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

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## **1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Statistical Service of the Republic of Cyprus (CYSTAT) is a real authority in statistical matters in Cyprus. This position is strongly supported by the Statistical Law from 2000. CYSTAT is strongly trusted. This is supported by a strong ethic of staff, based on statistical legislation which supports independence of the statistical system in the collection, methods and dissemination of statistics. The management and staff of CYSTAT have succeeded to realize 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 CYSTAT has a strong co-ordination role in the statistical system of Cyprus.

Statistical dissemination takes place in a modern way via the Website of CYSTAT:  
[CYPRUS - Statistical Service of Cyprus](#)

CYSTAT 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.

High response rates are critical for the quality of statistics. The response rate in the surveys conducted by CYSTAT is exceptionally high – normally over 90 %.

Since Cyprus became member of the EU the statistical system of Cyprus has developed dramatically. Such a change in a short time has meant a real challenge and a heavy workload for the staff of CYSTAT. There has been little room for analytical work, for a systematic approach in quality work and for specialization of work in CYSTAT during these first years as members of EU. These aspects should be given a higher priority during the coming years.

The balance between level of staffing and workload has to be dealt with. A number of different ways should be tried (see chapter 3 principle 3).

The peer review team has the opinion that it should be possible for Cyprus (and other small EU countries) to receive reductions in the statistical reporting demands in a number of EU Regulations on the basis of the First for Europe Principle.

## **2. INTRODUCTION**

With the adoption of the European Statistics Code of Practice, the Statistical Programme (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:

CYSTAT has a strong professional independence which is supported by appropriate provisions in the [Statistics Law No. 15\(I\) of 2000](#) and is reflected in a visibly high public perception of credibility and trustworthiness.

Improvement actions:

The status of the Director of CYSTAT should be upgraded.

*Timing: To be implemented by the end of 2010.*

CYSTAT will introduce a formal process of evaluation and reporting on the execution of the five-year and annual work programmes as well as a mid-term evaluation of the five-year programmes.

*Timing: To be implemented by 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 Statistics Law 15(I) of 2000, section 12, stipulates that the Statistical Service maintains its autonomy in technical matters and has exclusive responsibility for the choice of methodology, techniques, definitions and procedures, as well as for prescribing the time and manner of dissemination of the results. The principles of relevance, impartiality, reliability, transparency and statistical confidentiality are also highlighted in the Statistics Law.

There is strong evidence that CYSTAT is seen by users as impartial and objective in its work. There was no question from users about any political interference in the work of CYSTAT. The statistical service enjoys a high degree of credibility and trust among the citizens of Cyprus.

**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.**

### **Largely met**

Comments: The Director of CYSTAT is selected and appointed by the Public Service Commission which is an independent body solely responsible for the appointment and promotion of all personnel in the public sector. The post is advertised in the Official Gazette of the Republic and is open to both CYSTAT employees and outsiders who meet the professional qualifications and prerequisites. This non-political process of appointing the Head of the Statistical Service ensures that he/she is of the highest professional calibre.

It should be noted however that CYSTAT is located within and functions under the Ministry of Finance. The Director of CYSTAT is accountable to the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Finance. While there is no evidence of any political interference, in order to maintain complete assurance in this regard, consideration could be given to upgrading the status of CYSTAT to an independent (not belonging to any ministry) body, similar to the Audit Office and Legal Office. CYSTAT management noted that the Director was not involved in senior policy level issues and discussions. This could be resolved if the status of the Director was upgraded.

**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 Statistics Law (section 15) provides explicit reference to incorporating Community Statistics into the Statistical Programmes of CYSTAT. This obligation covers both EU statistics based on legal acts as well as statistics based on gentlemen agreements. Section 12 of the Statistics Law requires that all statistics of CYSTAT are governed by the principles of relevance, impartiality, reliability, transparency and statistical confidentiality. The Peer Review team obtained enough evidence that these responsibilities are exercised in a professional and independent manner.

*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: The Statistics Law provides strong and exclusive empowerment of CYSTAT in this regard (see comments on indicator 1.1). The Peer Review team obtained enough evidence which confirms that these exclusive responsibilities are exercised in a professional and independent manner.

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

#### **Largely met**

Comments: Section 7 of the Statistics Law requires CYSTAT to compile five-year and annual programmes of statistical activities. These statistical programmes are published. The [Statistical Advisory Council](#) provides advice with regard to the preparation and implementation of the statistical programmes: Article 6(b) spells out explicitly that the Statistical Council shall observe and evaluate the manner of implementation of the programmes of statistical activities and give advice in relation thereto.

It is the opinion of the Peer Review team that CYSTAT should introduce a more formal and systematic process of evaluation and reporting on the execution of the Statistical Programmes, including a mid-term evaluation of the five-year programmes.

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

#### **Fully met**

Comments: The Peer Review team has analysed a series of statistical releases and can confirm that this indicator is fully observed. In addition, all interviewed users underlined that all outputs of CYSTAT are strictly statistical in their nature and they were not aware of any incidence of political / policy statements interfering in the process or content of 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: There is evidence that the Director of CYSTAT comments publicly on statistical issues, including criticisms and misuses of official statistics. The decision is taken solely by the Director and the management of CYSTAT without any political involvement.

### 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:

CYSTAT has a comprehensive and strong legal mandate to collect data directly from households, institutions and enterprises. Statistical surveys which are based on EU legislation or 'gentlemen agreements' are incorporated in the five-year programmes of statistical activities - section 15 (1) (a) and (b) of the Statistics Law.

Improvement actions:

The use of administrative sources for statistical purposes should be strengthened. This is a demanding process and it is therefore necessary to identify a number of basic registers to be dealt with first (e.g. population register, tax register, social insurance, etc...).

*Timing: CYSTAT will start work on basic registers by the end of 2008. Progress will be evaluated by the end of 2012.*

CYSTAT will propose a revision to Section 10 of the Statistical Law in order to eliminate the risk of potential conflict with other legislative acts.

*Timing: CYSTAT will launch the consultation process by 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: Section 3 of the Statistics Law provides CYSTAT with a clear mandate for the production and dissemination of statistical data. Subsection 2 of Section 3 extends this mandate to other ministries, government services or public corporations for carrying out surveys relating to subject matters falling within the competences of the said ministries or services, provided that (i) the Director of CYSTAT is informed in advance, (ii) the classification systems of CYSTAT are used and (iii) the fundamental principles for official statistics are observed.

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

## Largely met

Comments: Section 10 of the Statistics Law empowers the Statistical Service for free access to the administrative records of the ministries and the services of the government of the Republic and of public corporations, to the extent to which the data to be collected are necessary for the production of statistics. It also states the obligation of these authorities to provide the Statistical Service any information or material which is necessary for or which will be used in the production of statistics.

It should be mentioned that the right of CYSTAT for access to administrative records has sometimes been questioned by various authorities, mostly citing contradictions with the provisions of the Data Protection Act or specific provisions of the legislation which governs the management of the administrative register(s). Unresolved conflicts are brought to the attention of the Commissioner for the Protection of Personal Data, who has always ruled in favour of CYSTAT's right in this regard. In a future revision of the relevant provisions of both the Statistics Law and the administrative sources' specific legislation, consideration should be given to achieving more clarity in this respect and providing CYSTAT with more legal powers to resolve potential conflicts.

In the opinion of the Peer Review team the use of administrative sources for statistical purposes should be strengthened and it has therefore proposed a relevant improvement action in this regard.

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

### **Fully met**

Comments: The Statistics Law provides that all statistical enquiries carried out by CYSTAT are compulsory. Persons who refuse to provide data or who provide false, incomplete or inaccurate data are guilty of an offence and in case of conviction are liable to a fine and/or imprisonment. This strong legal backing helps CYSTAT to achieve very high response rates (over 90%) in surveys. In practice therefore, CYSTAT does not, for the time being, see the need to exercise frequently this power for bringing cases of refusals to the court (except for a very few cases, 5-7 businesses in the last 10 years).

### **Principle 3: Adequacy of Resources**

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

Overall assessment:

The workload of the permanent staff of CYSTAT seems to be too high. The basic reason for this imbalance is the (increased) EU requirement for statistics. A number of ways should be tried to improve the situation:

- More efficient organisation of the work at CYSTAT by using more of specialisation.
- Acceleration of procedures to fill vacant posts
- Continued increase of the number of permanent staff at CYSTAT.

CYSTAT considered Eurostat activities towards exempting small member states from certain statistical requirements of utmost importance.



Improvement actions:

CYSTAT will investigate ways of speeding up the employment procedure.

*Timing: This should be done not later than 2008*

The number of permanent staff positions at CYSTAT should be increased to effectively carry out the present work program.

*Timing: This should be done not later than 2008.*

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

### **Partly met**

Comments: The number of full time permanent staff posts at CYSTAT is 144. This means an increase of about 30 permanent posts since 2001. 45 of the permanent staff posts are classified as "Scientific Personnel", 68 as " Non-Scientific Personnel" (Assistants of different levels) and 31 are classified as "Clerical and other personnel". There are 5 permanent staff members working with "Data processing and technical support".

There is also a number of casual staff employed. This number was during 2006 close to 200 measured in full-time equivalents. This figure includes all interviewers.

The management of CYSTAT thinks there is a need of about another 30-45 permanent posts to effectively carry out the present work programme.

A special question is the fact that there are regularly a large number of vacancies on the permanent posts (10 - 15 %). The reason is a centralized and thorough employment procedure in the government services of CYPRUS.

**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 practice CYSTAT tries to work in the spirit of the Quality Declaration of the European Statistical System. But there is no systematic approach to quality management used at CYSTAT neither in the form of a policy document nor in the organisational structure of CYSTAT.

The users of official statistics in Cyprus are on the whole satisfied with the work conducted by CYSTAT.

Improvement actions:

A strategic plan for CYSTAT will be developed based on the European Statistics Code of Practice and the Quality Declaration of the European Statistical System.

*Timing: Such a strategic plan will be decided not later than the end of 2009.*

An entity dealing with quality management will be established at CYSTAT.

*Timing: This will be done not later than the end of 2008.*

For all statistical outputs of CYSTAT quality will be monitored according to the European Statistical System (ESS) components of quality.

*Timing: This will be fulfilled not later than the end of 2012.*

The quality of the stages in the statistical production process will be monitored for all statistics produced by CYSTAT.

*Timing: This will be fulfilled not later than the end of 2012.*

A regular and thorough review of the key statistical outputs using external experts will be carried out.

*Timing: Such a review will be done for all the key statistical outputs not later than the end of 2012.*

Systematic training in quality matters of staff members at CYSTAT and other producers of official statistics in Cyprus will be organized.

*Timing: Such training will start not later than 2009.*

Systematic training in quality matters of users of statistics in Cyprus will be organized.

*Timing: Such training will start not later than 2010.*

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

### **Partly met**

Comments: Quality is monitored for some quality components and for some products. But there is a lack of a systematic approach covering all quality components and all products.

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

### **Not met**

Comments: There is no systematic control mechanism in place to monitor the quality of processes at CYSTAT.

*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.*

#### **Partly met**

Comments: There are no formal processes in place to deal with quality considerations including trade-offs within quality. There is no formal policy to guide the planning for new surveys. But there are formal obligations for quality reporting to Eurostat on all EU surveys and data collections which are required by statistical legislation.

*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.*

#### **Partly met**

Comments: There were no written quality guidelines presented to the peer review team but according to the self assessment internal handbooks/guidelines/recommendations are to a large extent available.

There is no systematic internal training in quality matters but staff members of CYSTAT participates frequently in such training arranged by EUROSTAT or other international organisations.

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

#### **Partly met**

Comments: Via the quality reporting required by EU legislation there is a regular and thorough review of some of the key statistical products.

### **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:

This principle is well covered by the Statistics Law [section 13] of Cyprus. CYSTAT has a confidentiality protocol and staff members understand that this is a key and important value of the office.

Improvement Actions:

The Confidentiality Committee should look at the security within the work area of CYSTAT to ensure that procedures are in place to ensure areas producing market sensitive statistics (e.g. GDP) are located in secure areas with restricted access.

*Timing: To be implemented during 2007.*

The Confidentiality Committee should review office documentation for managing unit record data (questionnaires / data files) to ensure that they are secure within the office.

*Timing: To be implemented during 2007.*

The Confidentiality Committee should continue to review the risk to confidentiality of improved technology over time and of changed circumstances.

*Timing: Ongoing.*

*Indicator 5.1 Statistical confidentiality is guaranteed in law.*

### **Fully met**

Comments: Section 13 of the Statistical Law deals with confidentiality. This provides definitions of confidentiality and identification.

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

### **Fully met**

Comments: Section 13 of the Statistical Law deals with confidentiality. Any officer of CYSTAT is required to sign a declaration of confidentiality under section 13 (5) a. This obligation continues to exist even after they finish work.

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

### **Fully met**

Comments: Section 13 of the Statistics Law deals with confidentiality. Section 13 (5) (b) makes violation of this provision an offence with a fine or imprisonment as a penalty.

*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.*

### **Fully met**

Comments: The Statistical Service provided a copy of their "Code of Practice for the Collection, Publication and Storage of statistical data" (February 2004) which has guidelines for the protection of confidentiality in all of collection, dissemination and storage of statistics. This is comprehensive documentation. This code of practice is on request available for external users of statistics.

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

### **Largely met**

Comments: The office has a very low risk appetite for confidentiality breach. CYSTAT is housed in the same building with the Ministry and with other Departments of the Ministry. Within the building there was no internal security between CYSTAT and the Ministry, which posed a low level of risk from people taking data from offices/computers.

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

### **Fully met**

Comments: This is specified in Statistical Law section 13 (2), and is managed by a Confidentiality Committee. There is good procedures [provided to the review team] for applying for access, which are signed off by the Director General. Over the last two years there have been 15 applications for access to microdata.

### **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 requirement for impartiality and objectivity is required under the Statistical Law as is the requirement for equity of access to the data. Users are confident that CYSTAT is trusted in this respect.

Improvement Actions:

CYSTAT will complete the publication of information on methods and procedures.

*Timing: To be implemented by the end of 2009.*

Information about pre-release access is made publicly available.

*Timing: To be implemented during 2007.*

CYSTAT will provide ongoing training to staff in dealing with the media and document good practice. This will also be emphasised as one of the values of the office.

*Timing: To be implemented during 2008.*

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

### **Fully met**

Comments: This is seen by senior management as a critical issue for the office. Users highlighted objectivity as a critical value that CYSTAT achieved. The basis for impartiality and objectivity lies in the Statistical Law – section 12 (1) “statistical activities governed by the principles of suitability, impartiality, reliability, transparency and statistical confidentiality.”

*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: The policy for CYSTAT is to correct errors at earliest time. Corrections are provided through appropriate channels. For press releases, an erratum is published and the web pages are updated – including informing users. It would be useful to provide documentation of these processes to provide consistent treatment and efficiencies.

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

### **Partly met**

Comments: CYSTAT provides information on methods and procedures in its printed publications. These are increasingly being made available in reports associated with data released on the web. But there is a need of a more complete approach in CYSTAT to provide information on the methods and procedures used.

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

### **Fully met**

Comments: This is required under the Statistical Law section 12 (2) (b) – “Statistical Service is responsible for prescribing the time and manner of dissemination of results of its survey or work in such a way that all users have equal and simultaneous access.” Statistical release calendars have been published weekly (for the next week). From January 2007 a quarterly release calendar will be provided. There have been no pre-release dates missed (partly due to the short calendar period). Users made use of the release calendar to plan their work (media and secondary research).

*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.*

### **Largely met**

Comments: Pre release access is limited to four instances: the Minister of Finance receives the CPI one hour before release, and the government deficit figures 1 day before release. The Minister of Labour receives the registered unemployment count 1 day before release, and the President of the Cyprus Tourism Organisation receives the number of arrivals and revenue one day before release. CYSTAT maintains a list of all staff in the ministerial offices who have access to the embargoed releases, which is kept up-to-date. This list is not however published. The peer review team discussed with the CYSTAT management publishing of the list on the web. The main argument expressed against such publishing is the risk that the list will have to be extended if it is made public.

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

### **Fully met**

Comments: This is seen as an important consideration by CYSTAT senior managers. It is assisted by the brevity of the media releases. All media releases (280 last year) are signed off by the Director which provides a level of consistency/quality assurance in this area. This work could be improved by ensuring that staff are provided with training on handling the media and also documenting the statistical release procedures of CYSTAT.

### **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 distribution of statistical information through the web and paper publications provides good access to this data. Improvement can come through increased development of metadata in a standard format.

Improvement Actions:

Develop standard metadata for release with statistical data.

*Timing: To be coordinated with the progress of the present statistical information system project.*

Provide ongoing training to staff in writing for the media and document good practice. Providing documentation on presentation standards (style guides, graphics, ...) would also assist. The standards applied to web Excel tables are a good example.

*Timing: To be implemented during 2008.*

To better balance the work of the office to contribute a greater proportion of resources to more analysis of data.

*Timing: To be implemented during 2010.*

To provide training to the media so that they understand better the concepts of the statistics that are being produced and the methods and procedures underlying the data.

*Timing: To be implemented during 2008.*

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

### **Partly met**

Comments: The Website needs to provide standard metadata, however this is not a current priority. Where possible, users are asked for views on the understandability of the information on the web site.

Providing training to staff in writing press releases and dealing with the media would provide assurance to high levels of clarity for released statistics. The media noted that there was still a need to provide statistical information that better related to the public. This included writing in terms that the public could understand, and presenting statistics which related to the public – light statistics.

CYSTAT would benefit from being able to put more resources into the further analysis of data to ensure that data is properly validated and CYSTAT is better placed to see future data needs for Cyprus. Increasingly NSIs are moving away from concentrating on data production, to complement this with increasing analytical capabilities to improve the robustness of the statistics. The media noted that they could make use of EU comparisons with the release of Cyprus statistics.

CYSTAT's Dissemination and Pricing Policy notes at 2.2 that statistics are "to be presented in a clear and understandable form that facilitates proper interpretation and meaningful comparisons."

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

### **Fully met**

Comments: Full use is made of the web site, with additional paper publications. The later are reducing as there is increased use of the web.

The web site is a government site, which was first developed in 1998 and updated in 2003. The reliability of the site is the responsibility of the Government IT department.

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

### **Largely met**

Comments: CYSTAT's Dissemination and Pricing Policy 3.5 allows for the production of tailor-made requests and provides an application form (also available on the web). Tailor-made



outputs are available for users at the cost of transformation and dissemination. The results are only made available to the requesting users and are not publicly made available thereafter. Users commented that there was high satisfaction with the statistical service in meeting user needs for non standard tables. These were readily provided to the standards needed by users.

*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.

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

### **Not met**

Comments: The Dissemination Manager noted that this is an area that needs improvement and will be one of the major issues in the strategy now underway.

*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.*

### **Partly met**

Comments: General users were not too concerned with methodology issues, as these were seen as the domain of CYSTAT. It was noted that the Cyprus University had asked for detailed methodology descriptions for some data that they wanted for secondary analysis. Methods are increasingly being published on the web. For example there is satisfactory documentation of methods used in the Labour Force Survey.

Some standard statistical quality measures are made available such as sampling errors. Quality reports required under EU regulations are being produced. However the full range of quality information under the ESS quality dimensions is not yet developed for all statistics because of resource costs and priorities.

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

CYSTAT is the authority which co-ordinates the development, methodology and production of official statistics in Cyprus. Though CYSTAT compiles most of the national official statistics, some other government departments / bodies also collect / produce official statistics, either directly or indirectly. For example, the Central Bank of Cyprus (balance of payments and foreign direct investment position statistics), the Ministry of Agriculture (censuses of animals, registers on various products, etc), the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance (registered unemployed), the Cyprus Ports Authority (sea transport statistics) and others.

CYSTAT makes sure that the principles governing official statistics are enforced by all these authorities and that the appropriate methodologies and uniform classification systems are being followed. It also informs these authorities of developments in the European Statistical System

of interest to them and assists in their participation in Eurostat Committees and Working Groups (usually a second participant from CYSTAT also attends). The data produced by these authorities are in most cases submitted to Eurostat through CYSTAT.

During the Peer Review meetings with the main other producers of statistics (Central Bank of Cyprus, Inland Revenue Department, Ministry of Agriculture, Civil Registry and Migration Department) we gathered strong evidence of the efficient co-ordination role of CYSTAT. Moreover, all participants underlined that CYSTAT provides excellent professional support in methodological and classification issues. There is also evidence, that in a number of cases it would have been impossible to comply with EU requirements without the assistance of CYSTAT (e.g. BOP, migration and asylum statistics).

Given that there will be an increase in the use of administrative sources (for statistical purposes) in the future, it is important for CYSTAT to maintain this efficient co-ordination role in official statistics. In this respect, it is the opinion of the Peer Review team that CYSTAT should develop a number of 'Memorandum of Understanding' agreements with the other authorities (particularly with the Central Bank of Cyprus).

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

CYSTAT has a very good service culture.

The review team found considerable evidence with users commenting on the excellent levels of service provided to them. Not only did users find good support with information about released data, but they also received good service with tailor-made tables. This was confirmed with discussions with staff who highlighted their culture of responding effectively with user requests. Additionally the Statistics Council provides a channel for the key statistical users to influence the work programme of CYSTAT.

CYSTAT benefits from very high response rates to its surveys.

High response rates are important in the quality of data publication and in the efficiency of data processing. Response rates are supported by the legal backing for compulsory collection and the use of interviewers to collect all data. High response rates are critical for quality statistics in a small country.

## **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 or earlier. A list of the improvement actions is presented in the next chapter.

The peer review team has the opinion that it should be possible for Cyprus (and other small EU countries) to receive reductions in the statistical reporting demands in a number of EU Regulations on the basis of the First for Europe Principle.

## 7. List of improvement actions by principle of the Code

### Principle 1: Professional Independence

#### Improvement actions

- ★ The status of the Director of CYSTAT should be upgraded.
- ★ CYSTAT will introduce a formal process of evaluation and reporting on the execution of the five-year and annual work programmes as well as a mid-term evaluation of the five-year programmes.

#### Timetable

To be implemented by the end of 2010.

To be implemented by the end of 2008.

### Principle 2: Mandate for Data Collection

#### Improvement actions

- ★ The use of administrative sources for statistical purposes should be strengthened. This is a demanding process and it is therefore necessary to identify a number of basic registers to be dealt with first (e.g. population register, tax register, social insurance, etc...).
- ★ CYSTAT will propose a revision to Section 10 of the Statistical Law in order to eliminate the risk of potential conflict with other legislative acts.

#### Timetable

CYSTAT will start work on basic registers by the end of 2008. Progress will be evaluated by the end of 2012.

CYSTAT will launch the consultation process by the end of 2008.

### Principle 3: Adequacy of Resources

#### Improvement actions

- ★ CYSTAT will investigate ways of speeding up the employment procedure.
- ★ The number of permanent staff positions at CYSTAT should be increased to effectively carry out the present work program.

#### Timetable

This should be done not later than 2008

This should be done not later than 2008.

### Principle 4: Quality commitment

#### Improvement actions

- ★ A strategic plan for CYSTAT will be developed based on the European Statistics Code of Practice and the Quality Declaration of the European Statistical System.
- ★ An entity dealing with quality management will be established at CYSTAT.
- ★ For all statistical outputs of CYSTAT quality will be monitored according to the European Statistical System (ESS) components of quality.

#### Timetable

Such a strategic plan will be decided not later than the end of 2009.

This will be done not later than the end of 2008.

This will be fulfilled not later than the end of 2012.

#### Principle 4: Quality commitment

##### Improvement actions

★ The quality of the stages in the statistical production process will be monitored for all statistics produced by CYSTAT.

★ A regular and thorough review of the key statistical outputs using external experts will be carried out.

★ Systematic training in quality matters of staff members at CYSTAT and other producers of official statistics in Cyprus will be organized.

★ Systematic training in quality matters of users of statistics in Cyprus will be organized.

##### Timetable

This will be fulfilled not later than the end of 2012.

Such a review will be done for all the key statistical outputs not later than the end of 2012.

Such training will start not later than 2009.

Such training will start not later than 2010.

#### Principle 5: Statistical Confidentiality

##### Improvement actions

★ The Confidentiality Committee should look at the security within the work area of CYSTAT to ensure that procedures are in place to ensure areas producing market sensitive statistics (GDP) are located in secure areas with restricted access.

★ The Confidentiality Committee should review office documentation for managing unit record data (questionnaires / data files) to ensure that they are secure within the office.

★ The Confidentiality Committee should continue to review the risk to confidentiality of improved technology over time and of changed circumstances.

##### Timetable

To be implemented during 2007.

To be implemented during 2007.

Ongoing

#### Principle 6: Impartiality and objectivity

##### Improvement actions

★ CYSTAT will complete the publication of information on methods and procedures.

★ Information about pre-release access is made publicly available.

★ CYSTAT will provide ongoing training to staff in dealing with the media and document good practice. This will also be emphasized as one of the values of the office.

##### Timetable

To be implemented by the end of 2009.

To be implemented during 2007.

To be implemented during 2008.

#### Principle 7: Sound Methodology

##### Improvement actions

★ A centralized methodological unit will be established at CYSTAT.

##### Timetable

This will be initiated during 2008 and be established not later than 2009.

<p>Principle 8: Appropriate Statistical Procedures</p> <p><b>Improvement actions</b></p> <p>See improvement actions under principle 4 and 7.</p>	<p><b>Timetable</b></p>
<p>Principle 9: Non-Excessive burden on respondents</p> <p><b>Improvement actions</b></p> <p>See improvement actions under principle 2.</p>	<p><b>Timetable</b></p>
<p>Principle 10: Cost Effectiveness</p> <p><b>Improvement actions</b></p> <p>★ The organisational structure of CYSTAT will be reviewed with the intention to establish certain specialized units like a quality management unit (see principle 4), a centralized methodological unit (see principle 7), an IT-unit, a data-collection unit and a corporate services unit.</p>	<p><b>Timetable</b></p> <p>Such units should be established not later than the end of 2008.</p>
<p>Principle 11: Relevance</p> <p><b>Improvement actions</b></p> <p>No improvement actions proposed</p>	<p><b>Timetable</b></p>
<p>Principle 12: Accuracy and Reliability</p> <p><b>Improvement actions</b></p> <p>See improvement actions under principle 4 and 7.</p>	<p><b>Timetable</b></p>
<p>Principle 13: Timeliness and Punctuality</p> <p><b>Improvement actions</b></p> <p>★ CYSTAT will regularly follow-up punctuality of the release of statistics in relation to the first published version of the new quarterly release calendar.</p>	<p><b>Timetable</b></p> <p>To be implemented during 2007.</p>
<p>Principle 14: Coherence and Comparability</p> <p><b>Improvement actions</b></p> <p>See improvement actions under principle 15.</p>	<p><b>Timetable</b></p>
<p>Principle 15: Accessibility and clarity</p> <p><b>Improvement actions</b></p> <p>★ Develop standard metadata for release with statistical data.</p>	<p><b>Timetable</b></p> <p>To be coordinated with the progress of the present statistical information system project.</p>
<p>★ Provide ongoing training to staff in writing for the media and document good practice. Providing documentation on presentation standards (style guides, graphics, ...) would also assist. The standards applied to web Excel tables are a good example.</p>	<p>To be implemented during 2008.</p>

Principle 15: Accessibility and clarity

**Improvement actions**

**Timetable**

★ To better balance the work of the office to contribute a greater proportion of resources to more analysis of data.

To be implemented during 2010.

★ To provide training to the media so that they understand better the concepts of the statistics that are being produced and the methods and procedures underlying the data.

To be implemented during 2008.

## 7. ANNEX A: PROGRAMME OF THE VISIT

**13-15 December 2006, Nicosia, Cyprus**

<b>Wednesday, 13 December 2006</b>	
09:30-10:00	Welcome and introductory meeting with Mr. P. Philippides, Director of CYSTAT
10:00-11:30	Meeting with the Director, Mr. G. Georgiou, Chief Statistics Officer, Mrs. I. Chappa, Senior Statistics Officer and Mrs. D. Kyriakidou, Senior Statistics Officer,
11:30-12:00	Meeting with the Confidentiality Committee (Mr. G. Georgiou and Mrs. I. Chappa), Principle 5
12:00-12:15	Break
12:15-13:00	Meeting with the Director, Mr. G. Georgiou, Chief Statistics Officer and the Data Dissemination Officer, Principles 6, 15
13:00-14:30	Meeting with Officers of the Ministry of Agriculture, Civil Registry and Migration Department and Inland Revenue Department

  

<b>Thursday, 14 December 2006</b>	
08:30-10:15	Meeting with press representatives
10:15-11:15	Meeting with Officers of the Ministry of Finance
11:15-12:15	Meeting with Officers of the Central Bank of Cyprus
12:30-14:30	Meeting with the Cyprus Employers & Industrialists Federation, Cyprus Tourism Organisation and Human Resource Development Authority
16:00-18:00	Meeting with junior staff (Principles 1-6,15)

  

<b>Friday, 15 December 2006</b>	
09:30-11:45	Meeting with all division heads to sum-up and detailed review of list of improvement actions for all principles.
12:00-12:45	Meeting with the Director General of the Ministry of Finance
13:00-14:00	Meeting with the Director and Mr. G. Georgiou, Chief Statistics Officer: conclusions, recommendations and follow-up

## 8. ANNEX B: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

NAME	DEPARTMENT / ORGANISATION
<b>A. CYSTAT</b>	
Mr. Pambis Philippides	Director of CYSTAT
Mr. George Georgiou	Head of Industry, Construction, Distributive Trade, Services, Environment
Mrs. Ioanna Chappa	Head of Demography, Health, Education
Mrs. Dora Kyriakidou	Head of Social Statistics
Mr. George Zeitountsian	Head of National Accounts and Foreign Trade
Mr. Damianos Pitiris	Head of Agriculture Statistics
Mr. Costas Diamantides	Statistics Officer A', Statistical Information and ICT surveys
Mr. George Sarris	Statistics Officer A', National Accounts and Foreign Trade
Mrs. Koulia Onisiforou	Statistics Officer A', Social Statistics
Ms. Maria Poupa	Statistics Officer, European Matters and International Relations
Mr. Vasilis Hailos	Statistics Officer, National Accounts and Foreign Trade
Mr. Sofronis Vikis	Statistics Officer, National Accounts and Foreign Trade
Ms. Marilena Loukaidou	Statistics Officer, Labour force, Wages and Salaries, Prices
Mrs. Demetra Costa	Assistant Statistics Officer, Demography, Health, Education
<b>B. Other</b>	
Mrs. Panayiota Nathanael	Civil Registry and Migration Department
Ms. Stavroula Vrasida	Inland Revenue Department
Ms. Elina Symeonidou	Inland Revenue Department
Mr. Christos Papayiannis	European Union and International Affiliations, Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment
Mr. Marinos Markou	Agriculture Research Institute
Mr. Christos Patsalides	Director General of Ministry of Finance
Mr. Andreas Charalambous	Director of Investment and Finance Directorate, Ministry of Finance



Mr. Andreas Trokkos	Director of Economic Research and EU Affairs Directorate, Ministry of Finance
Mrs. Marianna Orati	Directorate of Economic Research and EU Affairs, Ministry of Finance
Mrs. Melina Katsounotou	Directorate of Economic Research and EU Affairs, Ministry of Finance
Mrs. Eliana Psimolofitou	Assistant Manager, Money and Banking Statistics & Financial Accounts Section, Central Bank of Cyprus Central Bank of Cyprus
Mrs. Androulla Melifroniou	Money and Banking Statistics & Financial Accounts Section, Central Bank of Cyprus
Mrs. Nedi Papadatou	Assistant Manager, Balance of Payments and General Economic Statistics Section, Central Bank of Cyprus, Section, Central Bank of Cyprus Central Bank of Cyprus
Mrs. Eleni Nikolaou	Balance of Payments and General Economic Statistics Section, Central Bank of Cyprus
Mr. Chrysostomos Tsountas	Balance of Payments and General Economic Statistics Section, Central Bank of Cyprus
Mr. Antonis Fragkoudis	Cyprus Employers & Industrialists Federation (OEB)
Mr. Yiannis Mourouzides	Human Resource Development Authority (HRDA)
Mr. Constantinos Chappas	Cyprus Tourism Organisation (CTO)
Ms. Fiona Mullen	Economist Intelligence Unit
Ms. Alexandra Constantinou	Newspaper Phileleftheros
Mr. Demetris Georgiades	Newspaper Politis
Mr. Charis Christoforou	Journalist

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