

**Members of the Peer review team:**

Richard Laux	Office for National Statistics, UK (Chair)
Daiva Norkevičienė	Statistics Lithuania
Rainer Muthmann	Eurostat

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

**Country visited: Republic of Slovenia**

**Date: 14 -16 May 2007**

10 September 2007

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## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia (SORS) has, like the country itself, made enormous strides in recent years. It is a forward thinking National Statistical Institute, deliberately and effectively linking its planning and development within the context of the European Union.

The Office benefits from a powerful legal basis – in particular, a strong statistical law that guarantees professional independence, safeguards confidentiality, and enables access to administrative/register data owned by other public sector institutions. This latter feature, closely and deliberately modelled on the Nordic countries and facilitated by the use of unique identification numbers for both people and businesses, helps it reduce the data collection burden imposed upon Slovenian businesses. SORS is overseen by a Statistical Council, currently chaired by a senior Parliamentarian. The Council provides advice to the executive function of the Office, and reinforces the Office's independence.

As Slovenia's NSI, SORS is responsible for the majority of European Statistics. It has well-defined and effective links with those other government agencies (and the Bank of Slovenia) which produce European Statistics in their own domains, and has begun work with these Authorised Producers in relation to the implementation of European Statistics Code of Practice (CoP).

The Office has strong and energetic leadership, and the DG (currently Ms Irena Križman) uses her position and status to reinforce the authority of the Office. SORS currently has a relatively flat organisational structure which has helped the Office's leaders to implement their vision quickly. 'Quality' is considered the responsibility of all production areas, and accordingly the Office's leadership has deliberately not created a 'quality cell' (although the General Methodology and Standards Sector is responsible for co-ordinating quality-related activities); neither has SORS adopted an overarching quality approach such as TQM.

Links with users, for example through Slovenia's statistical advisory committee system, are well-established and well-regarded. The media are supportive of the Office. They and other specialist users are content with the quality of SORS' data. However it is clear that quality is not documented to the standards explicit in the CoP. This will be a challenge for the Office, and would seem to require dedicated resource. However, the Slovenian government's ongoing policy of reducing the size of the public sector means that SORS can expect to lose about 1% of its resources – equivalent to 3 or 4 posts – a year for the foreseeable future runs counter to the need to tackle quality more systematically. Otherwise the Office is compliant with most indicators of the CoP.

## 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 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: An effective National Statistics Act ensures the professional independence of the Statistics Office and (in particular) the position of the Director General. The review team saw no evidence or suggestion of inappropriate political interference; on the contrary there was evidence that statistics professionals had an important input to political decision making (such as setting the budget).

*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: **Fully met.**

Comments:

The Statistics Act (available via [http://www.stat.si/doc/drzstat/ZAKON\\_O\\_DSTA\\_ENG.PDF](http://www.stat.si/doc/drzstat/ZAKON_O_DSTA_ENG.PDF)) asserts that 'National Statistics is a professionally independent activity.....' - Article 1. The Statistics Office is a 'professionally independent government agency' - Article 3. The professional tasks of the Office – including production and dissemination – are set out in Article 7.

*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 of SORS is a statutory post - Article 8 of the Statistics Act. She is a member of the Government Committee for the Economy. Article 18 of the Statistics Act provides that the Office 'is directly involved in the preparation and harmonisation of the national budget'. She is responsible to the Prime Minister, and has access to him.

*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: There was no evidence of any Ministerial input to the statistical production or dissemination processes. The Statistics Act unambiguously defines these matters as being "professional tasks" - see Article 7, for example.

*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: **Fully met.**

Comments: Responsibility for statistical decision making rests firmly with the Director General. Article 11 of the Statistics Act says that 'nobody shall be entitled to give to the Director General of the Office binding instructions regarding the professional and methodological issues related to operations of national statistics.....'

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

Assessment: **Fully met.**

Comments: The Director General of SORS is responsible for the implementation of the Medium Term programme of statistical activity in Slovenia, including co-ordinating the activities of other Authorised Producers of Statistics.

Article 23 of the Statistics Act stipulates the need for this Medium Term Work Programme - which is issued by the Director General, and has a soft legal status within Slovenia - and coherent Annual Programmes. Article 25 of the Act sets out the arrangements for reporting progress against both the medium term and annual programmes. All such reports are published.

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

Assessment: **Fully met.**

Comments: Statistics releases are identifiable by logo and design, and are free-standing. The examples we saw - relating to labour market statistics [http://www.stat.si/eng/novica\\_prikazi.aspx?id=893](http://www.stat.si/eng/novica_prikazi.aspx?id=893) - are fully consistent with international best practice.

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

Assessment: **Fully met.**

Comments: Article 6 of the Statistics Act gives the Office an obligation to "respond in the event of unintentional or deliberate wrongful use of statistics...." A recent example of such a response, relating to a press article which drew inappropriate conclusions because it failed to appreciate that certain R&D figures were of provisional status, was described by SORS management.

Complementing this approach, a new Media Act in Slovenia requires that individuals or institutions have the right of reply, in a format of equivalent status and positioning to the original article. The Statistical Office uses this legal provision.

## **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: The Statistics Act gives SORS a clear and unambiguous mandate for data collection. SORS has, also, a clear legal mandate and option to use administrative sources and this opportunity has been increasingly used over the last years. By law, SORS has the possibility to compel response to statistical surveys, but this option has not been used.

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

Assessment: **Fully met**

Comments: SORS has a strong, broad mandate for data collection set out in the Statistics Act. (Article 34 “the Office shall have the right to collect data from all existing sources...” and “the Office may collect data..... by using the methods and technical means of remote sensing and other means and methods...”)

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

Assessment: **Fully met**

Comments: SORS has full legal cover for the use of administrative data (Statistics Act, Article 32 asserts this right and conditions) and uses this possibility as much as is feasible. SORS works closely with administrative data providers to ensure the quality of final statistical output. The providers of data from administrative sources expressed high degrees of satisfaction about their cooperation with SORS.

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

Assessment: **Largely met**

Comments: The Statistics Act includes a Chapter on Penalty Provisions (Article 54) which obliges reporting units to report to national statistics and foresees fines in case of violation of such an obligation.

The response rates to SORS' major statistical surveys are high, but are on a declining trend. SORS has not yet taken a respondent (e.g. an enterprise) to court in order to compel a response, because the legal process is slow. Instead SORS has sought to take 'positive' actions to convince respondents to reply – such as: the simplification of questionnaires; direct telephone contacts; and giving better feedback to respondents by sending them the survey results (plus analysis). If all these proactive actions do not result in stopping the trend of declining response rates SORS would consider taking legal action to compel response.

### Principle 3: Adequacy of Resources

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

Overall assessment: For smaller statistical offices, like SORS, the adequacy of human resources (in overall terms and in structure) is of crucial importance. SORS' current work load seems to be very high; in addition, important tasks (like documenting quality processes) are not being done satisfactorily because of the lack of personnel. Concerns have been expressed about whether the structure of human resources is appropriate in the face of future challenges (data requests under EU legal cover, electronic reporting, shared/integrated information systems, new requests from cross-cutting issues etc).

A general significant threat to SORS improvement actions on quality is the policy of the Slovenian government to reduce steadily the size of the public sector (1 % human resources less every year equal to 3 or 4 posts).

The financial resources, although stretched, seemed to meet the needs.

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

Assessment: **Largely met**

Comments: SORS staff are strongly committed to its tasks, and seem capable of providing the statistical output (at a level of quality acceptable to users) resulting from current European statistical needs. They are not, however, undertaking certain important 'meta' tasks, like documenting quality monitoring processes. For the future, the risk that human resources will not be sufficient in magnitude and structure is perceived as even higher than at present.

Their financial resources, although stretched, seemed to meet the needs. SORS financing is mainly from the National budget (which accounts for 90%); the remainder is resourced from donations (10%), with less than 1% generated from services provided by SORS.

*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: The quality of the statistical output of SORS is judged as very good by the main users (including representatives of the government, the media and the research community). This is not surprising given the user focus of SORS. The respect for the needs of survey respondents and the awareness of the problems of providers of administrative data further contribute significantly to good quality. SORS' employees seem to be treated as the key resources they are. Junior staff members seemed to be well qualified, and highly motivated.

Quality is interpreted as a core task for all project/process managers. Therefore, a 'quality cell' function is – deliberately – not considered necessary in the organisation – though the General Methodology and Standards Sector is responsible for co-ordinating quality-related activities.

We have the impression that SORS staff, from senior management to junior staff, are very strongly committed to the quality of their statistical products and processes. However, a central, underlying weakness remaining is the documentation of quality related processes, as reflected clearly in 'process' indicators 4.2- 4.4. To bring quality documentation up to the CoP standards and to tackle quality documentation in a more systematic manner will be a challenge requiring dedicated human resources. However, SORS can develop this work on the basis of some excellent existing methodological documentation.

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

Assessment: **Largely met**

Comments: Regular product quality reporting in full accordance with the ESS quality components was initiated in 2006. The first (30 page) quality report available in English is fully compliant with the ESS standard quality reporting scheme. This report has been followed by 8 further corresponding reports in 2007, though currently available only in Slovenian. We have been told that in the future an executive summary in English (of 3-5 pages) will be available for all product quality reports, in order to facilitate exchange of best practice at the international level.

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

Assessment: **Partly met**

Comments: According to SORS management, respondents and main data users, there has been considerable progress over the last ten years in improving collection methods (use of administrative sources, (IT) processing and ways of dissemination), but the quality of these processes is not yet monitored in a systematic way for all processes. There are very good examples of internal documentation and descriptions of processes available (e.g. the 'PC-DOK' on the Labour Force Survey) and users can find online useful 'methodological explanations', when consulting tables. These documents would constitute an appropriate basis for an effort to bring SORS quality monitoring processes up to CoP standards especially on formal guidelines for monitoring quality.

*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: Some key criteria related to the quality of ongoing data collection and dissemination exercises (timeliness of data releases, IT processing of major surveys on schedule, etc.) are assessed twice a month by senior management. These processes are documented.

A similarly formal and structured process to systematically consider trade-offs within quality, would efficiently complement the existing evaluations by senior management. Another important quality aspect, cost effectiveness, was judged as satisfactory by respondents and users, especially for new data collection methods (from statistical surveys or administrative sources or from a combination of both).

*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: **Partly met**

Comments: SORS senior management seem to be highly committed to training. The junior staff said that they were very satisfied that they could get the necessary training on all phases of statistical processes, including quality. Again, quality standards and guidelines are not explicitly formulated and made publicly available. SORS management and staff members argued that the necessary human resources were not available within an office as small in staff size as SORS.

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

Assessment: **Partly met**

Comments: Although SORS has successfully established good relations with main users and has organised user satisfaction surveys, this area needs further improvement. A special case - an exception - is that of data related to the introduction of the Euro. Slovenia's data (from the Central Bank, the Ministry of Finance and SORS) have undergone several rigid external reviews, especially related to 'excessive deficit procedure' - with very good results as to the reliability and timeliness of Slovenia's data. However, there is no systematic approach towards the external experts' review of the selected statistical outputs.

#### **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 strictly observed by the Statistics Office and enshrined in the Statistics Act. Rules and procedures on confidentiality are made public and are well known to internal staff, users and other producers of statistics. Penalties are set in the national Data Protection Act. However, there have been no reported cases of breach of confidentiality and so penalties haven't been applied in practice.

*Indicator 5.1 Statistical confidentiality is guaranteed in law.*

Assessment: **Fully met**

Comments: The Statistics Act embeds the principle of confidentiality in a number of Articles of Chapter VIII (Protection, use and dissemination of data). In addition, SORS adopted Rules on procedures and measures for the protection of data collected through programmes of statistical surveys (hereinafter referred to as The Rules) signed by Director General. The Rules regulate the internal organisation and coordination of work to ensure the protection of data and to prevent unauthorised access, processing, use, destruction, modification or transmission. The work on confidentiality is monitored by the Committee for Data Protection (established in the Office as required by the Rules).

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

Assessment: **Fully met**

Comments: SORS' staff sign the declaration on data protection defined in Article 13 of The Rules (see Indicator 5.1) on appointment.

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

Assessment: **Fully met**

Comments: Chapter XI of The Rules (see Indicator 5.1) embeds a responsibility for carrying out security measures and procedures. The penalties are set out in the national Data Protection Act.

*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: The Rules (see Indicator 5.1) are available on the website, known to users and other producers of official statistics, and are strictly observed.

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

Assessment: **Largely met**

Comments: Currently SORS is spread over two locations. We understand that in one of these it is difficult to ensure the physical protection of SORS' data, because of the nature of the premises. A new building is under development and it is important to stick to the established timetable (beginning of 2008) for its completion and move to one location.

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

Assessment: **Fully met**

Comments: SORS has a strict procedure for giving access to researchers, which is explicitly stated in Chapter V of The Rules (see Indicator 5.1). This provides the framework for access to data for research purposes. SORS provides the facility for researchers to work in a 'secure room' based on conditions set out in a standard contract form. There is also a standard form established for obtaining statistically protected microdata. A list of registered research institutions, and individual and government office researchers who obtain SORS' approval to access statistically protected microdata is compiled and made public. Researchers sign a contract with SORS which sets out conditions and responsibilities concerning access to confidential data.

SORS continues to work on other ways to promote use of data in the research community, e.g. piloting remote access.

### **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: The production and dissemination of statistics fully meets the standards set out in the CoP. This reflects the explicit legal provisions binding upon the Office, the policy framework of the Office, and the way in which SORS staff operate in practice.

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

Assessment: **Fully met.**

Comments: Article 27 of the Statistics Act says that "the Office.....shall determine the methodological bases for the implementation of the statistical surveys...".

The 'methodological bases' refer (in the Act) to: the selection of statistical units; the obligatory contents of statistical surveys; definitions, nomenclatures or classifications; the structure and level of aggregates of disseminated data; and obligatory or voluntary reporting.

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

Assessment: **Fully met.**

Comments: See 6.1 above. In addition, it is worth noting that;

- (a) the Office has access to administrative / register data.
- (b) SORS has a statutory right to comment on the methodological bases proposed by other Authorised Producers (Article 28).
- (c) the Statistical Council has a statutory responsibility to advise the Director General on a range of statistical issues (Article 13).
- (d) 25 statistical advisory committees comprised of SORS and other producers and users representatives consider methodologies for statistical activities.

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

Assessment: **Fully met.**

Comments: SORS has an error-correction policy. When an error is discovered, a template (held on their Intranet) is completed. This records suitable metadata about the error. This is then sent to a small group within SORS, including the Director General. A website announcement is then authorised, setting out the correction or the date when a correction might be expected (or when the correction date itself might be known). Subsequently SORS management review what lessons might be learnt.

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

Assessment: **Fully met.**

Comments: The peer reviewers were shown English-language examples of such methods and procedures, for example, relating to statistics on ICT usage by households, and industrial production indices. These documents - available on the SORS website - were clearly written, and structured according to a common format.

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

Assessment: **Fully met.**

Comments: SORS' release calendar is available from the home page of the website. The calendar is regularly reviewed by senior management. To cater for releases well into the future SORS maintain a "release not later than" category - releases may be earlier than this (though in practice are firmed up nearer the time) but never later.

*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: SORS operates very limited pre-release arrangements - data on quarterly GDP, inflation, unemployment, earnings and external trade statistics are made available to the Prime Minister, Governor of the Bank of Slovenia, the Finance Minister, and the Minister for the Economy, as well as their closest advisors. Pre-release is provided by email and/or SMS text message. Recipients are required to sign a formal declaration that they will protect the data.

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

Assessment: **Fully met.**

Comments: Representatives of the media were content that the Office's interpretations and statements are neutral. This accords with the evidence of first releases seen by the Review

Team. In addition, junior staff explained that they receive training in writing and presenting their statistical messages objectively

### **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: SORS presents its statistics in a clear form. Their website is continuously updated to satisfy users' needs and make it user friendly. A recently published report of an international survey (CESifo World Economic Survey) rates Slovenia's statistical reports and website very highly.

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

Assessment: **Fully met**

Comments: Statistics meant for dissemination are well structured and accompanied with the metadata to facilitate interpretation. The usual practise is that SORS provides analytical descriptions of the statistics being disseminated. Staff are continuously trained on writing analysis, preparing statistical releases, etc.

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

Assessment: **Fully met**

Comments: Different means are used for disseminating statistics including hard copy, but the focus is on internet access – SORS' website provides statistical information free of charge for over 75 % of statistical outputs. The website is continuously updated and improved.

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

Assessment: **Largely met**

Comments: The Statistical Office provides custom-design analyses, though not all of these are disseminated, i.e. made public.

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

Assessment: **Fully met**

Comments: See Principle 5, Indicator 5.6

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

Assessment: **Fully met**

Comments: It is the usual practice that statistical information is accompanied by standardised metadata, available on the website for all users. There is a responsible officer in SORS who checks that metadata are available, and monitors metadata documentation.

*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: Methodologies are available on the website and changes are communicated to users and discussed in the advisory committees which include also users of statistical information. SORS has published a number of comprehensive quality reports, consistent with the ESS quality criteria, and plans to publish more by the end of 2007. There is excellent commitment to this programme. SORS will wish to consider how to make relevant information from each report accessible to an English-speaking audience.

#### **4. CO-ORDINATION ROLE OF THE NATIONAL STATISTICAL INSTITUTE**

1. SORS performs an important co-ordination role across the Slovenian Statistical System. This is partly defined in the Statistics Act, and partly by convention.

2. In relation to Authorised Producers (APs) of national/European statistics, SORS is responsible for:

- planning and reporting - Articles 3, 7, 23(b) and 23(c), and 25 of the Statistics Act define the responsibility of SORS to co-operate with APs in relation to the preparation of the medium term and annual programmes of statistical surveys and reporting
- methodology - Article 28 of the Statistics Act defines the obligation on both APs and other institutions producing statistics to seek advice on the methodological basis of their own statistical surveys, prior to data collection. This also applies to administrative data collections which can be a source of statistics.

3. SORS also has a legal obligation - Article 15 of the Statistics Act - to establish Statistical Advisory Committees for individual fields of statistics. There are currently 25 such Committees. SORS provides administrative and technical support to them. These Advisory Committees have a long tradition (prior to the present Statistics Act). There are about 340 outside members of these Committees, and 95 SORS members.

4. SORS also operates within the framework of a series of co-operative agreements, with government departments and agencies. These cover issues such as:

- the statistical use and protection of administrative data held by the department/agency;
- the exchange of statistical information;
- methodological advice and support;
- co-ordination of IT systems.

In effect these agreements flesh out the rights and responsibilities of SORS set out in the Statistics Act.



5. SORS has also been active recently in raising awareness in the APs of the CoP. This activity has included seminars and workshops.

## **5. GOOD PRACTICES TO BE HIGHLIGHTED**

The peer reviewers identified a number of elements of the Statistical Office that might be regarded as good practice. These include:

- Statistics Act - the law unambiguously defines the professional independence of the Office and its Director General in particular; SORS' right of access to administrative data for statistical purposes; the protection of confidentiality; and the framework for SORS' planning on behalf of the Slovenian Statistical System.
- Error reporting – SORS' error reporting procedures – see indicator 6.3 above - are systematic and polished, and are designed first-and-foremost to meet the needs of users.
- The system of Advisory Committees ensures that each statistical domain is subject to a degree of methodological scrutiny and quality assessment, by the academic/research community and other users. These Committees are well regarded.
- Access to microdata for research - SORS provides carefully controlled access to microdata, according to well-defined Protocols. The research community accepts the obligations placed upon it. An on-site laboratory with a stand-alone computer is supported by SORS staff, who ensure that no disclosive information is removed from the Office

## **6. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PEER REVIEW TEAM**

The peer reviewers' discussions with stakeholders were wide ranging, and led to a number of recommendations which the Statistics Office will wish to consider. For simplicity these are grouped under generic headings.

### 1. Specific Data Needs

Users expressed interest in the following:

- more data on the service sector generally;
- actual sales price of (newly built) homes;
- more data on e-commerce;
- better integrated data across all sources;
- More data about other EU countries for comparisons (perhaps a task for the user support service at SORS) [http://www.stat.si/eng/esds\\_vstopna\\_stran.asp](http://www.stat.si/eng/esds_vstopna_stran.asp)

### 2. Release Arrangements

- bring the publication time of wages data - currently the end of the day - in line with other SORS data (10:30 am);



- attempt to avoid press releases and conferences on Fridays, to meet the needs of the week-day press.

### 3. Quality Improvement

- SORS staff might work more systematically with sophisticated academic/research users to improve validation techniques, including outlier detection.
- enable business survey respondents to provide their data electronically (especially via the internet). As well as enabling quality improvements, this would reduce costs for SORS and the burden imposed on businesses.
- SORS very able junior staff might be given a stake in the Office's future by being involved in a coherent project to improve the documentation of the quality of products and processes, as set out in relation to Principle 4.

## 7. LIST OF IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS BY PRINCIPLE OF THE CODE

### Principle 2: Mandate for Data Collection

#### **Improvement actions**

2.3 SORS to intensify its efforts to give better feedback to respondents by providing them with the (aggregate) survey results (including an analysis). If all these "positive" measures do not lead to improved response rates legal action to compel response should be seriously considered by SORS.

#### **Timetable**

Legal measures will be applied in 2008 (first half of the year).

Analysis of the scope to give feedback to reporting units will be performed in mid-2008 in connection with establishing the e-reporting portal for companies.

### Principle 3: Adequacy of Resources

#### **Improvement actions**

3.1 SORS to enhance the resource devoted to 'quality matters' either by obtaining new resource or by prioritising existing resources appropriately.

#### **Timetable**

Dependent on Slovenian government's policy; but at least in mid-2008.

#### Principle 4: Quality commitment

##### **Improvement actions**

4.1 Complete the series of quality reports which are fully compatible with the ESS standard quality reporting scheme and update them regularly. If possible provide for each report an executive summary in English (3-5 pages), enabling exchange of best practice at international level.

4.2 – 4.5 The SORS quality monitoring processes should be brought up to Code standards; these formal guidelines for monitoring quality should refer to the survey methodologies, the trade-offs between quality dimensions and the preparation of metadata like manuals, handbooks etc. containing procedures and best practice. SORS should start this work on the basis of very good existing examples of internal documentation (like the PC – DOK descriptions) or online material like the "methodological explanations" linked to tables.

Guidelines for quality related processes should be made public and external reviews should be encouraged also outside the Euro-related statistics and data.

#### Principle 5: Statistical Confidentiality

##### **Improvement actions**

5.5 To ensure the physical security of their data, either by moving to a new building or – if this appears unrealistic in the short term – to improve the security of their existing buildings.

##### **Timetable**

Completion of series of standard quality reports is decided by internal action plans – approx. 15 new reports each year. The executive summaries in English will be prepared for existing quality reports in 2007 (end), in 2008 this will be a normal practice.

The action plan of preparation of internal manuals will be adopted in 2007.

Committee for revisions of methodology and confirmation of new methodologies will be established in September 2007 where internal and external experts will be involved. Within the workplan of this committee, external revisions will be made. Action plan for the committee's work in 2007/08 will be adopted in autumn 2007.

##### **Timetable**

2009

Principle 7: Sound Methodology

**Improvement actions**

7.7 Preparation and adoption of: (i) a procedure for dealing with methodologies of new statistical surveys and the revision of existing statistical surveys and (ii) a procedure for reviewing existing statistical surveys.

**Timetable**

Autumn 2007

Principle 8: Appropriate Statistical Procedures

**Improvement actions**

8.2 To introduce questionnaire testing on a small focus group; to define the procedure within the framework of the ISIS project.

**Timetable**

Procedure will be defined in autumn 2007.

8.4 To work out a new system within the ISIS project for scanning and electronic reporting procedure with immediate access to quality indicators to be available to respondents and to survey managers.

Testing of the system: Autumn 2007-Spring 2008, then production.

To introduce a more systematic approach to analysing fieldwork for personal and household surveys.

End 2007.

8.5 To introduce, within the ISIS project, more automated editing which will facilitate the survey managers' access to quality indicators (rate of edited observations, rate of imputed data).

Mid 2008.

8.6 To set up clear procedures for publishing data revisions.

2008

Principle 9: Non-Excessive burden on respondents

**Improvement actions**

9.1 To analyse regularly the extent of respondents' burden (once a year) and make the results publicly available

**Timetable**

Autumn 2007.

9.2 To set up a common system of reporting on the use of resources (financial and human) and on the burden of data providers by statistical surveys.

End 2007 for resources (human, financial), mid 2008 (burden)

To study the possibility of co-ordinated sampling

Mid 2008

To calculate an indicator reflecting the burden on respondents (eg by introducing a question for respondents on how much time they spent filling in the questionnaire).

Spring 2008 (surveys which will be part of ISIS system at that time)

9.3 To introduce an electronic reporting infrastructure and standardize questionnaires within the ISIS project

End 2007

Principle 10: Cost Effectiveness

**Improvement actions**

10.1 To produce regular reports of the use of resources (human and financial) available to all employees quarterly

**Timetable**

September 2007

To start producing cost-benefit analyses of surveys, based on the EU methodology

2008

10.2 To expand the implementation of automatic and selective data editing in business statistics – as a result of the introduction of the ISIS system.

Mid 2008

Principle 12: Accuracy and Reliability

**Improvement actions**

12.1 and 12.2 To continue work on the quality indicators database, which includes all parts of the statistical process (implemented within ISIS system)

**Timetable**

2008

12.3 To set up a system for revisions and to use the Intranet site for reporting good practice and exchanging the opinions of methodologists.

System of revision: 2008

Intranet site for good practices: end 2007

Principle 14: Coherence and Comparability

**Improvement actions**

14.1 To set up a system for comparing annual and short-term statistics, comparisons over time, and comparisons with national accounts

**Timetable**

2009

14.2 To set up a system to document breaks in time series

2008

Principle 15: Accessibility and clarity

**Improvement actions**

15.3 SORS to publish on their website information about the custom-designed analyses undertaken, with a view to making the analyses available on request.

**Timetable**

Autumn 2007

15.6 To continue with the production of quality reports – specifically to publish a further 11 by the end of 2007. Also, to make suitable summaries available in English.

End 2007

Ongoing.

## 8. ANNEX A: PROGRAMME OF THE VISIT

### 1<sup>st</sup> day (14 May, 2007)

09:30	09:45	Welcome and introduction of programme, organisational matters
09:45	10:45	Presentation of strategic master plan and results of user satisfaction survey
10:45	11:00	Coffee break
11:00	12:30	Meeting with management and senior staff, Principles 1, 2, 3
12:30	13:30	Lunch break
13:30	15:15	Meeting with management and senior staff, Principle 4, 5, 6, 15
15:15	15:30	Coffee break
15:30	16:30	Meeting with media representatives

### 2<sup>nd</sup> day (15 May, 2007)

09:00	10:00	Meeting with main users (Ministries, etc.)
10:00	11:00	Meeting with junior staff, principles 1-6, 15
11:00	12:00	Meeting with other national data producers
12:00	12:30	Reception by Mr. Rudolf Moge, President of Statistical Council of Republic of Slovenia (at Slovenian Parliament)
12:30	15:00	Lunch break
15:00	16:00	Meeting with main users (research community)
16:00	17:00	Meeting with representatives of respondents

### 3<sup>rd</sup> day (16 May, 2007)

09:30	13:00	Meeting with management to sum-up and detailed review of list of improvement actions Meeting with top management: conclusions, recommendations and follow-up (improvement actions)
13:00	→	Lunch break

## **Annex B: List of participants**

### Session 1 – Monday 9:30 – 12:30

Ms. Irena Križman, Director General, SORS  
Ms. Metka Zaletel, Head of Sector for General Methodology and Standards  
Mr. Tomaž Smrekar, Head of Sector for Dissemination of Statistical Data and Methods  
Ms. Alenka Škafar, Head of Manufacturing and Services Statistics  
Ms. Jana Žužek, Head of Financial Operations

### Session 2 – Monday 13:30 – 15:30

Ms. Irena Križman, Director General, SORS  
Ms. Metka Zaletel, Head of Sector for General Methodology and Standards  
Mr. Tomaž Smrekar, Head of Sector for Dissemination of Statistical Data and Methods  
Ms. Alenka Škafar, Head of Manufacturing and Services Statistics  
Ms. Ida Repovž Grabnar, public relations

### Session 3 – Monday 15:30 – 16:30 (meeting with media representatives)

Mr. Boštjan Usenik, Finance (daily newspaper)  
Ms. Aleksandra Saksida, National TV (TV SLO)  
Mr. Boris Černi, Bloomberg Slovenia

### Session 4 – Tuesday 9:00 – 10:00 (main users – ministries, Bank of Slovenia)

Mr. Janez Fabijan, Bank of Slovenia  
Mr. Borut Gržinič, Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia  
Mr. Janez Rogelj, Ministry of the Economy

### Session 5 – Tuesday 10:00 – 11:00 (junior staff)

Ms. Nina Frkovič, survey manager (wages statistics)  
Mr. Mitja Petek, survey manager (price statistics)  
Mr. Gregor Zupan, survey manager (ICT statistics)  
Ms. Tina Ostrež, adviser, General Methodology and Standards  
Ms. Maja Žaberl, survey manager (industry statistics)  
Ms. Janja Povhe, survey manager (migration statistics)  
Ms. Jelena Čirjaković, survey manager (external trade statistics)  
Ms. Polona Polajnar, adviser, Legal services

### Session 6 – Tuesday 11:00 – 12:00 (other data producers)

Mr. Stane Vencelj, Ministry of Finance  
Mr. Darko Butina and Ms. Ines Sarazin Lovrečič, Pension and Disability Insurance Institute  
Mr. Marjan Babič and Ms. Mariza Šturman, Agency of the Republic of Slovenia for Public and Legal Records and Services  
Ms. Sonja Pirher, Employment Service of Slovenia  
Ms. Polona Truden Dobrin and Ms. Jana Trdič, Institute for Public Health

### Session 7 – Tuesday 15:00 – 16:00 (research community)

Ms. Mojca Bavdaž, Faculty of Economics, University of Ljubljana  
Mr. Boris Majcen, PhD, Director, Institute for Economic Research, University of Ljubljana  
Mr. Sašo Polanec, PhD, Faculty of Economics, University of Ljubljana  
Mr. Vasja Vehovar, PhD, Faculty for Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana  
Mr. Andrej Blejec, PhD, National Institut for Biology, University of Ljubljana, President of Statistical Society of Slovenia

### Session 8 – Tuesday 16:00 – 17:00 (respondents)

Mr. Boris Lipovšek, CETIS  
Ms. Nina Prešern, Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia

### Session 9 – Wednesday 9:30 – 13:00

Ms. Irena Križman, Director General, SORS  
Ms. Metka Zaletel, Head of Sector for General Methodology and Standards  
Mr. Tomaž Smrekar, Head of Sector for Dissemination of Statistical Data and Methods