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PEER REVIEWERS' RECOMMENDATIONS AND CROATIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS IN RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS

Peer reviewer's recommendations and improvement actions in response to the recommendations

GOVERNANCE

1. *The responsible Croatian authorities should promote legislative amendments laying down clear provisions for the appointment and dismissal of the Director General of the Croatian Bureau of Statistics in line with the European statistics Code of Practice. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 1.8.)*

Current situation:

The provisions for the appointment of the Director General of the Croatian Bureau of Statistics (CBS) are covered by Article 51 of the Act on the State Administration System (OG No. 150/2011). This Act regulates public administration in the Republic of Croatia. The Director General, being the head of a state administrative organisation, is appointed and dismissed by the government on the basis of a proposal of the Prime Minister. The current Director General was appointed on this basis in 2013, without a public advertisement for the position. The appointment is not for a fixed term.

CBS prepared a proposal for the new Official Statistics Act (OSA) addressing a number of issues requiring improvements within the legal framework for the official statistics, including the changes regarding the appointment of the Director General based on the recent revision of Regulation (EC) No 223/2009. The proposal was sent to the Government procedure, including consultations with other government institutions as well as a public debate. The Government assessed the proposal and requested some additional adjustments to be introduced. CBS redrafted the proposal and it's currently carrying out consultations with the Ministry of Public Administration.

Improvement action 1. Submitting the proposal of changes to the national legal framework regarding the appointment of the Director General of the CBS

CBS will continue with the ongoing process of finding the acceptable solution for appointment and dismissal of the Director General in the context of the existing national public administration system.

Timeline:

Fourth Quarter 2015.

Timeframe for the adoption of the proposal by the Government and subsequently the Parliament may be influenced by the upcoming parliamentary elections

2. The responsible Croatian authorities should amend the Official Statistics Act to ensure that the Statistics Council adequately represents the voice of the users of official statistics. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 11.1 and Coordination)

Current situation:

The Statistics Council is the advisory body for strategic issues concerning the NSS. Article 16 of the OSA stipulates that *“The Council shall be an advisory and professional body for strategic issues concerning official statistics, and shall be established with the aim of ensuring the influence of users, science and the general public on the Programme.”*

Article 17 of the OSA lists the tasks of the Council in more detail. The Council gives opinions on strategic documents and working plans as well as their implementation. It also provides opinions and proposals on “the need to implement censuses, introduce, revise or terminate extensive statistical surveys, infrastructure projects, and the funds necessary for their implementation”, on the “proposal of acts and other legal documents, which concern the activities or producers of official statistics”, on “cases of nondisclosure of data by bodies that manage administrative data sources” and on “the development and promotion of the official statistics system and international cooperation”.

The Council has 19 members (OSA, Article 18). The members of the current Council were appointed, or in some cases reappointed, in February 2014. The list of the institutions represented shows a dominance of administrations to the disadvantage of other user groups (Section 3). Accordingly, the Peer Review team proposes a rebalancing of the membership of the Council to more adequately represent the voice of users.

Improvement action 2. Submitting the proposal for introduction of changes to the Official Statistics Act regarding the composition of the Statistical Council to the authorities

CBS will submit the proposal for introduction of changes to the OSA regarding the composition of the Statistical Council to the authorities. Subsequently, a new Statistics Council will be appointed, according to the changes introduced into the OSA.

Timeline:

Fourth Quarter 2015, see IA 1.

3. *The Croatian Bureau of Statistics should provide visibility for the activities of the Statistics Council by publishing Council minutes, opinions and other relevant documentation on its website. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 11 and Coordination.)*

Current situation:

The Statistics Council has no visibility. It has no website. The CBS website provides no information on the Council or its activities. The Council publishes no opinions or any other documents, and no vision or mission statement is available. Minutes of meetings and opinions passed by the Council are available on the CBS intranet, but are not otherwise published.

Improvement action 3. Improving the visibility of the Statistics Council

CBS will publish the Statistics Council minutes, opinions and other relevant documentation on its website.

Timeline:

Fourth Quarter 2015, and subsequently within 30 days after each Statistical Council meeting

COORDINATION

4. The responsible Croatian authorities should amend the Official Statistics Act to establish a committee of producers of official statistics. (Coordination.)

Current situation:

According to the OSA, the CBS is the chief producer, disseminator and coordinator of the Croatian statistical system. It has the main coordinating role in preparing the Development Strategy of Official Statistics and in preparing the Programme of Statistical Activities, including the Annual Implementation Plan and the Annual Implementation Report. It also has the task of setting and monitoring standards for other producers of official statistics.

To ensure good coordination at the operational level, and not just at the planning and programming levels, systems need to be in place to allow an effective exchange of information between producers.

Currently, this communication takes place in four ways: discussions on the annual plan and the annual report; formal agreements, in some cases between the CBS and other producers; ad hoc methodological working groups; and bilateral contacts on a case-by-case basis.

In the CBS organisational structure, the coordination unit is the Strategic Development of the Statistical System Department. This unit coordinates the planning and programming of official statistical activities, and ensures that there is close consultation and collaboration when drafting strategies and work programmes. For example, a draft of the Annual Implementation Plan is prepared with the active assistance of all other producers of official statistics. This is a very detailed document, containing structured information on hundreds of statistical activities to be carried out by the CBS and other producers of official statistics. Consultations on the draft are held with public administration bodies and other users, seeking their suggestions. The Statistics Council gives its view on the document before it is submitted to the government and parliament for final approval.

Improvement action 4. Proposing the Establishment of the Committee of Official Statistics

CBS will submit the proposal for introduction of changes to the OSA addressing a number of issues requiring improvements within the legal framework for the official statistics, including the issue of establishment of the Producers Committee, aiming at improving coordination, enhancing compliance with the Code of Practice, and providing a stronger identity and greater visibility for the Croatian Statistical System.

Subsequently, a new Committee of Official Statistics will be appointed, according to the new OSA.

Timeline:

Fourth Quarter 2015, see IA 1.

5. The Croatian Bureau of Statistics should provide national guidelines, in line with European standards, for the development, production and dissemination of official statistics, and should set up a system for monitoring compliance with these guidelines. (Coordination.)

Current situation:

Article 9 of the OSA lists the tasks of the CBS. These include “Establishing, updating and maintaining methodological bases, [...] monitoring the application of these methodological bases, and providing instructions to other producers of official statistics on the application of the methodology”, and “Monitoring and implementing quality control of statistical results”.

The CBS provides information on methodology and classifications for other producers, and cooperates with other producers in carrying out statistical activities. However there are no guidelines for other producers regarding quality and methodology reporting, the treatment of errors, and the handling of revisions, release calendars and dissemination.

Improvement action 5.1 Development and publishing of national guidelines

Following the establishment of the Committee of Official Statistics, work on national guidelines will be set as one of its priorities. National guidelines will provide standards and guidance to all producers of official statistics on quality and methodology reporting. Guidelines will include treatment of errors, handling of revisions, rules for setting up release calendars and dissemination and will be published on CBS website. The Committee will also be entrusted to assess compliance with these guidelines and monitor their compliance with the CoP.

Timeline:

End of 2017

Improvement action 5. 2 Setting up a system for monitoring compliance with national guidelines

CBS will set up a system for monitoring compliance with national guidelines

Timeline:

End of 2018

RESOURCES

- 6. The responsible Croatian authorities should ensure that the Croatian Bureau of Statistics has sufficient human resources, in terms of level and skills, to meet its obligations in the production of European statistics. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 3.1 and 7.5.)**

Current situation:

The CBS in recent years has engaged in an impressive series of fundamental reforms, many providing a significant dividend in terms of cost-effectiveness and data quality. Developments have been particularly intensive in the areas of increased use of administrative data, the implementation of statistical registers and the development of integrated IT solutions to standardise and improve statistical processes (including data collection) and their documentation. As a consequence, there is a growing need for more highly qualified staff with the skills to operate and further develop the new processes. The pressure is particularly acute on IT specialists who have to hand over developed applications and systems to statistical areas and at the same time to continue new developments of the new IT systems and platforms while still maintaining the old production systems. CBS has only partial control over the recruitment procedure, as the hiring quotas are set by the Government.

In terms of human resources, the CBS has experienced substantial reductions since 2010. Between 2010 and 2013, number of staff was decreased by 12,2%. Further, there is now an imbalance in the age structure in the CBS: 52% are over 50 and only 4% under 30. The average age of the staff is 49. This could have negative effects in future for the quality and sustainability of statistical production.

Improvement action 6. Providing information about human resources in CBS to the relevant authorities

CBS will present the status of available human resources to responsible Croatian authorities, comparing them to increasing volume of tasks and mandatory results expected in official statistics, with the emphasis on EU statistics, i.e. on requirements set by the "acquis communautaire" in statistics. CBS will also develop a substitution plan for a number of key positions which may become vacated due to retirement. Further, CBS will continue to report its human and financial resource situation in the Annual Implementation Report.

Timeline:

End of 2015

7. In order to increase the expertise required for producing quality statistics, the Croatian Bureau of Statistics should develop and implement a human resources policy covering continuous training for its staff. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 7.6.)

Current situation:

Within the framework of pre-accession activities, the CBS increased the competency of certain categories of employees directly involved in the areas that the pre-accession programmes focused on. IT professionals, some staff involved in methodological areas such as sampling and seasonal adjustment, and some staff in statistical areas such as national accounts, improved their knowledge and skills through pre-accession assistance.

The priority now should be to maintain and further enhance the level of acquired expertise and to share it to increase the general level of competence across the organisation. Although the CBS has produced a strategic framework for the development of the human resources management system, it has not yet produced a human resources policy that would address continuous vocational training.

Staff members joining the CBS are invited to general training sessions organised by the State School for Public Administration. Specific training on statistical matters has until now been linked to pre-accession projects. In some cases, training sessions, workshops or seminars have been organised on specific topics to share knowledge among CBS staff. The CBS makes much use of the European Statistical Training Programme (ESTP) to further train its staff. In the period 2012-2014, 114 ESTP courses were attended by a total of 232 CBS staff members. In the same period, 7 CBS employees were integrated in traineeship programmes of 4-6 months in Luxembourg, Spain or Slovenia within the framework of the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) programmes.

Improvement action 7.1 Development of a training programme

Founded on a strategic framework for the development of the human resources management system, CBS will develop a continuous training programme, aimed at increasing knowledge and skills both in specialist statistical domains, and in horizontal statistical areas and IT. Such a programme will be designed in such a way that it may be supplemented by ESTP and other training possibilities offered within ESS. The objective is to ensure basic general and specialist training level for new or rotating staff, and advanced training level for more experienced.

This development is highly correlated to the overall increase in human and financial resources, which depends on Croatian authorities, and it will be done stepwise.

First step will be a development of a training programme concept, structure, organisation and estimating required costs.

Timeline:

End of 2016

Improvement action 7.2 Implementing pilot training programme

Next step will be implementing of a pilot training programme and obtaining funding for continuous training.

Timeline:

End of 2017

Improvement action 7.3 Implementing continuous training programme

Subsequent step will be implementing of a regular training programme.

Timeline:

End of 2018

8. The Croatian Bureau of Statistics should develop a mid-term plan for the replacement of the system of branch and regional offices, for example by a system of home-based interviewers or teleworkers. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 3.1, 10.2 and 10.4.)

Current situation:

A relatively large proportion of CBS staff is distributed in its decentralised units. There are 13 regional offices and 34 branch offices, and these contain a total of 151 full-time equivalent staff, or 27% of the total staff.

This structure is a result of traditional methods of operation, where the main tasks performed in branch and regional offices were linked to data collection activities (business entity-based surveys, household-based surveys and prices collection) and local data dissemination. Such structures are now becoming obsolete in the light of the introduction of new technologies for data dissemination, the increased use of administrative data and the wider use of computer-assisted telephone interviewing and web-based surveys.

While the regional offices are mainly involved in household-based surveys and prices collection, this activity does not keep them fully occupied: over 20% of regional and branch office staff performs data collection for other surveys, and the ones involved in household surveys and price collection are not performing those duties on a full-time basis. CBS additionally hires 34 full-time equivalent temporary interviewers to supplement the number of regional interviewers.

CBS plans to modernise data collection for business surveys, which will enable the reorganisation of branch and regional offices and their specialisation towards household data collection.

CBS developed a CAI (Computer Assisted Interviewing) System, with an operating CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone) Centre, serving already a number of household surveys, and an operating CMS (Case Management System) for managing CAPI (Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing) on major household surveys. CBS has developed a multi-annual plan of household surveys (until 2020), based on available information on European and national requirements.

Also, the Ministry of Administration is planning a reorganisation of State Administration County Offices, which may influence future developments of CBS regional offices.

Improvement action 8. Development of a mid-term plan for reorganisation of the Regional Offices

CBS will develop a plan for reorganisation of its regional and branch offices. Current idea is to gradually reduce the number of branch offices in order to accommodate needs of planned CAPI and CATI interviewing. CBS plans to set up a permanent network of interviewers and keep its major regional offices, with revised functions.

Mid-term plan will be developed by the end of 2016 at the latest, to be fully implemented subsequently starting in 2017. Full implementation is related to changes in the Croatian public administration system. CBS does not possess instruments for ensuring necessary conditions for full implementation of the mid-term plan.

Timeline:

End of 2016

9. The Croatian Bureau of Statistics should introduce a system of procedures and tools to allow the estimation of costs of statistical products and processes. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 10.1.)

Current situation:

A time-recording system was developed and used for EU-funded projects, but that system would require fundamental adaptations to be integrated into the current CBS account management system. Extending the time-recording system, currently used for EU-funded projects, requires a demanding activities on adjusting the system to statistical business processes, and a lot of organisational changes, adjustment of the currently used software and its testing, preliminary application of the cost-accounting system, with the emphasis on the overhead costs, and putting the new system into regular service.

Therefore the CBS is not in a position to identify the extent to which available resources have been effectively used, and it cannot support its budget requirements with evidence showing the level of resources that the production of quality official statistics requires.

One of the important pillars of the CBS quality management policy relates to the implementation of the GSBPM model. This provides a potential basis for implementing a cost-accounting system, where resources could be classified according to the main phases of the model.

CBS is currently looking into experiences of other EU MSs, which may serve as examples of good practices in cost-accounting.

Improvement action 9. Introduction of cost-accounting system

It is foreseen to introduce a CBS cost-accounting system, including procedures and tools, based on the GSBPM, as an adopted model of statistical business processes in CBS. Development of this system may use the already developed time-recording system for EU-funded projects.

Timeline:

End of 2018

10. The responsible Croatian authorities should take steps to allow the Croatian Bureau of Statistics to retain earned income. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 3.1.)

Current situation:

Currently, the CBS cannot retain income earned from the provision of data (including microdata for researchers) or services and must remit all such income to Government Budget. This works as a counter-incentive to providing a good service because the additional costs involved cannot be covered.

Own-generated income in 2014 amounted to €204,900 which represents 1,8% of the overall CBS budget. The Peer Review team considers that the CBS should be permitted to retain the portion of this income that relates to the customised work it delivers. This would provide an incentive for the CBS to offer a good service to specialist users and researchers.

Improvement action 10. Submitting the proposal for introduction of changes to the Official Statistics Act regarding retention of earned income by the CBS to the authorities

CBS will submit the proposal for introduction of changes to the OSA addressing a number of issues requiring improvements within the legal framework for the official statistics, including the issue of retaining earned income, aiming at using these financial resources as incentives for CBS staff, development activities for a range of additional services to the public, and for improving data dissemination and overall visibility of official statistics.

Subsequently, earned income may be retained and used by CBS directly, according to the new OSA.

Timeline:

Fourth Quarter 2015, see IA 1.

QUALITY

11. The Croatian Bureau of Statistics should establish a unit to support quality management within the organisation and to reinforce coordination within the national statistical system on quality issues. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 4.)

Current situation:

The CBS is intensively engaged in setting up a framework for the development of a system to continuously evaluate and improve the quality of its statistical processes and products. The CBS implemented an important Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) project called "Technical Assistance in Business Statistics and Quality Documentation". In the framework of this project, the CBS elaborated a draft document on Total Quality Management. This document presents the strategy of the CBS on adherence to quality principles and describes the instruments and tools under development at the CBS to upgrade the quality of its statistical processes and products in line with EU recommendations.

The CBS is progressively incorporating in the Integrated Statistical Information System (ISIS) the applications that are relevant to quality management: a central metadata repository, a metadata manager, a glossary of quality terms, a database of quality indicators, survey processing tools, data browsing and tabulation facilities and a classifications maintenance tool. ISIS represents an efficient centralised tool for standardised quality reporting and monitoring. The associated Database of Quality Information (DBQI) is becoming a key tool for quality assessment, quality documentation and quality reporting for all CBS surveys.

The Expert working group for dealing with quality issues within CBS was established on 31st of March 2015. This Working group will act as coordination body within CBS until a specific organizational unit for quality would be established.

Improvement action 11. Submitting the proposal for changing the organisational structure regarding establishment of the quality management unit to the authorities

Upon acceptance of the proposal for changing the organisational structure, CBS will establish a specific unit, whose task will be supporting quality management within CBS and participating in coordination activities within the national statistical system on quality issues.

Timeline:

Fourth Quarter 2015

12. The Croatian Bureau of Statistics should make arrangements for the participation of external experts, where appropriate, when key statistics are being audited. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 4.4.)

Current situation:

The CBS has an internal audit department, currently consisting of two people, responsible for the implementation of regular financial and statistical reviews. The department follows international auditing standards as well as national regulations and guidelines established by the Ministry of Finance. Internal audits comply with strategic and annual internal auditing plans. The current Strategic Internal Audit Plan covers the period 2014–2016, and annual plans are aligned with this multi-annual strategy following a risk assessment.

When the CBS started implementing quality reviews, activities were mainly focused on financial processes rather than on statistical ones. To date, several statistical outputs have been the focus of auditing activities, and these resulted in audit reports available for internal purposes. The audit reports result in detailed plans for improvement actions.

Currently, several statistical domains are subjected to internal audit activities.

Improvement action 12.1 Development of a plan of internal audits which may require inclusion of external experts

In the last quarter of 2015, based on a risk assessment, CBS/internal audit department will prepare a Strategic Plan for 2016-2018 and Annual plan for 2016. Based on the existing time, finances and human resources, it is estimated that five internal audits may be carried out per year. According to ranking of statistical processes in relation to their risk level CBS may include external experts for key statistical processes. It is estimated that engagement of one external expert per year is feasible. Internal audits will include external experts provided that they available, funding ensured, and need for their engagement justified in relation to the existing CBS knowledge and skills.

CBS/internal audit department will develop a plan of internal audits which may require inclusion of external experts, alongside with ensuring needed funding for this purpose, by the end of 2016.

Timeline:

End of 2016

Improvement action 12.2 Inclusion of external experts to internal audits, where appropriate

It is expected that the first audits including external experts will take place by the end of 2017 at the latest.

Timeline:

End of 2017

13. The Croatian Bureau of Statistics should commission a comprehensive security audit of its information technology infrastructure taking international standards into account. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 5.5.)

Current situation:

The CBS IT infrastructure is owned and mainly managed by the CBS itself. The central components are located in the two CBS premises in Zagreb. The CBS IT security policy, which is published on the intranet, stipulates the rules for the use of computers. Further documents available are the CBS Ordinance on access to confidential statistical data and documents on physical, technical and organisational IT protection.

The systems are constantly monitored by CBS staff, but no external auditing takes place.

Improvement action 13. Involvement of external IT Security Audit

CBS plans, in cooperation with Croatian Information Systems Security Bureau, to perform an external IT security audit, based on international standards. Audit is planned before 2021 Census of population.

CBS will develop a plan for involvement of external IT Security Audit, alongside with ensuring needed funding for this purpose, by the end of 2016. It is expected that involvement of external IT Security Audit will take place by mid-2018 at the latest.

Timeline:

Mid-2018

USER SERVICES

14. The Croatian Bureau of Statistics should redesign its website to improve layout, navigation and usability. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 15.2.)

Current situation:

In April 2015, the CBS conducted a user satisfaction survey. Several aspects got a positive rating: for instance, CBS statistics are considered to be of high quality, and users are very satisfied with the service they receive from CBS staff. However, it was clear from the survey that there is a low level of satisfaction with the design, navigation and usability of the website, with users being particularly critical about the limited number of statistics accessible in the web databases. Currently there is ongoing work on redesigning of CBS website, with the objective of improving layout, navigation and usability.

Improvement action 14. CBS website Redesign

CBS will redesign its website, with the objective of improving layout, navigation and usability.

Timeline:

Before the end of 2016

15. The Croatian Bureau of Statistics should extend the coverage of its web databases so that they contain, at least, all of the data in its statistical releases; the data should be available as soon as possible after the release is published, and ideally at the same time. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 15.2.)

Current situation:

The CBS employs the widely used PC-Axis software for disseminating statistics in interactive tables. But only a limited number of statistical areas are covered, and even in these cases the coverage tends to be rather limited.

The Peer Reviewers consider that the CBS should aim to provide all data in statistical releases, and as far as practicable in other statistical publications, in web database form. Strong central control should be exercised to ensure that the data files are structured in the most useful way from the users' perspective.

Furthermore, statistics in the databases are published by the CBS later than the corresponding statistics in the releases. The aim should be to publish the material in the releases and databases simultaneously so that users could use the data from either source at the time of publication, according to their needs.

Improvement action 15.1 Development of a plan for extending web database coverage, and ensuring funding

CBS will continuously extend the coverage of its web databases, with the aim of providing to users all data in statistical releases, and as far as practicable in other statistical publications, in web database form. Whenever applicable, material in the releases and databases will be released simultaneously so that users could use the data from either source at the time of publication, according to their needs.

CBS will develop a plan for extending the web database coverage, alongside with ensuring needed funding for this purpose, by the end of 2016.

Timeline: End of 2016

Improvement action 15.2 Extending the web database coverage

It is expected that databases intended for web inclusion will be developed by mid-2017, published by the end of 2017 and filled with data before the end of 2018.

Timeline:

End of 2017

16. The Croatian Bureau of Statistics should provide improved commentary in its statistical releases, and should ensure that all releases have a well-chosen headline. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 15.1.)

Current situation:

The results of statistical surveys are published for the first time in “First Releases”. These releases are a vital component of dissemination, providing the latest information to the media and other users. They are objective and laid out in a consistent style, with figures and percentage changes, which may make the information difficult to digest. The text in successive releases is usually identical, with just the numbers changing.

CBS does not have a practice of putting headlines to statistical releases.

Improvement action 16. Modernisation of statistical releases

CBS will work on improving its statistical releases in order to make them more informative. CBS plans to include more extensive commentaries in its most important releases, thus making them more understandable to general public. Commentaries will include careful examination of presented data and contain interesting facts about growth contributions, structure and relations to past periods. CBS will also introduce a practice of putting understandable headlines to statistical releases, with the aim of capturing attention, encourage users to continue reading and make it more likely that a release to get media attention. As a precondition, CBS will introduce training to staff involved in writing releases.

Timeline:

End of 2016

17. The Croatian Bureau of Statistics should extend the release calendar to cover the publication of data in its web databases. In cases where there is a delay, an explanation should be provided. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 6.5 and 13.4.)

Current situation:

The CBS provides an interactive advance release calendar on its website. It is published in October and covers publications due for the whole of the following year. It provides an easy way for users to see forthcoming publications and to access recently released data. One can readily see all publications for any day, week or month.

However, the calendar does not completely cover statistics published in the web databases. Only part of the statistics in the releases is currently published in the databases, and in some cases there is a delay before database publication takes place. Therefore users do not know when the data will be published in the database. CBS intends to increase the quantity of data available in its web databases, and publish the data at the same time in publications and databases.

Improvement action 17.1 Development of a plan for extending the web database coverage, and ensuring needed funding

CBS will publish the data in statistical releases and web databases simultaneously, and when that is not the case will extend the release calendar to cover the publication of data in web databases.

CBS will develop a plan for extending the web database coverage, alongside with ensuring needed funding for this purpose.

Timeline:

End of 2016

Improvement action 17.2 Extending Release Calendar to Databases

Relying on the CBS Revision policy, and criteria defined there, CBS will provide an explanation in case of a delay.

Following the Improvement action 17.1, it is expected that the Release Calendar will be extended to databases.

Timeline:

End of 2017

Improvement action 17.3 Provision of explanation in case of a delay

In parallel with the Improvement action 17.2, CBS will provide explanations in case of delays.

Timeline:

End of 2017

18. The Croatian Bureau of Statistics should publish its policy documents (dissemination policy, confidentiality policy, revisions policy) on its website. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 5.4, 8.6 and 15.1.)

Current situation:

The CBS has an internal policy document on dissemination, "Ordinance on the dissemination of official statistical data". This covers dissemination practices, the various types of statistical publication, the role of the release calendar, the communication channels used (including social media channels), the possibilities for providing custom-made analyses, the rules for correcting errors in published statistics and the extent to which English is used in statistical outputs. This dissemination policy document is not accessible to users.

Similarly, there is internal documentation on the protection of statistical confidentiality during data collection, processing and dissemination. No confidentiality policy document is accessible to users (apart from documents on the access to confidential statistical data for scientific purposes).

The CBS has a revision policy for some subject-matter domains, such as national accounts, short-term business statistics, and Prodcom. While an overall revision policy has been drafted, covering matters such as how seasonally adjusted series should be revised, it is not yet operational or publicly available.

Improvement action 18. Publication of major policy documents

Upon completion, CBS will publish its policy documents on dissemination policy, confidentiality policy and revisions policy, on its website.

CBS will publish each document separately, as finalized. Specific deadlines will meet by the end of 2016 at the latest. All documents are currently available in drafts. As they are closely related and connected, they need to be published in the same time.

Timeline:

End of 2016

19. The Croatian Bureau of Statistics should provide quality reports on its website for all of its statistical products; these reports should conform to international standards, and links to the reports should be provided on the relevant statistic pages. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 4.3, 15.6 and 15.7.)

Current situation:

The CBS has set up the DBQI, which will become the key tool for quality assessment, quality documentation and quality reporting for CBS statistics. The database contains numerical (quality indicators) and descriptive information. It contains an exhaustive list of quality information based on the two ESS structures — the Euro-SDMX Metadata Structure (ESMS) and the ESS Standard for Quality Reports Structure (ESQRS). Since it contains all fields from both structures, it could be used (if all variables are populated) to generate quality and methodology reports based on the Single Integrated Metadata Structure (SIMS) or any subset thereof. The database is now being progressively populated for the different surveys, and a small number of standard quality reports have been published on the CBS website. The reports contain a subset of variables from the DBQI, including the legal basis, classifications, definitions, coverage, scope, sampling and non-sampling errors, level of non-response and imputation, timeliness, comparability and response burden.

Improvement action 19. Quality Reports on CBS Website

CBS will provide quality reports on its website for all of its statistical products, and these reports will conform to international standards, and links to the reports will be provided on the relevant statistic pages.

CBS will finalize the existing draft plan for providing quality reports to general public on CBS website, by the end of 2015. Realization of this plan will be done stepwise, as quality reports will be prepared, checked and verified, cumulatively as follows: 20% by the end of 2016, 45% by the end of 2018, and 100% by the end of 2019.

Timeline:

End of 2019

20. The Croatian Bureau of Statistics should improve the service for authorised researchers by providing a remote access facility to microdata, and by supplying appropriate standardised documentation on the datasets and variables. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 15.4 and 15.5.)

Current situation:

The CBS provides access for authorised researchers to confidential microdata. This is provided for in the OSA (Article 65), and involves the signing of a special contract between the CBS and a researcher or a research entity. Currently, two methods are used to provide access to microdata. Researchers can go to the safe room in the CBS in Zagreb, or the microdata can be transmitted to the researcher. In the latter case the data are anonymised to protect against unauthorised disclosure.

Improvement action 20. Improved Services to Authorized Researchers

CBS will continuously work on improving metadata on the datasets at researcher disposal, thus providing them with appropriate standardised documentation on the datasets and variables. CBS will put a required security infrastructure in place. Thus CBS will be in a position to enable remote access to microdata for researchers in a secure way.

Timeline:

End of 2017

21. The Croatian Bureau of Statistics should establish standing user groups for key statistical areas. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 11.1.)

Current situation:

User consultation in Croatia takes place in a variety of ways, both formal and informal. The main communication channel is the Statistics Council, though discussions there are at a high strategic level. Users also have an opportunity to comment on draft strategies and programmes published on the CBS website. The user satisfaction survey in April 2015, which was an updated version of a survey first performed in 2013, provided useful feedback and comments from a wide range of users, and the CBS intends to repeat the survey annually. Various working groups exist. There are many bilateral contacts with the main users, and many informal contacts with occasional users.

User groups are set up, on an ad hoc basis, such as when planning for the ESA 2010 change.

Improvement action 21.1 Investigating possibilities for setting up standing user groups

CBS will set up standing user groups, which may meet once or twice a year, for key statistical areas.

CBS will investigate possibilities for setting up a realistic number of standing user groups, according to specific statistical areas, by the end of 2015.

Timeline:

End of 2015

Improvement action 21.2 Setting up standing user groups

Consultations with users and setting up of standing user groups are expected to be finalized by the end of 2016, at the latest.

Timeline:

End of 2016

Improvement action 21.3 User Consultation made functional

Standing user groups are made functional and user consultations are expected to be carried out regularly by the end of 2017, at the latest.

Timeline:

End of 2017

RESPONSE BURDEN

22. The Croatian Bureau of Statistics should extend web-based data collection to all business surveys, where appropriate. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principles 9 and 10.)

Current situation:

The CBS's strategic plan for 2014–2016 identified electronic data collection as an important method for reducing the reporting burden on businesses. Web-based data collection from businesses has the benefit of increasing efficiency and data quality, and of reducing timeliness and the burden on respondents. Experience shows that respondents prefer computer-assisted web interviewing (CAWI) to paper questionnaires, and thus the perception of response burden is further decreased.

The CBS has made good progress in the use of CAWI for business surveys: increasingly, businesses can provide data using the online application accessible from the CBS website. Currently, CAWI is available for 19 surveys, and it is being extended in line with available resources.

Improvement action 22. Web-based Data Collection

CBS will extend web-based data collection to all business surveys, where appropriate.

Timeline:

End of 2018

23. The Croatian Bureau of Statistics should systematically measure the response burden for all surveys and report annually on the trend. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 9.)

Current situation:

Several CBS activities are concerned with reducing the burden on respondents from completing statistical surveys. The use of administrative data has increased in recent years, and it will increase further over the coming years. Web-based data collection is being extended, a register of samples is planned to reduce the burden and spread it more fairly, and some questionnaire testing is taking place.

Currently, the burden is measured only for some surveys. This is done by including a question on how long it takes to complete the questionnaire, including the time spent extracting the required information from business files. The averages are calculated (using the median rather than the mean, as occasional extreme responses would distort the estimate) and analysed by responsible line managers.

Improvement action 23. Response Burden Measuring

CBS will extend the scope of surveys in which there is measured the response burden to all statistical surveys, where applicable. Information on response burden will be made available on CBS website.

Timeline:

End of 2019.