



EUROPEAN
STATISTICAL
SYSTEM

IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS MALTA



National Statistics Office
Uffiċċju Nazzjonali tal-Istatistika

**PEER REVIEWERS' RECOMMENDATIONS
AND IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS OF THE NATIONAL
STATISTICAL SYSTEM OF MALTA
IN RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Recommendation

The Malta Statistics Authority, the National Statistics Office and other relevant authorities should revise the Malta Statistics Authority Act assigning the coordination role of official statistics in Malta solely to the National Statistics Office. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 1bis.1)

Current situation:

Malta has a comprehensive statistical law—the Malta Statistics Authority (MSA) Act: Cap. 422. However, the MSA Act is unclear regarding the actors responsible for the coordination of official statistics. Yet in practice, it is indeed the Director General of the National Statistics Office (NSO) who decides on all statistical matters and coordination with data sources. The Malta Statistics Authority (MSA) and the NSO are currently working a new MSA Act that will repeal the existing MSA Act. The revised draft of the new Act aims to clarify NSO's role of coordinating all national activities with regards to the production of official statistics.

The Malta Statistics Authority and the National Statistics Office submitted the draft proposal of the MSA Act to the Ministry for Finance as per procedure. As soon as the Ministry green lights the draft, the Malta Statistics Authority and the National Statistics Office will start the process of consultations with stakeholders and liaise with Ministry for Finance to present the proposed Act to Cabinet and Parliament respectively. In Parliament, there will be 3 readings including a debate at Committee Stage. Once the final draft is approved by Parliament, it will be presented to President for final endorsement. Hence, the deadlines for improvements for sub-actions are indicative.

Improvement sub-action 1.1: Refine the draft proposal repealing the current MSA Act, in particular, to specify that the NSO is responsible for assuming all related coordination tasks and responsibilities and to reflect the amended Regulation (EC) 223/2009.

Deadline: Q2 2024

Responsible institutions for improvement sub-action 1.1: The Malta Statistics Authority and the National Statistics Office

Improvement sub-action 1.2: Carry out consultations with all stakeholders on the proposed new MSA Act and prepare an Impact Assessment for the attention of the Ministry for Finance.

Deadline: Q3 2024

Responsible institutions for improvement sub-action 1.2: The Malta Statistics Authority and the National Statistics Office

Improvement sub-action 1.3: Refer the proposed legislation to the Legislation Unit within the Office of the State Advocate (Ministry for Justice and Reform of the Construction Sector) to have it in the appropriate format in both Maltese and English versions and send the entire package to Cabinet.

Deadline: Q3 2024

Responsible institutions for improvement sub-action 1.3: Ministry for Justice and the Reform of the Construction Sector, Ministry for Finance, The Malta Statistics Authority, and the National Statistics Office

Improvement sub-action 1.4: Following Cabinet approval, the Bill will be presented for 1st reading in Parliament and publication. The Minister for Finance will then present the Bill and explain the changes in Parliament during the 2nd reading. The Bill will then go to Committee Stage for further discussions following which, will be presented again to Parliament for its 3rd reading and ultimately to President for final approval before it is published and put in force.

Deadline: Q1 2025

Responsible institutions for improvement sub-action 1.4: The Ministry for Finance and Parliament of Malta

2. Recommendation

The Malta Statistics Authority, the National Statistics Office and other relevant authorities, while revising the Malta Statistics Authority Act, should clearly specify that the reasons for the dismissal of the Director General of the National Statistics Office must not compromise professional independence. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 1.8)

Current situation:

Malta has a comprehensive statistical law—the Malta Statistics Authority (MSA) Act: Cap. 422. The Malta Statistics Authority (MSA) and the NSO are currently working on a new MSA Act that will repeal the existing MSA Act. The proposed changes include considerations regarding the dismissal of the Director General of the NSO.

The Malta Statistics Authority and the National Statistics Office submitted the draft proposal of the MSA Act to the Ministry for Finance as per procedure. As soon as the Ministry green lights the draft, the Malta Statistics Authority and the National Statistics Office will start the process of consultations with stakeholders and liaise with Ministry for Finance to present the proposed Act to Cabinet and Parliament respectively. In Parliament there will be 3 readings including a debate at Committee Stage. Once the final draft is approved by Parliament, it will be presented to President for final endorsement.

Improvement sub-action 2.1: Refine the draft proposal repealing the current MSA Act, in particular to specify the reasons for the dismissal of the Director General of the NSO and to reflect amendments to Regulation (EC) 223/2009.

Deadline: Q2 2024

Responsible institutions for improvement sub-action 2.1: The Malta Statistics Authority and the National Statistics Office

Improvement sub-action 2.2: Carry out consultations with all stakeholders on the proposed new MSA Act and prepare an Impact Assessment for the attention of the Ministry for Finance.

Deadline: Q3 2024

Responsible institutions for improvement sub-action 2.2: The Malta Statistics Authority and the National Statistics Office

Improvement sub-action 2.3: Refer the proposed legislation to the Legislation Unit within the Office of the State Advocate (Ministry for Justice and Reform of the Construction Sector) to have it in the appropriate format in both Maltese and English versions and send the entire package to Cabinet.

Deadline: Q3 2024
Responsible institutions for improvement sub-action 2.3: Ministry for Justice and the Reform of the Construction Sector, Ministry for Finance, The Malta Statistics Authority and the National Statistics Office
Improvement sub-action 2.4: Following Cabinet approval, the Bill will be presented for 1 st reading in Parliament and publication. The Minister for Finance will then present the Bill and explain the changes in Parliament during the 2 nd reading. The Bill will then go to Committee Stage for further discussions following which, will be presented again to Parliament for its 3 rd reading and ultimately to President for final approval before it is published and put in force.
Deadline: Q1 2025
Responsible institutions for improvement sub-action 2.4: The Ministry for Finance and Parliament of Malta

3. Recommendation

The Malta Statistics Authority and the National Statistics Office should review the adequacy of the human resources in the National Statistics Office and strengthen staff retention measures. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 3.1)

Current situation:

Throughout the last five years, the NSO has shown considerable improvement in the build-up of its human resources. Indeed, staff at the NSO has increased by over a quarter in the last five years that reflect the ever-increasing task portfolios. The NSO is continuously engaged in ensuring the adequacy of its capabilities in support of a change towards a more efficient and agile statistical production system. To this end, the NSO is developing a systematic approach to sustain the development of the NSO workforce in line with future needs.

Improvement sub-action 3.1: The NSO will prepare a long-term Human Resources plan to sustain the evolving national, EU and international demands on the NSO.

Deadline: Q3 2024

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 3.1: The National Statistics Office

Improvement sub-action 3.2: The NSO will start carrying out Staff Stay interviews with a sample from the staff to ensure that the needs of its staff are continuously addressed.

Deadline: Q4 2023 (frequency: annual)

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 3.2: The National Statistics Office

Improvement sub-action 3.3: The Human Resources Unit will be completed with at least one additional member of the staff primarily focused on the training and development of NSO's staff and the strengthening of staff retention measures.

Deadline: Q3 2024

Responsible institutions for improvement sub-action 3.3: The National Statistics Office and the Malta Statistics Authority

4. Recommendation

The National Statistics Office, within its coordination function, should identify criteria for statistical producers to be considered as Other National Authorities, when appropriate, and where this would help to strengthen the credibility of official statistics in Malta. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 1bis.1)

Current situation:

Currently, there is only one ONA developing, producing and disseminating official statistics; the Directorate of Health Information and Research (DHIR). However, there are around 30 providers and/or producers of statistical data who have signed Memoranda of Understanding with the NSO, making them statistical partners of the National Statistics Office. The NSO is examining the possibility of designating some of these partners as ONAs. This would expand the Maltese Statistical System and clarify the role of official statistics in Malta. Such a change may require additional efforts, including further support and coordination, to build up confidence in official statistics compared to statistics or data produced by other data providers and analysts.

The revision of the MSA Act also includes reference to ONAs, such as the definition of ONA in the Maltese context: defined as public entities which submit data directly to Eurostat for the production of European statistics, and that recommendations and designation of ONAs is the remit of the Director General of the NSO.

The Malta Statistics Authority and the National Statistics Office submitted the draft proposal of the MSA Act to the Ministry for Finance as per procedure. As soon as the Ministry green lights the draft, the Malta Statistics Authority and the National Statistics Office will start the process of consultations with stakeholders and liaise with Ministry for Finance to present the proposed Act to Cabinet and Parliament respectively. In Parliament, there will be 3 readings including a debate at Committee Stage. Once the final draft is approved by Parliament, it will be presented to President for final endorsement. Hence, the deadlines for improvements for sub-actions are indicative.

Improvement sub-action 4.1: To create a Central Management Unit (CMU) with the mandate to streamline NSO's institutional processes, improve coordination internally and with NSO's partners, and ensure more efficient operations. The Unit would enable a more streamlined approach to the work of the NSO at all levels (institutional, national, European, and international) and enhanced possibilities for collaboration. The establishment of such a unit will foster better coordination, coherence and effectiveness within the NSO and with its statistical partners, and will provide a holistic approach to addressing institutional, national, and international issues.

Deadline: Q2 2023

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 4.1: The National Statistics Office

Improvement sub-action 4.2: The proposed changes to the MSA Act introduce the concepts of 'Other National Authorities', and that of a National Statistical System (NSS) whereby the NSO coordinates other public entities that directly contribute towards the production of official statistics, in particular by sending data directly to Eurostat.

Deadline: Q2 2024

Responsible institutions for improvement sub-action 4.2: The Malta Statistics Authority and the National Statistics Office

Improvement sub-action 4.3: Carry out consultations with all stakeholders on the proposed new MSA Act and prepare an Impact Assessment for the attention of the Ministry for Finance.

Deadline: Q3 2024
Responsible institutions for improvement sub-action 4.3: The Malta Statistics Authority and the National Statistics Office
Improvement sub-action 4.4: Refer the proposed legislation to the Legislation Unit within the Office of the State Advocate (Ministry for Justice and Reform of the Construction Sector) to have it in the appropriate format in both Maltese and English versions and send the entire package to Cabinet
Deadline: Q3 2024
Responsible institutions for improvement sub-action 4.4: Ministry for Justice and the Reform of the Construction Sector, Ministry for Finance, The Malta Statistics Authority and the National Statistics Office
Improvement sub-action 4.5: Following Cabinet approval, the Bill will be presented for 1 st reading in Parliament and publication. The Minister for Finance will then present the Bill and explain the changes in Parliament during the 2 nd reading. Then the Bill will go to Committee Stage for further discussions following which will be presented again to Parliament for its 3 rd reading and ultimately to President for final approval before it is published and put in force.
Deadline: Q1 2025
Responsible institutions for improvement sub-action 4.5: The Ministry for Finance and Parliament of Malta

5. Recommendation

The National Statistics Office should, within its coordination role, establish a Memorandum of Understanding with the Directorate for Health Information and Research and provide adequate quality guidelines for the development, production and dissemination of European Statistics. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 1bis.2 and 1bis.1)

Current situation:

The NSO has Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with approximately 30 providers and/or producers of statistical data. However, the NSO does not have an MoU with the only ONA forming part of Malta's Statistical System. Thus, an MoU with the Directorate for Health Information and Research (DHIR) will need to be established to ensure compliance with the principles of ES CoP and Regulation (EC) 223/2009. Moreover, the NSO is currently working to develop its capacity to provide the current ONA with appropriate quality guidelines for the development, production and dissemination of European statistics by publishing a Quality Management Framework (QMF) and re-structuring the Methodology and Quality (MQ) Unit to enable better focus on the Quality of statistics to support the production units of the NSO and ONAs across all areas of interest.

Improvement sub-action 5.1: To prepare a draft MoU in cooperation with the Directorate for Health Information and Research that reflects the ONA status of the Directorate for Health Information and Research.

Deadline: Q4 2023

Responsible institutions for improvement sub-action 5.1: The National Statistics Office and the Directorate for Health Information and Research

Improvement sub-action 5.2: To sign the MoU with the Directorate for Health Information and Research
Deadline: Q1 2024
Responsible institutions for improvement sub-action 5.2: The National Statistics Office and the Directorate for Health Information and Research
Improvement sub-action 5.3: To develop and publish the first version of the Quality Management Framework (QMF) with an overall goal to meet and maintain the required standards set out in ES CoP.
Deadline: Q2 2024
Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 5.3: The National Statistics Office
Improvement sub-action 5.4: To re-structure the Methodology and Quality (MQ) Unit to enable better focus on the Quality of statistics to support the production units of the NSO and ONAs. The Unit will have a quality review function to support the implementation of the QMF guidelines.
Deadline: Q2 2024
Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 5.4: The National Statistics Office
Improvement sub-action 5.5: The internal quality reviews and the application of the QMF will be also extended to cover ONAs with the aim of improving the overall quality of the national statistical system. The MQ Unit, responsible for leading the exercise, will pinpoint various areas requiring attention based on internal requirements. This involves continuous review and updating of internal work process documentation and the QMF itself. Numerous meetings addressing operational and technical issues will be conducted among MQ members and relevant domain units, involving subject matter experts and potentially IT personnel. Subsequently, a set of improvement actions will be formulated, discussed, and presented to all internal stakeholders, including line directors, domain units, and other staff.
Deadline: Q2 2025
Responsible institutions for improvement sub-action 5.5: The National Statistics Office and the Directorate for Health Information and Research

6. Recommendation

The National Statistics Office should publicly issue an overarching quality policy and supporting guidelines, laying out the principles and commitments on quality towards stakeholders. (Compliance-relevant: ES CoP, Indicator 4.1)

Current situation:

Despite the high awareness of quality and the available documentation on quality at the NSO, a more strategic and overarching quality policy is needed. The NSO is currently working on a comprehensive quality policy that will outline how adherence to the ES CoP is guaranteed and will illuminate the critical quality criteria established within the office. These criteria encompass factors such as data accuracy, credibility, and reliability, among others. The purpose of this policy is to set benchmarks, encourage uniformity, mitigate potential risks, and address the demands of various stakeholders, all while ensuring that the office remains in compliance with legal and ethical standards.

Improvement action 6: The NSO will formulate and release a comprehensive overarching quality policy.

Deadline: Q2 2024

Responsible institution for improvement action 6: The National Statistics Office

7. Recommendation

The Other National Authority reviewed (the Directorate for Health Information and Research) should disseminate nationally the quality reports of the official statistics that it produces. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 15.1 and 4.3)

Current situation:

The Directorate for Health Information and Research (DHIR) submits quality reports to Eurostat accompanying the delivery of health statistics. However, these quality reports are currently not disseminated nationally for the view of the public in Malta.

Improvement sub-action 7.1: To prepare a draft MoU in cooperation with the Directorate for Health Information and Research (DHIR) that reflects the ONA status of the DHIR, which includes the obligation for the DHIR to publish the quality reports prepared when transmitted data for the production of official statistics.

Deadline: Q4 2023

Responsible institutions for improvement sub-action 7.1: The National Statistics Office and the Directorate for Health Information and Research

Improvement sub-action 7.2: To sign the MoU with the Directorate for Health Information and Research (DHIR)

Deadline: Q1 2024

Responsible institutions for improvement sub-action 7.2: The National Statistics Office and the Directorate for Health Information and Research

Improvement sub-action 7.3: The NSO will work on a dedicated page on its website regarding information on the Directorate for Health Information and Research (DHIR) that could incorporate indicators and related quality reports published by the DHIR.

Deadline: Q2 2024

Responsible institutions for improvement sub-action 7.3: The National Statistics Office and the Directorate for Health Information and Research

8. Recommendation

The National Statistics Office and the Other National Authority reviewed (the Directorate for Health Information and Research) should compile and make publicly available quality indicators on revisions as well as the results of their revision analyses. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 12.3, 8.5 and 6.6)

<p>Current situation:</p> <p>The NSO has a policy on revisions of Official Statistics. However, it is still working to provide more complete information such as quality indicators on revisions and accompanying revision analyses. The set of quality indicators to be published on revisions will be included in the QMF.</p>
<p>Improvement sub-action 8.1: To develop and publish the first version of the Quality Management Framework (QMF) with an overall goal to meet and maintain the required standards set out in ES CoP.</p>
<p>Deadline: Q2 2024</p>
<p>Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 8.1: The National Statistics Office</p>
<p>Improvement sub-action 8.2: To re-structure the MQ Unit to enable better focus on the quality of statistics to support the production units of the NSO and ONAs. The Unit will have a quality review function to support the implementation of the QMF guidelines.</p>
<p>Deadline: Q2 2024</p>
<p>Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 8.2: The National Statistics Office</p>
<p>Improvement sub-action 8.3: The NSO will use the QMF to support a culture of continuous quality improvement in official statistics by advancing the quality agenda within the NSO and within the the NSS by assisting ONAs to observe and implement the QMF.</p>
<p>Deadline: Q4 2026</p>
<p>Responsible institutions for improvement sub-action 8.3: The National Statistics Office, the Directorate for Health Information and Research</p>
<p>Improvement sub-action 8.4: To advance the quality agenda within the NSO and within the the NSS by assisting ONAs to observe and implement the revision policy.</p>
<p>Deadline: Q4 2026</p>
<p>Responsible institutions for improvement sub-action 8.4: The National Statistics Office, the Directorate for Health Information and Research</p>

9. Recommendation

The National Statistics Office should strengthen the quality monitoring initiatives that have already been established by introducing a more systematic quality review approach. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 4.4)

Current situation:

A culture of quality control and monitoring is embedded in the NSO, aided by the work of the Methodological and Quality Unit. ONAs and some other statistical partners producing statistics that are disseminated by the NSO, also carry out quality controls and monitoring. The NSO has been making substantial efforts in the area of quality control and monitoring and intends to set up a more systematic approach to quality control and monitoring.

Several organisational changes will be implemented to enable the Methodology and Quality Unit to concentrate specifically on quality-related matters. The first step in this process will involve the release and implementation of the QMF. This framework will, in turn, furnish the essential quality standards needed to support full alignment with the ES CoP. Furthermore,

this effort will be supplemented by an evaluation of internal workflow procedures aligned with the GSBPM framework. This evaluation aims to ensure that all processes, from both operational and methodological perspectives, are efficient and compliant with the required quality criteria set out by the NSO.

Furthermore, a number of responsibilities presently held by the MQ Unit will be reassigned to another Unit. This change aims to establish a more specialised and focused Unit dedicated to supporting the production units of the NSO and ONAs in matters pertaining to the quality of statistics. The MQ Unit will incorporate a quality review function to aid in the effective implementation of the QMF guidelines.

Improvement sub-action 9.1: To develop and publish the first version of the Quality Management Framework (QMF) with an overall goal to meet and maintain the required standards set out in ES CoP.

Deadline: Q2 2024

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 9.1: The National Statistics Office

Improvement sub-action 9.2: To re-structure the Methodology and Quality Unit to enable better focus on the Quality of statistics to support the production units of the NSO and ONAs. The Unit will have a quality review function to support the implementation of the QMF guidelines.

Deadline: Q2 2024

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 9.2: The National Statistics Office

Improvement sub-action 9.3: To support the culture of continuous quality improvement in official statistics by advancing the NSO's quality agenda by carrying out quality reviews and assisting NSO production units and ONAs to observe and implement the guidelines of the QMF.

Deadline: Q4 2026

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 9.3: The National Statistics Office

10. Recommendation

The National Statistics Office should complete the statistical process review of the various statistical domains based on the Generic Statistical Business Process Model and develop standard methods and IT applications based on the results to support the automation of statistical production. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 8.3 and 10.4)

Current situation:

The NSO has already initiated a multi-year project aimed at modernising its statistical production chain, known as the Statistical Production Service Architecture (Transformation project). This comprehensive endeavour encompasses the enhancement of processes related to data collection, storage, production, and data dissemination. This work has so far covered 33 statistical processes and should be the basis for a review of the statistical production architecture with the aim of ensuring better consistency across statistical indicators and harmonisation of statistical methods and processes across domains.

Furthermore, while the NSO has made progress in introducing more automation in the statistical production processes, particularly in the domain of social statistics and for data collection and dissemination functions, efforts to further extend automation and standardisation of data processing to other statistical domains have been curtailed due to

limitations in resources and conflicting priorities. Nevertheless, the NSO will continue investing in the IT Transformation Project and will extend automation and standardization of data processing across all statistical domains. This will necessitate a full overhaul of the internal structural metadata systems used within the office. This transformation is expected to yield significant improvements in terms of data governance, interoperability, and integration.

The MQ and IT Units will work together to enhance automation at every stage of the statistical data lifecycle and promote comprehensive consistency across different domains (relative to the GSBPM framework). The execution of the related sub-actions is closely interconnected with the goal of achieving cross-domain coherence, which, in turn, seeks to enhance both the efficiency and the quality of statistical data.

Improvement sub-action 10.1: To re-structure the Methodology and Quality Unit to enable better focus on the Quality of statistics to support the production units of the NSO and ONAs. The Unit will have a quality review function to support the implementation of the QMF guidelines.

Deadline: Q2 2024

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 10.1: The National Statistics Office

Improvement sub-action 10.2: To modernise the statistical production chain by completing the implementation phase of the IT Transformation Project which will transform and standardise the data ecosystem across all statistical processes.

Deadline: Q1 2024

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 10.2: The National Statistics Office

Improvement sub-action 10.3: The Methodology and Quality Unit and the IT Unit will collaborate to thoroughly examine the primary internal procedures employed by production units.

Deadline: Q4 2026

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 10.3: The National Statistics Office

Improvement sub-action 10.4: To complete the statistical process review of all key statistical domains based on the Generic Statistical Business Process Model, and translate all relevant production domains in the Statistical Production System Architecture; transforming and standardising the data ecosystem across all statistical processes, including the automation of statistical production.

Deadline: Q4 2026

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 10.4: The National Statistics Office

11. Recommendation

The National Statistics Office should continue to develop and implement the data infrastructure envisaged by the Transformation Project. It should develop a medium-term plan with clear priorities and adequate resources – in terms of both the technical and the statistical domain teams – to ensure that the new platform is fully deployed for regular statistical production in the coming years. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 10.2)

Current situation:

Since 2018, the NSO has been working on an ambitious Transformation Project to develop a new IT statistical production platform based on full workflow automation and driven by metadata, from collection to dissemination stages. A proof of concept to apply the new system to short-term business and transport statistics has been successfully finalised and will soon be reviewed internally. The next steps will be to finalise the IT platform to ensure its full deployment and start the migration of current statistical processes to the new platform. This will require a systematic approach for the roll-out of the new platform based on clear strategic priorities and guided by business needs. The deployment of the platform will generate efficiency gains and increase quality by removing manual steps from the statistical production process.

Improvement sub-action 11.1: In line with the objectives set forth in the Transformation project, the plan involves constructing the data infrastructure, which encompasses implementing a statistical data warehouse that ensures the harmonisation of data and metadata. Additionally, innovative IT tools will be introduced to enhance data efficiency through automation and bolster data security.

Deadline: Q2 2024

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 11.1: The National Statistics Office

Improvement sub-action 11.2: To implement the Transformation project by translating all production domains in the new statistical production system architecture and transforming and standardising the data ecosystem across all statistical processes through adequate process re-engineering.

Deadline: Q4 2026

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 11.2: The National Statistics Office

12. Recommendation

The National Statistics Office should strengthen its investment in innovative statistical methods and new data sources. Furthermore, the National Statistics Office should disseminate the resulting products through adequate communication channels to involve researchers and the wider user community. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 7.7)

Current situation:

The NSO has been carrying out several projects to improve the timeliness of statistical indicators and new statistical information products. Notwithstanding important advancements, there has been limited public debate around innovation projects and the NSO does not systematically publish the results of such projects. The NSO is aware that early engagement with the scientific and user community in the development of new statistical products and methods would help gain significant insights into directions for further improvements in innovative statistics towards mature products. Early and sustained engagement with users could also build stronger partnerships to support innovation in official statistics.

The NSO aims to harness the potential of alternative data sources, potentially leveraging artificial intelligence and web scraping techniques to enhance the existing data supply, which relies heavily on primary and administrative data sources. By combining these efforts with the thorough application of the QMF and the execution of the Transformation project, including the introduction of a new and improved dissemination tool, the NSO will be able

to provide a more comprehensive statistical coverage across various domains. This expanded data offering will be accessible to a broader range of users in various formats.

Improvement sub-action 12.1: A new Unit—the Data Processing Unit (DPU)—will be created to oversee the collection, management, and pseudonymisation of administrative data sources within the office.

Deadline: Q2 2024

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 12.1: The National Statistics Office

Improvement sub-action 12.2: Develop and keep up to date an internal register-of-registers to be shared on the NSO intranet as a knowledge management tool. This will enable all staff to identify and access administrative data based on need-to-know, subject to internal user access privileges, and will further facilitate the seamless utilisation, linkage, and sharing of administrative data sources.

Deadline: Q4 2026

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 12.2: The National Statistics Office

Improvement sub-action 12.3: The NSO will pursue innovation projects such as, scanner data for the compilation of retail price index; recently gained access of plastic money data from all commercial banks; linking tax data with employment register data to compile estimates of salaries by nationality of employees, and new estimates to measure better the burden of tourism by localities. Results from these projects will be disseminated as innovative statistics.

Deadline: Q4 2025

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 12.3: The National Statistics Office

13. Recommendation

The National Statistics Office should make a long-term release calendar available on its website, to better inform users of planned statistical releases. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 6.5 and 13.2)

Current situation:

The NSO has a very good approach to the release calendar on its website. This calendar contains “flags” for categories of revisions for each release and date. However, even though the plan is scheduled internally for the whole year, the NSO only makes the calendar available for the forthcoming three months.

Improvement action 13: To extend the release calendar from the forthcoming three months to six months.

Deadline: Q2 2023

Responsible institution for improvement action 13: The National Statistics Office

14. Recommendation:

The Other National Authority reviewed (the Directorate for Health Information and Research) should compile and publish its work programme and release calendar, both of

which should also be linked to or included in the corresponding documents of the National Statistics Office. (Compliance-relevant: ES CoP, Indicators 1.5, 6.5 and 13.2)
<p>Current situation:</p> <p>Currently, the Directorate for Health Information and Research (DHIR), which is responsible for producing health statistics at national level, does not publish a work plan or a release calendar for health on its website.</p>
Improvement sub-action 14.1: To prepare a draft MoU in cooperation with the Directorate for Health Information and Research, wherein obliging the ONA to publish its work programme and release calendar for health statistics and inform the NSO accordingly to provide the related links on its own website as well.
Deadline: Q4 2023
Responsible institutions for improvement sub-action 14.1: The National Statistics Office and the Directorate for Health Information and Research
Improvement sub-action 14.2: To sign the MoU with the Directorate for Health Information and Research
Deadline: Q1 2024
Responsible institutions for improvement sub-action 14.2: The National Statistics Office and the Directorate for Health Information and Research
Improvement sub-action 14.3: To publish the work programme and release calendar of the Directorate for Health Information and Research for 2025
Deadline: Q4 2024
Responsible institutions for improvement sub-action 14.3: The National Statistics Office and the Directorate for Health Information and Research
15. Recommendation
The National Statistics Office should improve the function to search for specific information on its website and in the statistical database. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 15.2)
<p>Current situation:</p> <p>The National Statistics Office's latest User Satisfaction Survey was conducted in early 2022 with the aim of collecting information about key users' satisfaction with the statistical output. News releases and tailor-made statistical outputs were assessed for their quality, timeliness and ability to meet user needs. The results were published in July 2022. Information gathered in this survey helped the NSO to gain better insight into its users' needs and perceptions of the NSO's products and services and helped the NSO to identify its communication and dissemination strengths and work towards retaining them. More importantly, the results also clarified weaknesses in the National Statistics Office's processes and shed light on how these deficiencies or limitations could be addressed in the future. For instance, relatively low marks were given by users in the User Survey regarding their ability to find what they were searching for on the NSO website.</p>
Improvement action 15: To upgrade NSO's website that includes an enhanced search function and an enhanced user-friendly statistical database interface.
Deadline: Q2 2023
Responsible institution for improvement action 15: The National Statistics Office

16. Recommendation

The National Statistics Office should develop innovative dissemination products for official statistics and should adapt and further develop its communication of statistics to users, to reach a maximum audience and increase statistical literacy in the Maltese society. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 15.2 and 15.1)

Current situation:

During the time of the peer review, the substance of some of NSO's news releases were difficult for a lay person to interpret. Also, the NSO's news releases were only provided in English, and not in Maltese. This restricted the accessibility of official statistics by certain users, for example, the Maltese-language media. Furthermore, NSO's dissemination products were not completely user-friendly and adaptable for different types of users. The NSO's re-branding project was an opportunity for the NSO to promote the principles of ES CoP, data literacy, and communication.

Improvement sub-action 16.1: The NSO will use its re-branding campaign to promote the principles of ES CoP and data literacy, as well as to address public awareness on NSO's output. Through this campaign the NSO will extend the relationship with the media and increase engagement with students.

Deadline: Q2 2023

Responsible institution for sub-action 16.1: The National Statistics Office

Improvement sub-action 16.2: To create in-house educational videos, to be shared with schools, social media platforms, NSO's subscribers, and amongst NSO staff that explain the compilation and utilisation of essential statistical indicators.

Deadline: Q2 2023

Responsible institution for sub-action 16.2: The National Statistics Office

Improvement sub-action 16.3: To provide News Releases, Press Information Notices, news updates and website content also in the Maltese language for extended reachability to users,

Deadline: Q2 2023

Responsible institution for sub-action 16.3: The National Statistics Office

Improvement sub-action 16.4: To introduce interactive charts in NSO releases, infographics and a revamped user-friendly online statistical database.

Deadline: Q4 2024

Responsible institution for sub-action 16.4: The National Statistics Office

Improvement sub-action 16.5: The NSO is to cooperate with the Institute for Public Service to hold annual statistics literacy courses to government and public sector employees.

Deadline: Q2 2025 (possibly between 1 - 2 courses every year)

Responsible institution for sub-action 16.5: The National Statistics Office