



## DESCRIPTION OF THE SWISS NATIONAL STATISTICAL SYSTEM

### I. GENERAL INFORMATION:

#### Mission of the NSI

The Swiss Federal Statistical Office (FSO) runs and co-ordinates Switzerland's entire public statistics system. It produces and disseminates key statistical information showing the current status and trends in the fields of demographics, economy, society, spatial planning and environment. It also carries out comprehensive analysis, devises indicator systems to monitor complex processes, produces scenario forecasts and maintains a historical database.

Switzerland is surrounded by the growth of a larger, united Europe. Swiss public statistics are becoming increasingly interwoven with Europe. Switzerland's comparative position and how Europe views Switzerland on this basis is largely due to statistical information.

#### Status of the NSI in public administration system of the country

The Federal Statistical Act provides a legal framework and does not list individual statistics and surveys which are regulated at ordinance level by the Federal Council. The Act sets out the tasks and organisation of federal statistics as well as fundamental principles for data procurement, publications and services. In particular, it describes data protection principles.

The salient innovations in the 1992 Act are: the coordination function of the FSO in its capacity as the Government's central statistical unit, the establishment of a Multiannual statistical program for overall planning of Swiss statistics, and the institution of the Federal Statistics Commission as an advisory body to the Federal Council (with representatives from academia, business, social partners as well as federal, cantonal and municipal units). In addition to the ordinance for individual statistics and surveys, various ordinances provide more detailed instructions for implementing the Federal Statistical Act, for example concerning the organisation of federal statistics, fees for statistical services provided by Government administrative units, as well as the Company and Business Register.

#### Procedure of appointment of Director-General of the NSI

The Federal Council is responsible for the nomination of the Director-General.

#### Location of seat and organisational structure of the NSI

Its October 1998 move from Berne to Neuchâtel, from German-speaking to French-speaking Switzerland, marks an important change for the FSO and Swiss Statistics. With the transfer of its entire staff from Bern to Neuchâtel in 2004, the Federal Statistical Office has now been able to concentrate all its resources in one single site. The Office is housed in an attractive new building that gives this government institution an immediately recognizable face.

There are four levels of management: the director general's office, three main departments, seven regular departments and thirty five units. 550 permanent employees hold the equivalent of 480 jobs. 40% of the jobs are held by women and 42% by French speakers. Almost half of the incumbents are scientific; the rest are support personnel.

#### Main legal act(s)

Public statistics are based on the Swiss constitution. In the vote held on 18 April 1999 the Swiss electorate approved a total revision of the constitution, which now includes a statistics article (Art. 65) concerning the commissioning and competence of statistics. The legal basis

for public statistics in Switzerland is defined in more detail in various laws, principally in the Federal Statistic Act of 9 October 1992. The law is modern in the sense that it reflects the values embodied in the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics such as the obligatory public nature of the output, its firm grounding in statistics as an objective discipline, and the recognition of the international nature of national statistics.

### **Statistical programme(s)**

The Multiannual Programme for Federal Statistics (2003-2007, e.g. budget-years 2004-2007) was drafted by the FSO and finds its legal basis in the Federal Statistics Act. Used as part of legislative planning, the Multiannual Programme enables the Federal Council to determine the federal statistical activities. The Multiannual Programme provides information about the most important federal statistical work to be done; the financial and human resources needed; and planned cooperation with partners abroad.

## **II. SYSTEM OF OFFICIAL STATISTICS IN THE COUNTRY**

### **The role of the NSI in the system, other major players**

The statistical system involves all parts of the public sector (Federal, cantonal, and municipal) that have an explicit statistical mission resulting in the publication of official statistics with the customary attributes of objectivity, neutrality and impartiality. The FSO is the key institution – responsible for the substantial majority of total official statistical output within the statistical system. There has been a conscious recognition of the need for complementarity between the federal and cantonal statistical offices. The FSO has initiated a regular series of meetings with cantonal offices, sharing of plans, and coordination of work. However, the FSO has no formal means to influence the work of these offices, cannot help create offices in cantons that do not already have them, and has no direct means to respond to the statistical information needs of cantons.

### **III. ADVISORY BODY/STATISTICAL COUNCIL (or its equivalent)**

The Federal Statistical Council is comprised of representatives from the employer's associations and unions, from the Swiss National Bank and the federal administration, from Universities, from regional statistical offices, from the private sector as well as of other representatives. Its members are chosen by the Federal Council and come under the auspices of the Federal Department of Home Affairs. The Council is presided by a representative from a scientific body. As a rule it meets three times a year. The Council has the task of advising the Federal Council on all matters pertaining to the 21 domains of statistics.

## **IV. PUBLICATIONS**

Every year, the office issues more than 200 publications and roughly 160 press releases, as well as answering tens of thousands of inquires. The FSO is electronically aware, with a much-visited Internet site, an online database as well as a growing number of publications on CD-ROM and DVD.

## **V. OTHER RELEVANT REMARKS**

For more information: <http://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/portal/en/index.html>