written agreement with a commitment that micro-data will only be used for research purposes.

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

Partly met

Comments: Metadata is available through the reports on methodology in the national language and the 'user-oriented quality reports' in the national language and - for a part of them – in English (see indicator 6.4). Through the ISIS project, metadata will be better integrated in the dissemination via the (new) website.

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.

Largely met

Comments: See indicator 4.1. Comments of users are discussed in a User-services quality upgrading Working Group and the feedback is used to improve metadata/methodology where possible. Methodologies and quality reports are published on the website. Publications include also short descriptions of statistical production processes and of quality issues. For users, training courses are organised on statistical literacy issues.

4. CO-ORDINATION ROLE OF THE NATIONAL STATISTICAL INSTITUTE

In addition to Statistics Lithuania, there are more than 20 other institutions that produce official statistics in Lithuania. All these producers are covered by the Law on Statistics. Although the Law on Statistics does not as such assign a role of overall coordination of all official statistics to Statistics Lithuania, the specific tasks, functions and rights of Statistics Lithuania (as laid down in the Law on Statistics and in a specific Regulation) include inter alia its coordination role for statistical surveys of other institutions and on the Work Programme of Official Statistics. The other producers of official statistics are also part of the Statistical Council to Statistics Lithuania, which focuses on analysing key issues of organising statistics and methodology (including programming and main outcomes of statistical surveys).

In 2006, Statistics Lithuania has established an inter-institutional Working Group on the implementation of the European Code of Practice, which brings together representatives of other institutions which are responsible for the management of European Statistics.

Also with respect to dissemination, Statistics Lithuania intends to better inform users on statistics from other producers. The possibilities to establish a common Portal for official statistics will be investigated which will include direct access to statistical databases from all producers of official statistics.

5. GOOD PRACTICES TO BE HIGHLIGHTED

SL uses the national Law of Statistics to implement the principles of European Statistics Code of Practice in Lithuania.

SL is planning to submit to the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania before the end of 2007 amendments of the Law on Statistics and other related acts with specification of principles of European Statistics Code of Practice.

SL has a very systematic approach to quality management.

The quality framework of Statistics Lithuania includes from the EU level the Quality Declaration of the European Statistical System, LEG Recommendations, the European Statistics Code of Practice and EU Legislation and from the national level the Strategy of Statistics Lithuania as well as user requirements and expectations. Based on this quality framework SL has implemented/is developing a quality management system which includes:
- a process-orientation of its data-entry, processing and dissemination systems
- survey software which will automatically record quality characteristics on data entry and processing.
- a regular monitoring of performance of the Regional Statistical Offices
- systematic self-assessment surveys of survey-managers based on the DESAP checklist.
- regular user satisfaction surveys

The user satisfaction surveys cover general users, web users and specific user groups. The surveys – some outsourced to private opinion institutes - ask for opinions on the following subjects: visibility and image perception, quality of official statistics, internet accessibility, statistical publications, monitoring of user-requests, alert-me services, library-bookshop in SL head-office and visitors' corners in Regional statistical offices.

At the end of 2007 SL plans for an independent certification audit of the SL Quality Management System against ISO 9001:2000.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PEER REVIEW TEAM

The peer review team recommends that the improvement actions presented in connection to each principle should be implemented. This should take place in accordance with the timetables. A full list of the improvement actions is presented in the next chapter.

SL is working very fast and straightforward to fulfil its ambition to process-orientation of data-collection, data-processing and dissemination of statistics. The peer review team thinks that it is very important that SL continues to involve all staff members in this radical change of the organisation of work. Especially it is important that junior staff is heavily involved. The process-oriented production system will become their future working environment so it is very important that the junior staff is aware of and committed to the change.

7. LIST OF IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS BY PRINCIPLE OF THE EUROPEAN STATISTICS CODE OF PRACTICE

Statistics Lithuania together with the peer review team agreed on the following improvement actions, which are mainly based on actions foreseen in self-assessment of SL, recommendations of peer review team and targeted future developments foreseen for the next strategic period 2008-2012 of SL (these actions presented in italic).

Principle 1: Professional Independence

Improvement actions	Timetable
✸ 1. To submit to the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania the amendments of the Law on Statistics and other related acts with specification of principles of	Before the end of 2008.

Principle 1: Professional Independence

Improvement actions	Timetable
European Statistics Code of Practice and strengthened coordinating role of SL.	

Principle 2: Mandate for Data Collection

Improvement actions	Timetable
✱ See improvement action 1 - To submit to the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania the amendments of the Law on Statistics and other related acts rendering more powers to influence administrative sources to adapt their data for statistical needs and vesting households with more clear responsibility of response to statistical surveys.	Before the end of 2008.

Principle 3: Adequacy of Resources

Improvement actions	Timetable
✱ 2. To improve system for training of internal trainers in SL.	To be implemented not later than 2008.
✱ 3. To improve workload assessment system in order to link classification on time use with budget planning.	To be implemented not later than 2009.
✱ 4. To make an analysis of existing staff competencies to required ones in	To be implemented not later than
- statistical production divisions,	2007
- administrative and functional divisions	2008
✱ 5. To gradually replace existing statistical information system by metadata driven integrated statistical information system.	To be fully implemented not later than 2009.

Principle 4: Quality commitment

Improvement actions	Timetable
✱ 6. To fully implement automated recording of process variables in all statistical surveys.	To be fully implemented before the end of 2007.
✱ 7. To test previously approved questionnaires according to the approved procedures, which are currently applied for new questionnaires.	To be fully implemented before the end of 2010.
✱ 8. To develop recommendations how to deal with quality trade-offs.	The recommendations will be decided on not later than 2009.
✱ 9. To introduce internal statistical audits.	From 2008.

Principle 5: Statistical Confidentiality

Improvement actions	Timetable
✱ See improvement action 1-To submit to the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania the amendments of the Law on Statistics improving provisions to access individual data for research purposes.	Before the end of 2008.
✱ 10. To update documentation on data security policy.	Ready before the end of 2007.
✱ 11. To update and approve Manual on Statistical Disclosure Control based on Eurostat Manual on Statistical Disclosure Control (CENEX SDC).	To be approved not later than 2007.

Principle 6: Impartiality and objectivity

Improvement actions	Timetable
✱12. To publish English summaries on statistical methods used for production of all statistical outputs.	To be fully implemented not later than 2008.
✱ 13. To create database for recording and analysis of discovered errors (on the internal website).	To be implemented not later than 2008.

Principle 7: Sound Methodology

Improvement actions	Timetable
✱ See improvement actions 9.	

Principle 8: Appropriate Statistical Procedures

Improvement actions	Timetable
✸ See improvement actions 6-7 and 9.	
✸ 14. To publish brief information on revision procedures for all indicators	To be implemented during 2007 according to Revisions calendar.
✸15. To implement e-questionnaires in the remaining business statistical surveys (with few exceptions, caused by particularity of the surveys).	To be fully implemented during 2009.

Principle 9: Non-Excessive burden on respondents

Improvement actions	Timetable
✸See improvement action 1-To submit to the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania the amendments of the Law on Statistics forbidding collecting statistical data, if corresponding data are available in administrative sources and including the right to exchange confidential data between institutions producing official statistics.	Before the end of 2008.
✸See improvement action 7 and 15.	
✸*16. To use developed response burden indicator as performance indicator.*	*To be implemented during 2009.*
✸*17. To develop an IT system allowing direct data extract from business accounting systems.*	*The implementation will start during 2011.*

Principle 10: Cost Effectiveness

Improvement actions	Timetable
✸See improvement actions 3, 5 and 15.	
✸ *18. To develop and implement Enterprise Resource Management system.*	*To be implemented during 2008.*
✸*19. To prepare methodological framework for cost benefit analysis.*	*Ready 2009.*

Principle 11: Relevance

Improvement actions	Timetable
✸ See improvement action 1-To submit to the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania the amendments of the Law on Statistics defining users' rights.	Before the end of 2008.
✸20. To prepare methodology for calculation of the User satisfaction index.	Ready 2007.

Principle 12: Accuracy and Reliability

Improvement actions	Timetable
✸See improvement action 8.	
✸21. To develop general rules for setting criteria for accuracy assessment.	Ready 2007.
✸*22. To expand quality report template in terms of presentation of more exhaustive information on accuracy.*	*To be implemented during 2009.*

Principle 13: Timeliness and Punctuality

Improvement actions	Timetable
✸See improvement action 8.	

Principle 14: Coherence and Comparability

Improvement actions	Timetable
✸See improvement action 22 - *To expand quality report template in terms of presentation of more exhaustive information on coherence and comparability.*	*To be implemented during 2009.*
✸24. To elaborate procedure for coherence monitoring and documentation.	Ready 2007.
✸25. To implement coherence monitoring for all statistical outputs.	To be fully implemented from 2010.

Principle 15: Accessibility and clarity

Improvement actions	Timetable

Principle 15: Accessibility and clarity

Improvement actions	Timetable
✸See improvement action 12.	
✸ 26. To publish the remaining user-oriented quality reports on SL website	To be fully implemented
- in Lithuanian (according to approved time table)	2007
- in English	2008
✸*27. To investigate possibilities on establishment of common portal for official statistics.*	*The investigation will be ready during 2009.*

8. ANNEX A: PROGRAMME OF THE VISIT

PEER REVIEW PROGRAMME
25-27 April, 2007

25 April, Discussions with staff of Statistics Lithuania (SL)

9.00 – 9.30	Welcome and introduction of programme, organisational matters	A. Šemeta V. Lapėnienė D. Ambrozaitienė J. Markelevičius V. Norkus D. Jurelevičienė B. Kaminskienė D. Norkevičienė
9.30 – 10.00	Strategy of Statistics Lithuania	A. Šemeta V. Lapėnienė D. Ambrozaitienė J. Markelevičius V. Norkus D. Jurelevičienė B. Kaminskienė
10.00 – 10.15	Coffee break	
10.15 – 11.45	Meeting with top management and senior staff, Principle 1-3	A. Šemeta A. Gibaitė-Kudžmienė B. Liberiene A. Miškinienė D. Norkevičienė S. Raila R. Rimša S. Stonienė I. Žibūdienė D. Jurelevičienė
11.45 – 12.45	Lunch	
12.45– 13.15	Meeting with the Heads of Regional statistical offices	V. Aukselis J. Budreikienė A. Deinoravičius J. Liutkus A. Gibaitė-Kudžmienė D. Jurelevičienė
13.15 – 14.30	Presentation by SL: Quality management system in SL Interview with DG, Quality manager and Quality working group, Principle 4	A. Šemeta D. Jurelevičienė B. Kaminskienė V. Kunigėlienė D. Norkevičienė
14.30 – 14.45	Coffee break	

14.45 – 15.15	Meeting with management and senior staff, Principle 5	V. Norkus M. Solovjov I. Žibūdienė B. Liberiene D. Norkevičienė D. Jurelevičienė
15.15 – 16.15	Meeting with management and senior staff, Principles 6, 15	J. Markelevičius B. Kaminskienė B. Liberienė A. Miškinienė D. Norkevičienė M. Solovjov D. Jurelevičienė
16.15– 17.00	Meeting with junior staff, principles 1-6, 15	I. Baltramaitytė N. Fursova A. Kaplanovskis J. Kelmelytė E. Onichovska T. Paulauskas A. Pereskokova G. Ramšaitė J. Rukšėnaitė J. Sluka R. Tumėnienė L. Veličkienė V. Virketytė

26 April, Discussions with external stakeholders

9.00 – 10.00	Meeting with members of Interinstitutional working group on Implementation of European Statistics Code of Practice	R. Baravykas R. Gaidelytė A. Jarockytė A. Jonaitis D. Krisiulevičienė I. Kuželevičienė S. Netikšaitė R. Ramonas A. Savilionis J. Skeberdienė V. Šapolaitė R. Zubkevičiūtė D. Jurelevičienė A. Gibaitė-Kudžmienė D. Norkevičienė
10.00 – 10.15	Coffee break	
10.15 – 11.15	Meeting with the members of Statistical Council representing users from public administration institutions	V. Burokas A. Gaižauskienė E. Pranckevičius R. J. Vaicenavičius A. Gibaitė-Kudžmienė D. Jurelevičienė D. Norkevičienė

11.15 – 12.00	Meeting with representatives from the Bank of Lithuania	A. Jakaitienė E. Tvarijonavičiūtė A. Vėberis D. Jurelevičienė D. Norkevičienė
12.00 – 13.00	Lunch	
13.00 – 14.00	Meeting with representatives from academic community and analysts	J. Čičinskas G. Nausėda V. Paulauskas A. Pocius J. Rojaka V. Stankūnienė V. Tauraitė D. Jurelevičienė D. Norkevičienė
14.00 – 15.00	Meeting with media	N. Adomaitis E. Gurskis K. Pranckevičius G. Putelytė A. Račas D. Ručinskas M. Šeputytė D. Jurelevičienė D. Norkevičienė
15.00 – 15.15	Coffee break	
15.15 – 16.15	Meeting with representatives of respondents	D. Kiselienė V. Šarka D. Jurelevičienė

27 April, Conclusions

9.00 – 11.00	Meeting with senior staff to sum-up and detailed review of list of improvement actions for all principles	D. Jurelevičienė A. Gibaitė- Kudžmienė B. Kaminskienė V. Kunigėlienė B. Liberiene A. Miškinienė D. Norkevičienė S. Raila M. Solovjov
11.00 – 11.15	Coffee break	
11.15 – 13.15	Meeting with top management: conclusions, recommendations and follow-up (improvement actions)	A. Šemeta V. Lapėnienė D. Ambrozaitienė J. Markelevičius V. Norkus D. Jurelevičienė D. Norkevičienė
13.15 – 15.00	Lunch	

9. ANNEX B: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Expert team	
Staffan Wahlström	Statistics Sweden (Chair)
József Kárpáti	CSO Hungary
Marleen De Smedt	Eurostat
Statistics Lithuania	
Algirdas Gediminas Šemeta	Director General
Vilija Lapėnienė	First Deputy Director General
Dalia Ambrozaitienė	Deputy Director General
Jonas Markelevičius	Deputy Director General
Vygandas Norkus	Deputy Director General
Inga Baltramaitytė	Senior specialist, Methodology and Quality division
Aldona Gibaitė - Kudžmienė	Head, Programs of Official Statistics division
Nadiežda Fursova	Chief specialist, Methodology and Quality division
Daiva Jurelevičienė	Chief specialist on quality management issues
Aleksandras Kaplanovskis	Senior specialist, Energy Statistics division
Bronislava Kaminskienė	Head, Methodology and Quality division
Jūratė Kelmelytė	Chief specialist, Price Statistics division
Violeta Kunigėlienė	Head, Industry Statistics division
Birutė Liberienė	Head, Dissemination of Statistical Information division
Audronė Miškinienė	Head, Public Relations division
Daiva Norkevičienė	Head, European Affairs and International Cooperation division
Edita Onichovska	Senior specialist, Demographic Statistics division
Tomas Paulauskas	Senior specialist, National Accounts division
Anastasija Pereskokova	Senior specialist, Foreign Trade Statistics Division
Sigitas Raila	Head, Economic and Finance division
Gabija Ramšaitė	Chief specialist, European Affairs and International Cooperation division
Raimondas Rimša	Head, Information Systems Maintenance division
Jurga Rukšėnaitė	Senior specialist, Methodology and Quality division
Jurijus Sluka	Senior specialist, National Accounts division
Michail Solovjov	Deputy Head, Information Systems Maintenance division
Simona Stonienė	Head, Personnel division
Renata Tumėnienė	Chief specialist, Enterprise Statistics division
Laura Veličkienė	Senior specialist, Programs of Official Statistics division
Vaiva Virketytė	Chief specialist, Education and Culture Statistics division
Irida Žibūdienė	Head, Legal division
Heads of regional statistical offices of SL	
Virgilijus Aukselis	Head, Vilnius Regional Statistical Office
Julija Budreikienė	Head, Panevėžys Regional Statistical Office
Algirdas Deinoravičius	Head, Šiauliai Regional Statistical Office
Juozas Liutkus	Head, Kaunas Regional Statistical Office

Members, of interinstitutional working group on implementation of European Statistics Code of practice	
Ramunas Baravykas	Insurance Supervisory Commission
Audronė Jarockytė	Customs department
Arūnas Jonaitis	Fishery department
Rita Gaidelytė	Lithuanian Health Information Centre
Danutė Krisiulevičienė	Labour Medicine Centre of Institute of Hygiene
Ivona Kušelevičienė	Ministry of Finance
Sandra Netikšaitė	Environment protection agency
Romas Ramonas	State Border Guard Service
Aleksandras Savilionis	Agriculture and Food Market Information Centre
Jolita Skeberdienė	Lithuanian Securities Commission
Vaida Šapolaitė	Lithuanian Institute of Agrarian Economics
Rita Zubkevičiūtė	State Labour Inspectorate
Journalists:	
Nerijus Adomaitis	News agency REUTERS
Edmundas Gurskis	Weekly "Savivaldybių žinios"
Kęstutis Pranckevičius	Regional media
Giedrė Putelytė	Weekly "Veidas"
Artūras Račas	News agency BNS
Dainius Ručinskas	News agency ELTA
Milda Šeputytė	Agency BLOOMBERG News
Scientists and analysts	
Jonas Čičinskas	Vilnius University
Gitanas Nausėda	SEB Vilniaus Bankas
Vygantas Paulauskas	Vilnius University
Arūnas Pocius	Labour and Social Research Institute
Jekaterina Rojaka	AB DnB NORD Bank
Vlada Stankūnienė	Institute for Social Research
Vilija Tauraitė	SEB Vilniaus Bankas
Respondents	
Dalia Kiselienė	Lithuanian Business Employers' Confederation
Vaidotas Šarka	Association of Construction Organizations