PEER REVIEW REPORT

ON COMPLIANCE WITH THE CODE OF PRACTICE AND
THE COORDINATION ROLE OF THE NATIONAL STATISTICAL INSTITUTE

BULGARIA

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The National Statistical Institute of Bulgaria (NSI) is the main producer of European statistics in Bulgaria. According to the Statistics Act, the National Statistical System (NSS) also includes other statistical authorities and the Bulgarian National Bank (BNB). The NSI has a strong legal mandate to coordinate the production of European statistics at national level. This mandate should be fully implemented.

The NSI stands separately from the ministries. Other national statistical authorities are structural units of ministries or other governmental bodies. The elements of the NSS could be more integrated.

The Peer Review team identified six broad issues that are related to the professional independence of the NSS, implementation of the systematic quality management, modernisation of statistical processes, modernisation of the organisation with increasing cost-effectiveness, improving service for users and coordination role of the NSI.

A quality management framework for the NSI is still under development. The legal basis, the organisational structure, and various documents, in particular, the Quality Management Policy, clearly indicate the NSI's strong commitment to quality. The Strategy for Development of the NSS of the Republic of Bulgaria, 2013–2017, lists a number of highly relevant activities and projects. The department responsible for quality management is intended to conduct quality audits of the statistical processes and products. An important and urgent NSI activity is the development of Quality Guidelines.

Sound methodology underpins quality statistics, and adequate tools, procedures and expertise are required to facilitate this. No divergence from Eurostat methodology has been identified but conclusive evidence has not been presented that shows that adequate procedures are in place to check and ensure that the concepts and definitions required by the European Statistical System (ESS) are adhered to or that the best methodological solutions are followed in practice.

Web-based data collection from enterprises is a positive step that preserves confidentiality, reduces the form filling burden and increases the efficiency of the statistical processes. Use of the internet could be further enhanced if all business data collection was processed through a common site. The Peer Review team could not identify any systematic procedures for examining the potential for further applications of electronic data collection. The response burden on businesses should be more proactively managed within the organisation and across the NSS as a whole, and be routinely appraised.

The data collection systems of other producers of European statistics (e.g. agricultural statistics, operated by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food) can be improved by developing common information technology (IT) applications. This would increase the cost-effectiveness of data collection and the production of statistics and, when combined with appropriate statistical processes, it also has the potential to enhance the quality of outputs.

Administrative data is the prominent source of data for different statistics and generates efficiency savings both to the respondent and to the compiler of the associated statistics. The Statistics Act provides access to administrative data but no control or influence over the definitions, coverage, quality and overall relevance of the information to produce fit-for-purpose statistics that meet ESS requirements. The use of these data needs further legal support; appropriate and more specified agreements between the NSI and the owners of the administrative data are required in order to control the flow and the quality of the data.

A more empowering management style, supported by suitable processes, would help the NSI to take better advantage of the constructive attitude of the more junior staff in improving the statistical processes and output. The Peer Review team saw only limited evidence of a structured approach to staff development and the building of statistical capacity.

Communication channels between the NSI and users of its statistical products are the National Statistical Council and to some extent the regional statistical offices. In communication with users, not much space is given to technical issues like statistical products and statistical processes. More intensive communication with and consultation of users should be institutionalised. Successful user relations involve further services for the users, in particular in the process of disseminating statistical figures.

For the most part, the NSS of Bulgaria is compliant with the European statistics Code of Practice (CoP), but there is still some scope to enhance compliance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Strengthening professional independence of the National Statistical System and ensuring trust in official statistics

1. The Statistics Act should be amended so that the obligations of the President of the National Statistical Institute are specified. The President of the National Statistical Institute and the heads of the Other National Authorities producing European statistics should have sole responsibility for deciding on statistical methods, standards and procedures, and content and timing of statistical releases. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 1.4.)

2. The Statistics Act should be amended so that the appointment of the President of the National Statistical Institute and heads of Other National Authorities producing European statistics shall be based on professional competence only. The law should stipulate clear selection criteria and a transparent procedure of competition for the appointment of top management (President and Deputy-Presidents) of the National Statistical Institute. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 1.8.)

3. The practice of privileged access to press releases prior to publication should be more visible on the National Statistical Institute website. The concordance of the Dissemination Policy with the Statistics Act in this regard should be analysed. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 6.7.)

4. Access by the tax agency to the business data collected for statistical purposes should be stopped or permission for use of statistical data for administrative purposes from respondents obtained. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 5.)

Enhancement of the Quality Management System

5. A quality management system inspired by the concepts of the European Foundation for Quality Management should be established. The head of the unit responsible for quality should play the role of Quality Manager, and a cross-organisational Quality Committee should be established to support him/her (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 4.1.)

6. The National Statistical Institute should adopt quality guidelines that describe in detail the implementation of quality management within the statistical production processes based on the Generic Statistical Business Process Model or another equivalent model. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 4.1 and 4.2.)

7. Both metadata reports and quality reports, which follow a uniform and standardised format for all statistics and provide users with all relevant metadata and quality indicators, should be available on the National Statistical Institute website. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 4.3, 6.4, 15.5 and 15.6.)

Modernisation of statistical processes

8. The Generic Statistical Business Process Model or another equivalent model should be used consistently in the National Statistical System to define the business processes needed to develop and produce official statistics. The benefit would be a more strategic approach to the delivery of the requirements of the European Statistical System. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 8.1–8.8.)

9. A central methodological unit of the National Statistical Institute should take on the role of providing to Directorates of the National Statistical Institute standardised methodological solutions that are compliant with the needs of the European Statistical System and are aimed at improving cost-effectiveness. The unit should also be proactive in undertaking a rolling programme of methodological reviews and ensuring the maintenance of the appropriate metadata jointly with compilers of European statistics. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 7.)

10. The response burden on businesses should be monitored and reported to the top management of the National Statistical Institute on a regular basis. The central methodological unit should take responsibility for ensuring that the burden on business is kept to a minimum. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 9.)

11. The data collection system for agricultural statistics operated by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food should be improved by an appropriate Information Technology application, which is compatible with the Information Technology systems of the National Statistical Institute. Development should be performed with the help and involvement of Information Technology specialists from the National Statistical Institute. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 10.2, 10.4 and 8.4.)

Use of administrative data, increasing cost-effectiveness and accomplishments, modernisation of the organisation

12. In the context of administrative data used by the National Statistical Institute and the Other National Authorities producing European statistics, a legal mandate, appropriate procedures, control and influence over the definitions, coverage, quality and overall relevance should be ensured. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 2.2, 8.1 and 9.4.)

13. An organisational review of the National Statistical Institute should be undertaken focusing on the benefits of a more centralised structure based on the statistical value chain: statistical design; data collection; data compilation and estimation; and computation, analysis and dissemination. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 10.4.)

14. A more empowering management style should be introduced in the National Statistical Institute to better exploit the knowledge and enthusiasm of staff. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 7.5 and 7.6; Principle 10.)

15. Project management arrangements and tools should be put in place and an action plan drawn up to take forward the strategic plans relating to 2013–2017. A Project Management Board should take responsibility for the monitoring and delivery of the strategic plans and should provide regular reports to top management of the National Statistical Institute. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 3.1 and 10.1.)

16. Information Technology projects in particular should be carefully designed and managed and be realistic in terms of their delivery. To facilitate this, the National Statistical Institute should take on an Information Technology coordination role across the National Statistical System. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 10.1, 10.2 and 10.4.)

17. A more systematic and proactive approach to training should be introduced. The National Statistical Institute should build up the relevant staff skills and regularly check the availability of those skills it needs, offering training to fill the skill gaps, if needed. Arrangements should be put in place for internal skills transfer and assistance from academia. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 7.6.)

18. The National Statistical Institute should have the appropriate human resources policies in place to recruit and retain, in the longer term, experts with the relevant and essential skills. This applies especially to Information Technology staff. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 3.1 and 7.6.)

Deepening relations with and improving services for users

19. An intensified communication with and consultation of users should be institutionalised in the National Statistical Institute in the form of technical working groups for all relevant topics. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 11.1, 11.3 and 15.6.)

20. Users should have the possibility of self-tabulating statistical data on the National Statistical Institute website. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 15.2.)

21. The practice of custom-designed analyses should be improved in the National Statistical Institute by simplifying the price list and by informing the general public about custom-designed analyses conducted. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 15.3.)

22. Projects contracted outside of the National Statistical Programme should follow criteria that ensure that the project theme is related to official statistics and the general public should be informed about contracted surveys. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 15.3.)

23. Interest in using anonymised microdata for research purposes should be raised and the National Statistical Institute should improve the possibilities of accessing microdata. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 15.4.)

24. A formal procedure for correction of errors discovered in published statistics should be established and published on the National Statistical Institute website. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 6.3.)

25. A formal procedure for informing about changes of a release date should be established and published on the National Statistical Institute website. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 6.5.)

Coordination role of the National Statistical Institute

26. Members of the National Statistical System should establish common dissemination guidelines and procedures (including a release calendar and regular reporting of data transmissions) in the National Statistical System. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 6.3 and 6.5–6.8; Principles 13 and 15.)

27. The National Statistical Institute and Other National Authorities producing European statistics should disseminate the whole set of European statistics in a common statistical database of the National Statistical Institute. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 15.2, 15.5, 15.6 and 15.7.)

28. The National Statistical Institute should monitor and publish activities and accomplishments of objectives set out in the Strategy for Development of the National Statistical System of the Republic of Bulgaria, 2013–2017. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 1.5.)

2. INTRODUCTION

This peer review report is part of a series of assessments, the objective of which is to evaluate the extent to which National Statistical Institutes (NSIs) and the European Statistical System (ESS)[1] comply with the European statistics Code of Practice (CoP).

The CoP, which sets out a common quality framework for the ESS, was first adopted in 2005 by the Statistical Programme Committee and updated in 2011 by its successor, the European Statistical System Committee. The CoP — 15 principles and related indicators of good practice — covers the institutional environment, the statistical production process and the output of European statistics. The ESS is committed to fully complying with the CoP and is working towards its full implementation. Periodic assessments review progress towards reaching this goal.

The first global assessment, a round of peer reviews in 2006–2008, explored how the NSIs and Eurostat were progressing in implementing the parts of the CoP relating to the institutional environment and dissemination of statistics (principles 1–6 and 15). This resulted in reports for each NSI and Eurostat, available on the Eurostat website[2]. These reports also include a set of improvement actions covering all the principles of the CoP; these informed the annual monitoring of the implementation of the CoP in the ESS in the period 2009-2013.

The scope of this second round of peer reviews is broader: the assessment of CoP compliance covers all principles; the CoP compliance of selected other national producers of European statistics (as well as the NSI) in each country is being assessed; and the way in which statistical authorities coordinate the production and dissemination of European statistics within their statistical systems is being explored.

It should be underlined that there is a fundamental difference between the reports in the previous round of peer reviews conducted in 2006-2008 and the reports from this round. In the 2006-2008 round compliance with principles 1 to 6 and 15 of the CoP was assessed by means of a four-level scale (fully met; largely met; partly met and not met) and improvement actions were agreed on all 15 principles. After five years of continuous development most of the improvement actions have been implemented and significant progress towards full compliance with the CoP has been made. Therefore, rather than stating the state of play for all principles of the CoP, the reports from the 2013-2015 round mainly focus on issues where full compliance with the CoP has not been found or further improvements are recommended by the Peer Review team.

In order to gain an independent view, the peer review exercise has been externalised and an audit-like approach, where all the answers to the self-assessment questionnaires have to be supported by evidence, has been applied. As in 2006-2008, all EU Member States and EFTA/EEA countries and Eurostat are subject to a peer review.

Each peer review in the Member States and EFTA/EEA countries is conducted by three reviewers and has four phases: completion of self-assessment questionnaires by a country; their assessment by Peer Reviewers; a peer review visit; and the preparation of reports on the outcomes. The peer review of Eurostat has been conducted by the European Statistical Governance Advisory Board (ESGAB).

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[1] The ESS is the partnership between the Union statistical authority, which is the Commission (Eurostat), and the national statistical institutes (NSIs) and other national authorities responsible in each Member State for the development, production and dissemination of European statistics. This Partnership also includes the EEA and EFTA countries.

[2] http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/quality/first-round-of-peer-reviews

To test and complete the methodology, it was piloted in two countries, Iceland and Slovakia, over the summer of 2013.

The Bulgarian peer review was conducted by Mr Priit Potisepp (chair), Mr Peter G. Hackl and Mr David Fenwick, with a peer review visit to Sofia on 13–17 October 2014. The programme of the visit is shown in Annex A and the list of participants in the various sessions in Annex B.

This report focuses on compliance with the CoP and the coordination of European statistics within the Bulgarian statistical system. The report highlights some of the strengths of Bulgarian NSS in these contexts and contains recommendations for improvement. Improvement actions developed by NSI on the basis of this report will be published within the four-week period starting when the final report is sent to the NSI.

3. BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE NATIONAL STATISTICAL SYSTEM

Statistical activity in Bulgaria is regulated by the Statistics Act, Law for Protection of Personal Data, Electronic Government Act and specific legal acts such as acts on 2011 population and housing census and on intra-community trading of goods (Intrastat).

According to the law, the NSI, with headquarters in Sofia, carries out statistical surveys necessary for national and European statistics, disseminates statistical information and coordinates statistical activity in Bulgaria.

The NSI is primarily financed from the public budget. It is managed by a President appointed by the decision of the Council of Ministers for a term of seven years, which is renewable once. There are no public competitive recruitment procedures and no qualifications requirements set in the Statistics Act for selection of the NSI President. As of the end of 2013, NSI staff (excluding field interviewers) numbered 1 119 employees, 334 in headquarters and 785 in regional statistical offices. Regional offices, located in the district centres, generally carry out surveys in the territory of the respective district, i.e. collect and process data according to approved methodologies, and transmit data to the NSI headquarters. They also analyse data and conduct statistical services at the request of external users. Regional offices keep close contact with respondents and other local stakeholders and focus on reaching high response rates. The NSI budget amounted to EUR 9.1 million in 2012. According to the average salary, NSI salaries are ranked among the lowest in Bulgarian government institutions. The average age of the staff is rather high, 40 % of NSI employees in headquarters and 30 % in regional offices being older than 55 years.

According to the Statistics Act, the NSI, with its 28 regional statistical offices, the Bulgarian National Bank (BNB) and Other National Authorities producing European statistics (ONAs) form the NSS.

ONAs are decided by an order of the Prime Minister on the basis of the joint proposal made by the President of the NSI and the head of the respective institution for a period of five years. At the time of conducting the Peer Review, the following eight other producers of European statistics existed: Intrastat Directorate within the National Revenue Agency (subordinated to the Ministry of Finance); Customs Statistics and Analyses Department within National Customs Agency (subordinated to the Ministry of Finance); Agrostatistics Department within the Ministry of Agriculture and Food; National Health and E-health Directorate within the National Centre for Public Health Analyses (subordinated to the Ministry of Health); Ports Department in Inspection Activities Directorate of Executive Agency "Maritime Administration"; Registers and Statistics Department in Administrative Directorate of Directorate General "Civil Aviation Administration" (both subordinated to the Ministry of Transport, Information Technology and Communications); Analyses, Planning and Prognoses Directorate within the National Social Security Institute; Environmental Monitoring and Assessment Directorate of Executive Environment Agency (subordinated to the Ministry of Environment and Water).

Some ONAs seem to be rather independent of the NSI, whereas others are more closely linked to it. Relations between the ONAs and the NSI are based on written agreements or memorandums. This link is strengthened through participation of representatives of ONAs in the National Statistical Council (NSC). Organisations and activities of ONAs are considerably influenced by the administrative culture and rules of the general government. The NSI produces the major part of the European statistics in Bulgaria.

The National Statistical Programme (NSP) includes all ONA statistical activities. It is elaborated by the NSI for each calendar year and adopted by the Council of Ministers. The NSC discusses the

NSP. The annual average number of surveys and activities in the NSP for the period 2007–14 was 276, of which around four-fifths (80%) were carried out by the NSI.

The NSC is a consultative body to the President of the NSI who appoints and dismisses its members. The NSC discusses proposals by ONAs and gives opinions and recommendations on the annual NSP and Strategy for Development of the NSS for each five-year period. It also discusses and supports implementation of the NSP. It consists of representatives of all ONAs, the BNB, academic society and different groups of respondents and users.

The Strategy for Development of the NSS of the Republic of Bulgaria, 2013–2017 is the main strategic document for development. It is elaborated by the NSI, in collaboration with ONAs and the BNB. According to the strategy, the main goals of the NSS are to ensure impartial, timely and reliable statistical information; to introduce new data sources and tools to improve statistical process and quality of output; to implement modern information and communication technology (ICT) solutions; and to increase the professional and administrative capacity of the NSS. The strategy also emphasises the commitment to implement a systematic approach to quality management.

The main drivers of the change defined in the strategy are: increased demand of statistical information; increasing competition in producing of statistical information; a need to reduce respondents' burden while ensuring the quality of statistics; budget restrictions; staff aging; and employee turnover.

4. COMPLIANCE WITH THE CODE OF PRACTICE AND THE COORDINATION ROLE WITHIN THE NATIONAL STATISTICAL SYSTEM

4.1 STRENGTHS OF THE NATIONAL STATISTICAL INSTITUTE IN RELATION TO ITS COMPLIANCE WITH THE CODE OF PRACTICE

The NSI has considerably high response rates in business surveys. The response rate in all major sample surveys of businesses reaches 90–95 % and has remained at this level through 2011–2013. In addition, a vast majority of the respondents provide the NSI with timely responses. High and timely response rates improve the timeliness and accuracy of business and economic statistics (CoP indicators 8.4. and 13.1).

Such a high response rate in business surveys could be a benchmark for many national statistical offices within the ESS. The high response rate could be attributed to a number of things. Internet-based collection of business data is well accepted by the business world. The representatives of respondents pointed out the good service of the NSI in consulting respondents alongside the data collection process. The problem of the high response burden on businesses was not indicated. The decentralised network of regional statistical offices also contributes to good relations with the business world. It should be mentioned, however, that this particular positive effect has to be contrasted with the high costs of the regional network of statistical offices.

For internet-based collection of business data, two obviously quite advanced applications have been developed. This shows that the NSI has the competency to use its potential to enhance the efficiency of the statistical processes by establishing suitable IT tools (CoP indicator 10.2). The electronic response rate for structural business statistics is 80 %, and 55 % for short-term statistics, numbers which indicate the payback of investments made during recent years in the area of data collection from businesses. The competencies and experience gained with tools for data collection from businesses are a good basis for the development of instruments to be applied in household surveys as indicated in the Strategy for Development of the National Statistical System of the Republic of Bulgaria, 2013–2017.

4.2 ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this section, some areas where the NSI needs to improve are discussed and the Peer Review team makes recommendations. The issues are grouped in six themes. The first five deal with the CoP and are related to more than one of its principles. At the end of this chapter, the coordination role of the NSI is discussed and some recommendations presented.

4.2.1 STRENGTHENING PROFESSIONAL INDEPENDENCE OF THE NATIONAL STATISTICAL SYSTEM AND ENSURING TRUST IN OFFICIAL STATISTICS

4.2.1.1 THE SOLE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE NSI AND HEADS OF OTHER PRODUCERS FOR DECIDING ON STATISTICAL METHODS, STANDARDS AND PROCEDURES SHALL BE STATED IN THE LAW

The responsibility of the President of the NSI for deciding on statistical methods and national classifications is set up in Article 9, item 9 of the Statistics Act. However, according to the legal phrasing *('...either independently or with the bodies stipulated by a normative act...')*, the mandate may involve limits to professional independence.

According to the law, statistics activities shall be carried out in compliance with the principle of professional independence. This principle, to which the activity of the President is subject, is defined under the supplementary clauses within the Statistics Act. Nevertheless, the sole responsibility of the President of the NSI for deciding on statistical methods, standards and procedures, and on the content and timing of statistical releases are not explicitly set up in law. In practice, the timing of statistical releases is stated in the release calendar, which is approved by the President of the NSI.

Emphasising in the law the responsibility of the President of the NSI for ensuring that statistics are developed, produced and disseminated in an independent manner would address the responsibility more precisely.

The Statistics Act stipulates binding principles for all producers of European statistics and defines duties of the President of the NSI. It does not define responsibilities of the heads of the ONAs. Amendments to the law by describing the duties and responsibilities of heads of all ONAs would help setting uniform standards across the NSS.

In order to enhance compliance with the CoP, the **Peer Reviewers recommend that:**

1. **The Statistics Act should be amended so that the obligations of the President of the National Statistical Institute are specified. The President of the National Statistical Institute and the heads of the Other National Authorities producing European statistics should have sole responsibility for deciding on statistical methods, standards and procedures, and content and timing of statistical releases. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 1.4.)**

4.2.1.2 PROCESS OF APPOINTMENT OF THE PRESIDENT, DEPUTY-PRESIDENTS OF THE NSI AND HEADS OF ONAS SHALL BE TRANSPARENT AND BASED ON PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE

According to the Statistics Act (Article 8, paragraph 2) the NSI is managed by a President and three Deputy-Presidents who are appointed by the Council of Ministers for a term of seven years and for no more than two terms. The same article regulates the termination of incumbency during a term.

In the last few years, the President of the NSI has twice been changed for different reasons that were not necessarily related to political influence. Not all interviewed users and stakeholders were convinced of the professional background of several NSI Presidents. The majority of those interviewed stated that they had not observed any violation of the principle of professional independence. Nevertheless, some fear was expressed and reference was made to pressure that data on the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) published by the NSI should indicate higher economic growth.

During interviews with NSI employees and external stakeholders, comments on the non-transparent appointment procedure of the President of the NSI and also on missing selection criteria were made. Others stated that it was not clear to them how the top management is selected, and considering that appointments are made by the highest political levels, inappropriate selection criteria may be not excluded. Expressions like "not so [sic] independent as it should be", "there is some political dependency", "no guarantee for the future" were used.

Under certain circumstances, missing requirements and lack of precise regulations may lead to the appointment of candidates with insufficient qualifications or, in extreme cases, even politically comfortable persons.

Given the existing regulations for appointing the President and the Deputy-Presidents of the NSI, a more transparent appointment procedure and clearer criteria for appointment designed to secure

the necessary impartiality and high degree of professionalism of the top management should be established. The amended Statistics Act should state that the appointment of the top management (the President and Deputy-Presidents) of the NSI shall be based on professional competence only.

Appointment of the heads of ONAs is subject to the internal procedures of the respective organisations. Also for them, professional qualifications should be the basis for appointment. To ensure this, a respective clause in the Statistics Act should be used.

In order to achieve compliance with the Code of Practice, **the Peer Reviewers recommend that:**

2. **The Statistics Act should be amended so that the appointment of the President of the National Statistical Institute and heads of Other National Authorities producing European statistics shall be based on professional competence only. The law should stipulate clear selection criteria and a transparent procedure of competition for the appointment of top management (President and Deputy-Presidents) of the National Statistical Institute. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 1.8.)**

4.2.1.3 PRIVILEGED ACCESS TO PRESS RELEASES IS IN CONFLICT WITH THE PRINCIPLE OF IMPARTIALITY

According to the Statistics Act, statistical activity shall be carried out in compliance with the principle of impartiality. According to the supplementary provisions of the Statistics Act, Article 1, item 12, impartiality is a principle according to which statistical information shall be developed, produced and disseminated neutrally and all users shall be treated equally.

The Principle of equal access is distinctly stated under the basic principles of the Dissemination Policy of the NSI. In this policy document, one section defines a preferential treatment of high-level politicians. The President, the Prime Minister, the President of the National Assembly and ministries get information on core economic and social indicators one hour before the official announcement; they receive this information under strict embargo of disclosure of data. This preferential treatment is justified by the need of these top politicians to have enough time to prepare answers for journalists.

The Dissemination Policy, a lower-level act, is not in concordance with the Statistics Act. Although privileged access can exist according to the CoP, it should be limited, controlled and published. At present, it is not visible enough for other users and, according to the statements of employees, it is a traditional practice.

In order to enhance compliance with the CoP, the **Peer Reviewers recommend that:**

3. **The practice of privileged access to press releases prior to publication should be more visible on the National Statistical Institute website. The concordance of the Dissemination Policy with the Statistics Act in this regard should be analysed. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 6.7.)**

4.2.1.4 THE COMBINED COLLECTION OF ANNUAL DATA FROM BUSINESSES FOR THE NSI AND THE TAX AGENCY: CONFIDENTIALITY

During interviews with groups of stakeholders, the Peer Review team was informed about an innovative and efficient practice of data collection for multiple purposes. The concept and application, called Single Entry Point, permits economic units to submit data both to the NSI and to the National Revenue Agency via a single data collection gate. Submitting structural business

statistics (SBS) data and annual accounts (balance sheet, revenue-income statement, capital transfers, etc.) to these government bodies through a single entry point is appreciated by respondents. However, they stated that selected SBS data collected only for statistical purposes by the NSI are used by the tax agency. This information was confirmed during consecutive clarifications.

It is the opinion of the Peer Reviewers that SBS data cannot be used by the National Revenue Agency for administrative purposes, even though single collection of annual data from economic units may be efficient and avoid duplication. The combined collection of annual data from businesses, both for the NSI and the tax authority is not in line with the principle of statistical confidentiality if the data collected only for statistical purposes are used by the tax agency for administrative purposes. This practice may lead to distortions of the data provided by the respondents, and reduce the quality of business statistics, national accounts data, etc.

In order to achieve compliance with the CoP, **the Peer Reviewers recommend that:**

4. **Access by the tax agency to the business data collected for statistical purposes should be stopped or permission for use of statistical data for administrative purposes from respondents obtained. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 5.)**

4.2.2 ENHANCEMENT OF THE QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

The Statistics Act, the mission statement and the vision of the NSI give a clear commitment to ensuring the quality of statistics produced by the NSI, in line with the Quality Declaration of the ESS. A central unit — the General Methodology and Analysis of Statistical Surveys Department — was established recently and is intended to conduct quality audits of the statistical processes and products in addition to various activities related to the NSS. The NSI established a Quality Management Policy in 2011 which gives very general outlines of intentions, principles, and tasks of quality management.

The NSI has elaborated further documents related to quality management: the Quality Management Programme (2008, updated in 2011), the Guidelines on Quality Criteria in the NSS of Bulgaria (2010, updated in 2012), Guidelines for Quality Assessment in the NSI (2008, updated in 2011), the Handbook on Internal Quality Audit in the NSI (2009, updated in 2013), and a Glossary of Quality Terms (published on the NSI Internet site in 2014).

The Strategy for Development of the National Statistical System of the Republic of Bulgaria 2013–2017, Objective 2, *Implementation of New Data Sources and Instruments for Improving the Production and Increasing the Quality of Statistical Products and Services*, Priority 2.3, *Implementing a Systematic Approach for Quality Management and Control in NSS*, lists the following activities and projects:

- Implementing a systematic approach for quality management, based on the national framework for quality provision.

- Establishing a system for quality management in production of statistical information products.

- Implementing an annual monitoring on implementation of CoP in the NSS.

- Standardising the quality reports in NSS.

- Recording the quality of statistical products and processes in NSS.

- Conducting quality audits of statistical products and processes.

- Organising and participating in trainings and courses in the field of quality.
- Publishing documents on quality of statistical information, provided by NSI, ONAs and BNB.

The NSP 2014 contains the following surveys or activities:

- Measurement of user satisfaction with the statistical products and services.
- Quality assurance in the NSS.
- Internal quality audits of statistical processes and products.

All these objectives and activities can be seen as elements of a quality management policy and its implementation, and reflecting the commitment of the NSI to quality.

It is to be mentioned that Bulgaria subscribed to the Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS) in 2003 and met all SDDS requirements at the time of subscription.

4.2.2.1 IMPLEMENTATION OF A QUALITY MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

The Peer Review report from 2007 stated that at the time of the 2007 Peer Review no overall quality management framework had been established, and that it was planned to develop a quality management framework based on the model of the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM). This plan has not been realised so far.

The Peer Review team was informed that the NSI has committed itself to working according to the quality standards as defined through the ISO 9001 standard. This implies that the NSI does not make an explicit reference to the quality standards of the Quality Declaration of the ESS, although a high overlap between the formal goals specified by the NSI and the Quality Declaration can be found. Nevertheless, the establishment of a quality management system inspired by the concepts of the EFQM as earlier planned is recommended. It should comprise — in line with the CoP — the dimensions:

- Quality of statistical processes and products, corresponding to the CoP Principle 4;
- Efficiency of the statistical processes and the organisation, partly covered by the CoP Principle 10;
- Reduction of the burden of respondents, corresponding to the CoP Principle 9.

In addition, two further dimensions should be included:

- User orientation, referring to aspects like communication policy, market strategy, product and marketing policy, availability of results, encompassing much of what is laid out in Section 4.2.5.1 of this Report on institutionalisation of user involvement.
- Staff orientation, referring to staff training, job enrichment, flexibility, co-operative management, team work, and staff satisfaction.

The head of the General Methodology and Analysis of Statistical Surveys Department should play the role of the Quality Manager, reporting directly to the President of the NSI, and deal with the coordination and management of horizontal quality issues. A cross-organisational Quality Committee, composed of a number of senior experts who represent important operations within the NSI, should support the Quality Manager, discussing in regular meetings the various projects and the annual work plan of the Department, designing the Quality Management strategy, and providing the Quality Manager with information on quality issues in the line departments and sharing feedback from them.

The conduct of the quality projects that are planned in the Strategy for Development of the National Statistical System of the Republic of Bulgaria, 2013–2017 should have the highest priority.

In order to further enhance compliance with the CoP, **the Peer Reviewers recommend that:**

5. A quality management system inspired by the concepts of the European Foundation for Quality Management should be established. The head of the unit responsible for quality should play the role of Quality Manager, and a cross-organisational Quality Committee should be established to support him/her. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 4.1.)

4.2.2.2 GUIDELINES ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF QUALITY MANAGEMENT IN THE PRODUCTION PROCESSES

Starting in 2008, the NSI has elaborated a number of documents related to quality management: the Quality Management Programme, describing the tasks and monitoring indicators related to quality dimensions of the EFQM model; the Guidelines on Quality Criteria in the NSS of Bulgaria, describing a quality assurance framework and providing guidelines for the improvement of the statistical products quality, following the CoP; and Guidelines for Quality Assessment in the NSI (2010, updated in 2011), containing a description of the statistical processes, quality indicators of processes, and special features of the quality components by type of survey and structure and recommendations for the quality report. All these documents are of a rather conceptual nature.

According to the Quality Assurance Framework of the ESS, Quality Guidelines should be available on how to practically implement quality management within the statistical production process. Such guidelines are an important tool for assuring the consistently high quality of statistical products. The guidelines facilitate the work of the line departments, including the training of new staff, and having such guidelines would improve the efficiency of statistical processes. The Peer Review team recommends that quality guidelines describing in detail the implementation of Quality Management within the statistical production processes based on the Generic Statistical Business Process Model (GSBPM) or another equivalent model are adopted. These guidelines should also describe the monitoring of quality at each stage of the statistical production process and take the situation of other producers within the NSS into account. The application of the guidelines and the results of the monitoring are to be reported annually.

In order to achieve compliance with the CoP, the **Peer Reviewers recommend that:**

6. The National Statistical Institute should adopt quality guidelines that describe in detail the implementation of quality management within the statistical production processes based on the Generic Statistical Business Process Model or another equivalent model. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 4.1 and 4.2.)

4.2.2.3 AVAILABILITY OF METADATA AND OF QUALITY REPORTS

NSI management is well aware of the fact that the production of high-quality products is essential for the good reputation of official statistics and the trust that the public has in them. Each department is responsible for monitoring the quality and assurance of its own statistical processes, with support from the methodological and IT departments. Conceptual and methodological information is available on the NSI website for most statistical products, helping users to understand and assess the quality of the statistics. Quality reports are available for some statistical products, for example for the results from the Community Survey on ICT in Households

2013. Reports on metadata compiled by the NSI and designed according to the Euro-SDMX Metadata Structure (ESMS) are available in English and on the Eurostat website. The Peer Review team welcomes the availability of reports on user satisfaction surveys, which have been conducted annually since 2009.

Metadata reports should be available on the NSI website. Quality reports should also be available on the NSI website; they should follow a uniform and standardised format for all statistics and provide users with all relevant metadata and quality indicators. This would help not only users, but also the media and the general public, to better understand published statistical figures.

In order to achieve compliance with the CoP, **the Peer Reviewers recommend that:**

7. **Both metadata reports and quality reports, which follow a uniform and standardised format for all statistics and provide users with all relevant metadata and quality indicators, should be available on the National Statistical Institute website. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 4.3, 6.4, 15.5 and 15.6.)**

4.2.3 MODERNISATION OF STATISTICAL PROCESSES

4.2.3.1 STATISTICAL PROCESSES

A general concept for the design of the statistical process, like the GSBPM, is not uniformly followed in all parts of the NSS. The GSBPM provides a standard framework and harmonised terminology to help statistical organisations to modernise their statistical production processes, as well as to share methods and components. The GSBPM can also be used for integrating data and metadata standards, as a template for process documentation, for harmonising statistical computing infrastructures, and for providing a framework for process quality assessment and improvement. The GSBPM has been successfully used by statistical organisations as a framework to develop systems for statistical production and it includes such features as time recording and management, cost allocation and quality management. The GSBPM forms an essential part of Eurostat's work for implementing the ESS vision of better harmonisation and integration of statistical business processes and the importance metadata management in this context.

The self-assessment questionnaire (SAQ) described a number of processes for the production of statistics from administrative and non-administrative sources but no evidence was found during the course of the mission of a standardised and strategic approach within the NSI or across all ONAs. The lack of such an approach significantly undermines the capabilities of the NSI and other ONAs to deliver a coherent set of integrated statistics from multiple sources. It weakens the forward development programme that the NSI has embarked on to enhance its statistics and is exacerbated by the decentralised nature of activities across the NSS and, more particularly, the lack of central support functions within the NSI for methodology, data collection and compilation of statistics.

Sound methodology underpins quality statistics and adequate tools, procedures and expertise are required to facilitate this. Neither the SAQ nor discussions during the course of the mission provided conclusive evidence that adequate procedures were in place to check and ensure that the concepts and definitions required by the ESS were adhered to or that the best methodological solutions were followed in practice. This was not helped by the limited metadata that was available to the Peer Reviewers. The Peer Review team is concerned about the lack of comprehensive metadata for all outputs of the organisation and across official statistics as a whole, including adequate desk instructions for staff on how to compile the various statistics.

In order to strengthen compliance with the CoP, **the Peer Reviewers recommend that:**

8. The Generic Statistical Business Process Model or another equivalent model should be used consistently in the National Statistical System to define the business processes needed to develop and produce official statistics. The benefit would be a more strategic approach to the delivery of the requirements of the European Statistical System. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 8.1-8.8.)

4.2.3.2 SOUND METHODOLOGY

The Peer Review team was reminded of the fact that the NSI has the responsibility to provide accurate, up-to-date and comprehensive statistics within the ESS and that this can only be fulfilled through:

- A corporate culture that fosters quality over the whole of the statistical value-added chain through the effective training of staff, the application of appropriate methodologies, the existence of suitable processes with supporting tools and pertinent documentation, including appropriate desk instructions.

- The establishment of a regular review programme of key outputs.

- Promotion of high-quality statistical output through systematic evaluation and research.

- Improved reporting on quality and documentation of methods leading to the effective use of statistics.

The Peer Review team takes the view that the newly established General Methodology and Analysis of Statistical Surveys Department should serve the subject matter units in providing advice on generic methodological issues and should be proactive in undertaking a rolling methodological review programme focusing on non-compliance with the CoP and also on enhancement of the quality of the output. These methodological reviews will also contribute to a more systematic collection of metadata and to the maintenance of up-to-date desk instructions for staff compiling statistics. The latter are a significant gap in documentation. This is as much a quality management issue as a methodological one (Section 4.2.2).

In order to strengthen compliance with the CoP, **the Peer Reviewers recommend that:**

9. A central methodological unit of the National Statistical Institute should take on the role of providing to Directorates of the National Statistical Institute standardised methodological solutions that are compliant with the needs of the European Statistical System and are aimed at improving cost-effectiveness. The unit should also be proactive in undertaking a rolling programme of methodological reviews and ensuring the maintenance of the appropriate metadata jointly with compilers of European statistics. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 7.)

4.2.3.3 NON-EXCESSIVE BURDEN ON RESPONDENTS

CoP Principle 9 states that the reporting burden should be proportionate to the needs of the users (of the statistics) and not excessive for respondents (to the surveys) and that the statistical authorities should monitor the burden and set targets for its reduction over time. The NSI conducts many business surveys and is to be commended for its extensive use of electronic data gathering. The use of the website to collect data from enterprises in a secure environment using electronic signatures and passwords and available over a 24-hour period, seven days a week is seen as a

positive step for data providers, which makes data submission easier for them and thus reduces the form-filling burden. But it could be further enhanced if all business data collection went through a common site. Additionally, the Peer Review team could not identify any systematic procedures for examining the potential for further applications of electronic data submission, for example when new surveys are being developed or current surveys are being reviewed, nor could Peer Reviewers locate any unit within the NSI with responsibility for taking on this activity.

The response burden on businesses should be more proactively managed within the organisation and across the NSS as a whole and be routinely appraised. The Peer Reviewers found no evidence of a fully corporate approach and believe that the overall burden on respondents should be systematically monitored and used to inform the formulation and management of a strategy relating to the collection of data from businesses. The impact of the introduction of resulting policies and procedures should be measured. The burden of form-filling should be monitored for individual businesses as well as for the business community as a whole. For example, the Peer Review team understands that there is no policy of giving large businesses a rest from particular surveys where they would be selected in most circumstances. The Peer Reviewers were told that the implementation of such a policy would not be possible due to the concentrated structure of business within Bulgaria where most output is produced by a relatively small number of companies but no evidence was provided that this was the case or that the option had been properly investigated.

In order to strengthen compliance with the CoP, **the Peer Reviewers recommend that:**

10. **The response burden on businesses should be monitored and reported to the top management of the National Statistical Institute on a regular basis. The central methodological unit should take responsibility for ensuring that the burden on business is kept to a minimum. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 9.)**

4.2.3.4 INTEGRATION OF OFFICIAL STATISTICS

As mentioned earlier, the NSS of Bulgaria includes ONAs other than the NSI. This raises challenges for the integrity, coherence, and integration of official statistics. The Peer Review team feels that the data collection system of agricultural statistics operated by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food can be improved by developing an IT application. This would improve the cost-effectiveness of data collection and the production of statistics and, when combined with appropriate statistical processes, also has the potential to enhance the quality of outputs. There are also significant operational advantages in using standard IT applications, including software, across the NSS: for example, through more effective interfaces between systems, savings in systems maintenance and more effective use of IT staff and their skills. In this regard Peer Reviewers recommend that the IT human resources from the NSI are fully engaged in the development of improved IT systems in the Ministry of Agriculture and Food (and possibly in other ONAs) either by providing input into any impending decision-making on the design of any future systems or, more directly, by being directly involved in system design and construction. This would ensure better compliance with CoP indicator 10.4, which states that "Statistical authorities promote and implement standardised solutions that increase effectiveness and efficiency."

In order to strengthen compliance with the CoP, **the Peer Reviewers recommend that:**

11. The data collection system for agricultural statistics operated by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food should be improved by an appropriate Information Technology application, which is compatible with the Information Technology systems of the National Statistical Institute. Development should be performed with the help and involvement of Information Technology specialists from the National Statistical Institute. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 10.2, 10.4 and 8.4.)

4.2.4 USE OF ADMINISTRATIVE DATA, INCREASING COST-EFFECTIVENESS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS, MODERNISATION OF THE ORGANISATION

In Bulgaria, administrative data is the prominent source of data for business statistics and it can generate efficiency savings both for the respondents and for the compiler of the associated statistics. But a number of issues are associated with the use of administrative data. These include questions relating to concept and definition and to the quality of the information being extracted (all of which determine whether the data is fit-for-purpose) and also questions relating to the legal basis underlying the use of such data (which will have implications for data use and confidentiality). Putting aside definitional and quality issues, the primary considerations are whether the statistical authority has a clear legal mandate to collect information for European statistical purposes (CoP Principle 2) and, if so, whether the appropriate statistical procedures are in place to do so (CoP Principle 8).

4.2.4.1 USE OF ADMINISTRATIVE DATA FOR STATISTICAL PURPOSES

The mandate to collect administrative data is defined in the Statistics Act. Clarifications were sought during the course of the review. The legal basis for access to administrative information for statistical purpose is not clear. The Peer Reviewers' understanding is that the law applies to the NSI and to the ONAs. The Statistics Act provides access to data but no control or influence over the definitions, coverage, quality and overall relevance of the information to produce fit-for-purpose statistics that meet ESS requirements.

More generally, although the NSI has a right to have access to administrative data, the Peer Review team came to the conclusion that the use of these data needs further legal support and appropriate agreements between the NSI and the owners of the administrative data in order to control the flow and the quality of the data.

In order to strengthen compliance with the CoP, **the Peer Reviewers recommend that:**

12. In the context of administrative data used by the National Statistical Institute and Other National Authorities producing European statistics, a legal mandate, appropriate procedures, control and influence over the definitions, coverage, quality and overall relevance should be ensured. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 2.2, 8.1 and 9.4.)

4.2.4.2 COST-EFFECTIVENESS: ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURES AND THE USE OF RESOURCES

Cost-effectiveness relies on an efficient organisational structure. In noting the creation of a central unit for methodology, Peer Reviewers feel that the opportunity should also be taken to review the organisation of other parts of the NSI with a view to restructuring the NSI towards a more centralised organisation. This would help solve resource problems and improve the efficiency of

the organisation and the quality of its statistical products. In this connection, there are many benefits that can accrue from a structure according to the statistical value chain: statistical design; data collection; data compilation and estimation; and computation, analysis and dissemination. Such a structure can exploit the skills of specialist staff to maximum effect and thereby increase statistical capacity across the organisation as a whole: it can contribute to the effective use of resources.

In order to strengthen compliance with the CoP, **the Peer Reviewers recommend that:**

13. **An organisational review of the National Statistical Institute should be undertaken focusing on the benefits of a more centralised structure based on the statistical value chain: statistical design; data collection; data compilation and estimation; and computation, analysis and dissemination. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 10.4.)**

4.2.4.3   COST-EFFECTIVENESS: THE NSI CULTURE AND MANAGEMENT STYLE

A more centralised structure should not be misconstrued as one that should be associated with a more authoritative regime. During the current review, the Peer Review team was left with the strong impression that more junior staff felt that they had little opportunity to contribute to the development of statistics. There is no formal or well-tested system whereby junior staff can make suggestions for improvements in the statistical design or production of statistics, for instance as inputs into quality reviews or as part of a regular system of staff meetings. Rather the opportunity for having meaningful discussions on such issues is informal and depends on the attitude and management style of individual line managers. This lack of empowerment represents a failure to exploit junior professionals to their full potential and can also result in disillusionment amongst staff leading to a lack of motivation and/or high staff turnover as the individuals concerned find more interesting and more empowered jobs elsewhere. A more empowering management style instead of an authoritative and centralised one would help the NSI to take better advantage of the constructive attitudes of the more junior staff in improving the statistical processes and output.

In order to strengthen compliance with the CoP, **the Peer Reviewers recommend that:**

14. **A more empowering management style should be introduced in the National Statistical Institute to better exploit the knowledge and enthusiasm of staff. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 7.5 and 7.6; Principle 10.)**

4.2.4.4   COST-EFFECTIVENESS: MODERNISATION, PLANNING AND IT

The Peer Review team was impressed by the plans that the NSI has for further modernisation. These plans should offer considerable benefits but delivery will depend not only on the capacity of the office to undertake the transformation but also on the adequacy of the change management process. Setting up a strong foundation based on thorough knowledge of the statistical processes is essential in setting out the guidelines for streamlining initiatives, as is a clear and shared vision of the streamlined business process. The authority role of a supervising body therefore becomes critical. The objectives and priorities formulated in the Strategy for Development of the NSS of the Republic of Bulgaria 2013–2017 need to be translated into a set of realistic actions, and the implementation of these actions needs to be controlled by comprehensive project management tools and reports and a clear upward reporting process to a management committee and ultimately to the President of the NSI. No such action plan is yet in place and the project management tools are not readily at hand to take things forward.

Similar considerations apply to IT projects. It is clear that IT plays and will play a major role in re-engineering. This applies not just within the NSI but also across the NSS as a whole. Two major systems currently exist in parallel: the Information Systems Business Statistics (ISBS) and the Information System for Short Term Statistics (ISSTS). These two systems have been instrumental in delivering efficiency savings and reducing the response burden on businesses: 80 % of participants in SBS respond electronically, as do 55 % of participants in short-term business statistics enquiries. But data for some other statistics are collected manually.

Considering the experience of the recent past, it is recommended that IT projects are carefully designed, realistic for the available competencies and resources, and use appropriate project management procedures and tools.

In order to strengthen compliance with the CoP, **the Peer Reviewers recommend that:**

15. **Project management arrangements and tools should be put in place and an action plan drawn up to take forward the strategic plans relating to 2013—2017. A Project Management Board should take responsibility for the monitoring and delivery of the strategic plans and should provide regular reports to top management of the National Statistical Institute. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 3.1 and 10.1.)**

16. **Information Technology projects in particular should be carefully designed and managed and be realistic in terms of their delivery. To facilitate this the National Statistical Institute should take on an Information Technology coordination role across the National Statistical System. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 10.1, 10.2 and 10.4.)**

4.2.4.5   COST EFFECTIVENESS: STATISTICAL CAPACITY

Skills management of individual employees, and in relation to the organisation as a whole, is a pre-requisite for effective delivery, particularly so when the pace of change accelerates with strategic changes in the organisation and outputs of an NSI and when technological developments impact on the skills required. In this connection, the Peer Review team saw only limited evidence of a structured approach to staff development and the building of statistical capacity. For instance, personal development plans, listing an individual's training needs to bridge their skills gaps, need to be not only drafted but used proactively to build the competencies of individuals. Similarly, the drawing up of skills matrices for the organisation as a whole, consisting of the skills required by the NSI set against the skills that are to hand, are needed to facilitate the identification of significant skills gaps. Neither did the Peer Review team see any evidence of relevant personal development being part of an individual's personal objectives. The existing annual appraisal process could be used more effectively for identifying training needs and for developing the necessary staff competencies. It can be noted that an effective staff appraisal and personal development scheme facilitates the setting of personal goals and the better understanding by the individual of the value they bring to the organisation — which in turn can boost staff morale and increase staff retention.

The Peer Review team was encouraged by the number of staff participating in training opportunities offered or facilitated by Eurostat and the number sent to Eurostat Working Parties. But Peer Reviewers were also told that in recent years there had been a reduction in staff training provided both internally and externally, for both current staff and new entrants.

Similarly, while the Peer Review team welcomes the close working relationship with academia and the methodological support being given, the Peer Reviewers did feel that there should be a shift in focus to knowledge transfer. A regular training programme should be implemented both for new

staff and for improving the capacity of current staff. Internal skills transfer and cooperation with academia in training activities are to be encouraged.

During discussions it became apparent that the salaries of NSI staff were not competitive compared with other state organisations including the BNB, which is a direct competitor for recruiting staff with numerical, statistical and analytical skills. Whilst the Peer Review team found no evidence of retention problems, this is likely to be influenced, in part, by the current economic climate. Moreover, the retention of experienced staff within the NSI will become more critical as the organisation enters a further period of change. Recruitment and retention needs to be more closely monitored and human resources policies need to be in place to deal with issues that arise. This applies especially to IT staff.

In order to strengthen compliance with the CoP, **the Peer Reviewers recommend that:**

17. **A more systematic and proactive approach to training should be introduced. The National Statistical Institute should build up the relevant staff skills and regularly check the availability of those skills it needs, offering training to fill the skill gaps, if needed. Arrangements should be put in place for internal skills transfer and assistance from academia. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 7.6.)**

18. **The National Statistical Institute should have the appropriate human resources policies in place to recruit and retain, in the longer term, experts with the relevant and essential skills. This applies especially to Information Technology staff. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 3.1 and 7.6.)**

4.2.5 DEEPENING RELATIONS WITH AND IMPROVING SERVICES FOR USERS

Communication with users helps to improve trust in the institution and its statistical products. As for any national statistical office, user feedback is also an important source of information for the NSI of Bulgaria about the potential to improve the quality of the statistical products and the efficiency of the organisation. This communication is a two-way information stream that benefits both the NSI and users. The NSI needs to understand user needs in order to deliver relevant and high-quality statistical products; user feedback is the most important source of information for that purpose. Users need high-quality statistical products in terms of relevance, accuracy, timeliness, punctuality, comparability and coherence, accompanied by all metadata that are necessary for understanding and assessing the suitability of the statistical products for the purpose the user has in mind.

In Bulgaria, the NSC serves as the most important tie between the NSI and users of its statistical products. The 28 regional statistical offices constitute important channels for contacts with regional authorities. Since 2009, the NSI has conducted an annual user satisfaction survey, which provides it with valuable feedback. The NSI website is used to provide users with information not only about the statistical results but also about metadata and quality reports, information which helps users to understand and assess the published statistical figures.

Successful user relations involve further NSI services that benefit users, in particular the process of disseminating statistical figures. This refers to the selection and formatting of statistical results, to the conduct of custom-designed analyses, and also to the handling of the release calendar and the correction of errors.

4.2.5.1 INSTITUTIONALISATION OF USER INVOLVEMENT

In Bulgaria, the most important communication channel between the NSI and the users of its statistical products is the NSC. Meeting agendas focus on issues of general interest like the Annual Statistical Programme or the preparation of the European Statistical System Committee (ESSC). Not much space is given in the NSC meetings to more technical issues like statistical processes and statistical products. The annual user satisfaction surveys, conducted since 2009, are important communication channels.

A more intensive communication with and consultation of users should be institutionalised. Technical working groups that include users should be established for all relevant topics as an effective instrument for collecting user feedback on statistical products, for informing users about metadata and quality reports and for promoting other topics for discussion. User feedback should be the basis for identifying potential for improvement.

In order to strengthen compliance with the CoP, **the Peer Reviewers recommend that:**

19. An intensified communication with and consultation of users should be institutionalised in the National Statistical Institute in the form of technical working groups for all relevant topics. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 11.1, 11.3 and 15.6.)

4.2.5.2 DISSEMINATION SERVICES: SELF-TABULATION OF STATISTICAL DATA

The NSI website contains a wide range of statistical results, tables and figures. While the number of available breakdowns is limited, they probably satisfy users in many cases. More detailed results can be ordered and the provision of such further calculations requires payment.

In order to better meet user needs and comply with recognised international dissemination practice, the NSI should give users the possibility of self-tabulating statistical data allowing for user-defined breakdowns of the statistical results with respect to economic activities, regions, etc. Corresponding software is in use in many national statistical offices within the ESS. These NSIs may give the Bulgarian NSI advice about the strengths of such software and the competencies needed for installation and maintenance. The Peer Review team was informed about a current project, which aims at implementing the possibility of self-tabulation.

In order to strengthen compliance with the CoP, **the Peer Reviewers recommend that:**

20. Users should have the possibility of self-tabulating statistical data on the National Statistical Institute website. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 15.2.)

4.2.5.3 DISSEMINATION SERVICES: CUSTOM-DESIGNED ANALYSIS

As a special service, the NSI offers to analyse data that are available to it in order to answer questions in directions which it does not routinely foresee. For such custom-designed analyses, the user has to pay for labour and materials, and a price list is available that is used as a basis for such calculations. This price list is very detailed, and the calculation of the charge for a custom-designed analysis must be elaborated and costly. This complication may reduce the attraction of this valuable service both for potential customers and for the NSI.

The practice of custom-designed analyses could be improved by simplifying the price list and making it more transparent. Transparency and equal access require informing the general public about conducted custom-designed analyses, for example by listing on the NSI website those analyses that have been performed during the previous 12 months, and giving access to those

results to everybody. Requested custom-designed analyses should be included in standard publications.

In order to strengthen compliance with the CoP, **the Peer Reviewers recommend that:**

21. The practice of custom-designed analyses should be improved in the National Statistical Institute by simplifying the price list and by informing the general public about custom-designed analyses conducted. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 15.3.)

4.2.5.4 DISSEMINATION SERVICES: CONTRACTED SURVEYS, USING ANONYMISED MICRODATA FOR SCIENTIFIC AND RESEARCH PURPOSES

As a special service for users, the NSI offers to conduct surveys which are not an element of the NSP. Such projects have a legal basis in the Statistics Act, but the law does not regulate the details under which such surveys can be conducted.

It is recommended that contracted projects conducted outside of the NSP follow reasonable criteria that ensure that the project theme is related to official statistics.

Using anonymised microdata for scientific and research purposes can be improved by establishing an infrastructure for remote access to the microdata. In order to enhance compliance with the CoP, **the Peer Reviewers recommend that:**

22. Projects contracted outside of the National Statistical Programme should follow criteria that ensure that the project theme is related to official statistics and the general public should be informed about contracted surveys. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 15.3.)

23. Interest in using anonymised microdata for research purposes should be raised and the National Statistical Institute should improve the possibilities of accessing microdata. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 15.4.)

4.2.5.5 DISSEMINATION: CORRECTION OF ERRORS

As in any statistical agency, it may happen that an NSI publication contains an error. According to information the Peer Review team obtained during various meetings, the NSI react properly in such situations and informs the addressees about the case and the corrected results. However, the NSI has not developed an error correction policy which defines in a written form a formal procedure for correction of errors discovered in published statistics.

In order to further enhance compliance with the CoP, **the Peer Reviewers recommend that:**

24. A formal procedure for correction of errors discovered in published statistics should be established and published on the National Statistical Institute website. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 6.3.)

4.2.5.6 DISSEMINATION: CHANGE OF RELEASE DATE

As in any statistical agency, it may happen that a release data has to be changed. According to information the Peer Review team obtained during various meetings, the NSI announces such a change on a highly visible place on its website, a suitable measure to inform the interested public about such a case. However, the NSI has not developed formal procedure for changes of a release date.

In order to further enhance compliance with the CoP, **the Peer Reviewers recommend that:**

25. A formal procedure for informing about changes of a release date should be established and published on the National Statistical Institute website. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 6.5.)

4.2.6 COORDINATION ROLE OF THE NATIONAL STATISTICAL INSTITUTE

The NSI has a strong legal mandate to coordinate the production of European statistics at national level. This mandate facilitates the strengthening of European statistics and the full implementation of legal intentions is recommended. According to the Statistics Act (Article 7), the NSI has a clearly defined coordinating role within the NSS. It shall:

- Act as central coordinative point in drafting and implementing the NSP;

- Ensure methodological uniformity of the surveys and compliance of the methodology, content and scope of statistical surveys with requirements set within the ESS;

- Participate in the development of the national statistical information systems;

- Represent the NSS in the ESS;

- Coordinate all activities at national level for development, production and dissemination of the European statistics.

There is a dedicated structural unit within the NSI that is in charge of planning, coordination and projects. As tools for coordination, the NSI uses agreements and memorandums with ONAs and permanent or temporary thematic working groups. Around 20 working groups are currently established, governed by and acting according to the decree of the President of the NSI.

Coordinated planning of statistical work seems to be well established: representatives of ONAs are members of the NSC, which discusses their annual work programme and proposals.

In order to strengthen NSS compliance with the CoP indicator 1.5, the NSI should take the lead in monitoring goals set by the Strategy for Development of the National Statistical System of the Republic of Bulgaria 2013–2017. The Peer Review team understands that there is a plan of activities, which is linked to the NSS development strategy. This plan should be complemented with an overview of accomplishments and published on a regular (annual) basis. It could also be included in the existing report on the implementation of the NSP and the activity of the NSI for the previous year.

There is no consolidated budget of national statistical activities whereas ONAs apply their own budget. Fragmented views of financial and human resources may hamper prioritisation and lessen economies of scale through common investments. The example of decentralised decision-making regarding investments is highlighted in Section 4.2.3.4.

In practice, the NSI's possibilities and capabilities to execute its legal obligations are limited. An efficient coordination needs full execution of the roles defined by the Statistics Act. The NSI provides methodological assistance to ONAs. Such interactions were mentioned during the course of the mission by ONA representatives. The NSI's coordination activity has rather a soft character (methodological guidance) and seems to be limited by the NSI's capabilities.

All ONAs are organisational units of ministries or other state agencies and act according to the general administrative rules, culture and internal procedures of a particular organisation. Currently not all ONAs have a direct reporting line to the NSI in professional statistical matters. Information received by the Peer Review team says that activities like quality control or the conduct of

statistical audits in the ONAs' production system have not yet been established. Effective coordination implies controlling in accordance with the methodology and the statistical process of the ONAs. The NSI should have the power — and the capacity — to conduct audits of statistical processes.

Coordination of activities related to the dissemination of European statistics also deserves more attention. In order to improve compliance with CoP indicators 6.3, 6.5–6.8 and Principles 13 and 15, ONAs should adopt similar principles and procedures for dissemination as those practiced by the NSI. Internal NSI Rules for Dissemination could serve as point of departure for ONAs and the NSI should establish supervision of these processes.

To improve compliance with the CoP indicators 15.2, 15.5, 15.6 and 15.7, the NSI and ONAs should consider disseminating the whole set of European statistics in a common statistical database of the NSI. ONA European statistics should be available on the NSI website, making this website a portal of official statistics.

The members of the NSS under the leadership of the NSI or the NSC should also discuss the common needs of ONAs and arrange/promote relevant training courses.

In order to improve the overall coordination across the national statistical system, **the Peer Reviewers recommend that:**

26. Members of the National Statistical System should establish common dissemination guidelines and procedures (including a release calendar and regular reporting of data transmissions) in the National Statistical System. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 6.3 and 6.5-6.8; Principles 13 and 15.)

27. The National Statistical Institute and Other National Authorities producing European statistics should disseminate the whole set of European statistics in a common statistical database of the National Statistical Institute. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 15.2, 15.5, 15.6 and 15.7)

28. The National Statistical Institute should monitor and publish activities and accomplishments of objectives set out in the Strategy for Development of the National Statistical System of the Republic of Bulgaria, 2013-2017. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 1.5.)

4.3 NATIONAL STATISTICAL INSTITUTE VIEWS WHERE THEY DIVERGE FROM PEER REVIEWERS' ASSESSMENT

Referring recommendation No 4

In order to ensure compliance with the CoP Principle 5, the access by the tax agency to the business data collected for statistical purposes should be stopped or permission for use of statistical data for administrative purposes from respondents obtained, we submit for your consideration the following clarification:

The National Statistical Institute (NSI) does not provide any data collected for statistical purposes to the National Revenue Agency (NRA).

According to the Accountancy Act, the Corporate Income Tax Act, the Income Taxes on Natural Persons Act and the Statistics Act, the enterprises shall provide common accounting data to NSI and NRA. For this reason a Single Entry Point has been set up which establishes a Common Accounting Database for both institutions. Each institution uses the common accounting data for its own purposes - NSI for statistical purposes, and NRA for fiscal purposes. Specific statistical data are collected and used only by NSI and are not provided to other users.

In addition, according to the Commercial Register Act, the enterprises shall publish their annual accounting reports on the website of the Registry Agency.

Attached is the joint Ordinance between the National Statistical Institute and the National Revenue Agency, regulating the set-up of the Common Accounting Database.

Referring recommendation No 28

The NSI monitors activities and accomplishments of objectives set out in the Strategy for Development of the National Statistical System of the Republic of Bulgaria, 2013-2017. The control and monitoring of the Strategy is done by NSI. The implementation of the outlined objectives and priorities are discussed by the National Statistical Council and are reported annually. There is a chapter named "Implementation of horizontal priorities of the Strategy 2013 – 2017" in the Annual report on implementation of the National Statistical Programme and NSI activities, where all implemented activities as well as outstanding activities are reported. The Annual report is publicly available on the NSI website.

ANNEX A: PROGRAMME OF THE VISIT

Time	Programme	Organisation	Participants
Day 1 - Monday 13 October 2014			
9.00 - 10.15	PR team discussion to finalise the preparation of the visit.		
10.15 – 11.15	Preparatory meeting with the NSI coordinator team and, possibly, other national participants in the visit to discuss practical aspects of the visit.	National Statistical Institute (NSI)	National coordinator and NSI coordinator team
11.15 – 11.30	Coffee break.		
11.30 – 12.00	Welcome and introduction of the programme, organisational matters.	NSI	Sergey Tsvetarsky, Diana Yancheva, Bogdan Bogdanov, Nasko Nanev,Elka Atanasova ,Ivan Balev Spas Kostov, Iskra Georgieva Sergey Genev, Deyan Slavov Kalina Kazandzhieva, Galina Handzhieva, National coordinator and NSI coordinator team
12.00 – 13.30	General information session with a description on how the national statistical system is organised (bodies, distribution of responsibilities, relations between authorities).	NSI	Sergey Tsvetarsky,Diana Yancheva ,Bogdan Bogdanov, Nasko Nanev Elka Atanasova Ivan Balev, Spas Kostov, Iskra Georgieva, Sergey Genev , Deyan Slavov Kalina Kazandzhieva Galina Handzhieva, National coordinator and NSI coordinator team
13.30 – 14.15	Lunch.		
14.15 – 15.45	The statistical law and related legislation (CoP principles 1, 2, 5 and 6).	NSI	Principle 1 - Galya Stateva; Milena Djumayska; Georgi Hristov; Pavel Ivanov; Nikos Samaras Principle 2 – Pavel Ivanov; Luben Kalpakov Principle 5 and 6 – Pavel Ivanov; Luben Kalpakov, Marina Grigorova
15.45 – 16.00	Coffee break.		
16.00 – 17.00	Coordination role of the NSI.	NSI	Galya Stateva; Milena Djumayska; Georgi Hristov; Mariana Angelova; Marina Grigorova; Bojidar Parvanov; Galina Paeva; Georgi Stanev; Anastasia Marinova
17.00 – 17.30	Stock-taking (incl. outstanding clarifications or additional issues) and reviewing of remaining schedule.	NSI	PR team
Day 2 – Tuesday 14 October 2014			
9.00- 11.00	Programming, planning and resources, including training (CoP principles 3, 9 and 10).	NSI	Principle 3 – Nasko Nanev; Emilia Shikova; Marina Grigorova; Anastasia Marinova Principle 9 – Karmen Iskrova, Gergana Maeva, Magdalena Kostova, Todor Davidkov, Albena Dancheva, Svilen Kateliev Principle 10 – Karmen Iskrova; Gergana Maeva; Magdalena Kostova; Todor Davidkov; Albena Dancheva; Svilen Kateliev; Stefan Tsonev; Pavel Ivanov; Marina Grigorova; Anastasia Marinova; Kostadin Georgiev
11.00 – 11.15	Coffee break.		
11.15 – 13.00	Commitment to quality (organisational structure, tools, monitoring, ...) (CoP principles 4 and 11 to 15).	NSI	Principle 4 – Milena Djumayska; Galya Stateva; Georgi Hristov; Mariana Angelova; Bojidar Parvanov; Galina Paeva; Karmen Iskrova, Gergana Maeva, Magdalena Kostova; Todor Davidkov; Albena Dancheva; Svilen Kateliev; Stefan Tsonev Principle 11,12, 13 and 14 - Karmen Iskrova, Gergana Maeva, Magdalena Kostova, Todor Davidkov, Albena Dancheva, Svilen Kateliev, Stefan

Time	Programme	Organisation	Participants
			Tsonev; Bojidar Parvanov; Galina Paeva; Galya Stateva, Milena Djumayska; Georgi Hristov, Mariana Angelova
			<u>Principle 15</u> – Galya Stateva; Mariana Angelova; Kostadin Georgiev
13.00 – 13.45	Lunch.		
13.45 – 15.15	Methodology, data collection, data processing and administrative data (CoP principles 2, 7 and 8).	NSI	<u>Principles 2 and 7</u> - Elka Atanasova, Karmen Iskrova, Gergana Maeva, Magdalena Kostova, Todor Davidkov, Albena Dancheva, Svilen Kateliev, Stefan Tsonev, Maria Gergova
			<u>Principle 8</u> – Georgi Stanev, Desislava Dimitrova, Todor Davidkov, Girgina Nikolova, Anastas Troyansky, Karmen Iskrova, Gergana Maeva, Silvia Kavgadzhiyska, Galina Vasileva
15.15 – 15.30	Coffee break.		
15.30 – 17.00	(cont.) Methodology, data collection, data processing and administrative data (CoP principles 2, 7 and 8).	NSI	<u>Principles 2 and 7</u> - Elka Atanasova, Karmen Iskrova, Gergana Maeva, Magdalena Kostova, Todor Davidkov, Albena Dancheva, Svilen Kateliev, Stefan Tsonev, Maria Gergova
			<u>Principle 8</u> – Georgi Stanev, Desislava Dimitrova, Todor Davidkov, Girgina Nikolova, Anastas Troyansky, Karmen Iskrova, Gergana Maeva, Silvia Kavgadzhiyska, Galina Vasileva
17.00 – 17.30	Stock-taking (incl. outstanding clarifications or additional issues) and reviewing of remaining schedule.	NSI	PR team
Day 3 – Wednesday 15 October 2014			
9.00 – 11.00	Dissemination and confidentiality (CoP principles 6, 15, 5).	NSI	<u>Principle 5</u> – Diana Yancheva; Iskra Georgieva; Bojidar Parvanov; Galina Paeva
			<u>Principle 6</u> – Diana Yancheva; Bojidar Parvanov; Galina Paeva; Sonia Zlatanova
			<u>Principle 15</u> - Diana Yancheva; Iskra Georgieva; Bojidar Parvanov, Galina Paeva
11.00 – 11.15	Coffee break.		
11.15 – 12.15	Cooperation/level of integration of the ESS.	NSI	Yordanka Anastasova; Daniela Georgieva; Galya Stateva; Milena Djumayska; Marina Grigorova; Georgi Stanev; Bojidar Parvanov; Galina Paeva; Anastas Troyansky
12.15 – 13.00	Lunch.		
13.00 – 14.30	Meeting with main users – Ministries and other public/private institutions (including Central Bank as a user).	NSI	Michail Yanchev , Silvia Todorova, Maria Zareva – Ministry of Finance, Valery Serafimov ,Maya Hristova Petya Cekova
14.30 – 14.45	Coffee break.	NSI	
14.45 – 15.45	Meeting with main users – Media.	NSI	Ekaterina Toteva,Valery Roev, Mila Kisiova, Svetoslav Metanov
15.45 – 17.00	Meeting with main users – Scientific community	NSI	Prof. Hristina Vucheva , Prof. D.Sc. Svetlana Seykova
			Prof. Dr. Veselka Pavlova, Prof. Dr. Lalko Dulevski, Prof. Dr. Stoyan Totev, Aleksandar Naidenov
17.00 – 17.30	Stock-taking (incl. outstanding clarifications or additional issues) and reviewing of remaining schedule.	NSI	PR team

Time	Programme	Organisation	Participants
Day 4 – Thursday 16 October 2014			
9.00 – 11.00	Meeting with main data providers.	NSI	Dafinka Pashova , Emilia Aronova, Michail Petrov, Svetlana Lalova, Yordan Donchev
11.00 – 11.15	Coffee break.		
11.15 – 12.15	Meeting with junior staff	NSI	Hristina Terzijska, Irena Dudova, Petar Kamenov, Tsveta Kostova, Arslan Ahmedov, Tsveta Tsonkova, Petar Petrov
12.00 – 12.45	Lunch.		
12.45 – 14.15	Meeting with ONAs	Agrostatistics Department, Ministry of Agriculture and Food	Diana Atanasova, Vasilka Galabova, Radomira Bruseva, Galina Lukarska, Teodora Semerdjieva -
14.15 – 15.00	Coffee break.		
15.00 – 16.30	Meeting with ONAs	National Revenue Agency	Krasimir Ivanov, Daniela Yaneva, Petar Iliev
16.30 – 17.00	Stock-taking (incl. outstanding clarifications or additional issues).	NSI	
Day 5 – Friday 17 October 2014			
9.00 – 10.30	PR team discussion.	PR team	PR team
10.30 – 10.45	Coffee break.		
10.45 – 12.45	Clarifications, remaining or additional issues and focus areas.	NSI	PR Team + National coordinator Team
12.45 – 13.30	Lunch.		
13.30 – 15.30	Meeting with senior management: conclusions and recommendations.	NSI	Sergey Tsvetarsky, Diana Yancheva, Bogdan Bogdanov, Nasko Nanev
15.30 – 16.30	Preparation of the report: task sharing.	PR team	PR team

ANNEX B. LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

№	Name	Position	
		Position	
Peer Reviewers			
1	Mr. Priit Potisepp, Estonia	Reviewer, Chair	
2	Mr. Peter G. Hackl, Austria	Reviewer	
3	Mr. David Fenwick, United Kingdom	Reviewer	
Observer			
4	Mr. Luis del Barrio	Eurostat, Task Force Peer Reviews	
Participants from National Statistical Institute of Bulgaria			
Management of National Statistical Institute:			
5	Mr. Sergey Tsvetarsky	President of the NSI	
6	Ms. Diana Yancheva	Deputy president	
7	Mr. Bogdan Bogdanov	Deputy president	
8	Mr. Nasko Nanev	Secretary General	
National Peer-Review coordination team of NSI:			
9	Ms. Galya Stateva	National coordinator/ State expert	General Methodology and Analysis of Statistical Surveys Department
10	Ms. Milena Djumayska	Senior expert	Planning, Projects and Coordination Department
11	Mr. Georgi Hristov	Chief expert	Planning, Projects and Coordination Department
12	Ms. Mariana Angelova	Chief expert	General Methodology and Analysis of Statistical Surveys Department
13	Ms. Daniela Georgieva	Senior expert	Planning, Projects and Coordination Department
14	Ms. Yordanka Anastassova	Head of Department	International Cooperation and Protocol Department
15	Ms. Tihomira Dobreva	State expert	International Cooperation and Protocol Department
16	Mr. Kamen Karadjov	Chief expert	International Cooperation and Protocol Department
17	Ms. Iskra Georgieva	Director	Multi-domain Statistics and User services Directorate
18	Ms. Galina Paeva	Chief expert	Relations with users and e-services Department
19	Ms. Marina Grigorova	Senior expert	Human Resources Department
20	Mr. Pavel Ivanov	Legal adviser	Legal activities Department
21	Ms. Anastasia Marinova	Head (acting) of Department	Financial - Economic Activities Department
22	Ms. Sonia Zlatanova	Junior expert	Publications, Library and Archives Department
23	Mr. Deyan Slavov	Director	Regional Statistical Office -Varna
24	Mr. George Angelov	Director	Regional Statistical Office – Plovdiv
25	Ms. Kalina Kazandzhieva	Director	Regional Statistical Office – Yambol

№	Name	Position	
26	Ms. Galina Handzhieva	Director	Regional Statistical Office – Russe
Other participants of National Statistical Institute:			
27	Ms. Elka Atanasova	Director	"Macroeconomic statistics" Directorate
28	Mr. Ivan Balev	Director	"Demographic and Social Statistics" Directorate
29	Mr. Spas Kostov	Director	"Business Statistics" Directorate
30	Ms. Iskra Georgieva	Director	"Multi-domain statistics and user services" Directorate
31	Mr. Sergey Genev	Director	"Information systems and Infrastructure" Directorate
32	Mr. Bojidar Parvanov	Head of Department	Relations with users and e-services Department
33	Mr. Lubomir Blatski	Head of Press Centre	Press Centre
34	Mr. Anastas Troyansky	Head of Department	Business registers Department
35	Mr. Luben Kalpakov	Legal adviser	Legal activities Department
36	Ms. Svetoslava Filipovich	Head (acting) of Department	Structural Business Statistics Department
37	Ms. Karmen Iskrova	State expert	Structural Business Statistics Department
38	Mr. Peter Soyanov	Head of Department	Short-term Business Statistics Department
39	Ms. Gergana Maeva	State expert	Short-term Business Statistics Department
40	Ms. Magdalena Kostova	Head of Department	Demographic Statistics Department
41	Mr. Todor Davidkov	Head of Department	Labour Statistics Department
42	Ms. Albena Dancheva	Head of Department	Consumer Price Statistics and PPP Department
43	Mr. Svilen Kateliev	Head of Department	Education and Culture Statistics Department
44	Mr. Stefan Tsonev	Head of Department	Environmental and Energy Statistics Department
45	Ms. Maria Gergova	Head of Department	Business Tendencies and Tourism Department
46	Ms. Galina Vasileva	State expert	Short-term Business Statistics Department
47	Ms. Silvia Kavgadzhiyska	Head of Department	Foreign Trade Statistics Department
48	Ms. Girgina Nikolova	Head of Department	Agriculture and Forestry Statistics Department
49	Mr. Kostadin Georgiev	Chief expert	Relations with Users and e-Services Department
50	Mr. Georgi Stanev	Head (acting) of Department	Database Administration Department
51	Mr. Nikos Samaras	Head (acting) of Department	Legal activities Department
52	Ms. Emilia Shikova	Head (acting) of Department	Human Resources Department

№	Name	Position	
Junior staff of National Statistical Institute:			
53	Ms. Hristina Terzijska	Senior Expert	Business Tendencies and Tourism Department
54	Ms. Irena Dudova	Senior Expert	Multy-Domain Statistics and Geostatistics Department
55	Mr. Petar Kamenov	Senior Expert-	Financial Statistics Department
56	Ms. Tsveta Kostova	Chief expert	Labour Statistics Department
57	Mr. Arslan Ahmedov	Chief expert	Multy-Domain Statistics and Geostatistics Department
58	Mr. Petar Petrov	Chief expert	Environmental and Energy Statistics Department
59	Ms. Milena Nedelkova	Senior expert	Health and Justice Statistics Department
Participants from other organisations			
Main users, data providers/respondents:			
№	Name	Position	Name of the organisation
Ministries and other public/private institutions, including Bulgarian Central Bank:			
60	Mr. Michail Yanchev		Bulgarian National Bank
61	Ms. Maria Zareva (substituted by another person)		Ministry of Finance
62	Mr. Valery Serafimov		Ministry of Environment and Water
63	Ms. Silvia Todorova		Bulgarian Industrial Association
64	Ms. Maya Hristova		Capital market
65	Ms. Petya Cekova		United Bulgarian Bank
Media:			
66	Ms. Ekaterina Toteva		Bulgarian News Agency
67	Mr. Valery Roev		Telegraph newspaper
68	Ms. Mila Kisiova		Standard newspaper
69	Mr. Svetoslav Metanov		ClubZ.bg
Representatives of scientific community:			
70	Ms. Prof. D.Sc. Svetlana Seykova	Head of the Center	Social Survey Research Center, Institute for the Study of Societies and Knowledge at Bulgarian Academy of Sciences
71	Ms. Prof. Dr. Veselka Pavlova	Vice-Rector on Education in EQD of Master and Distance Learning, Head of Department Statistics and Econometrics	University of National and World Economy
72	Mr. Assoc. Prof. Hristo Maleshkov, Ph.D.	Lecturer in General Economic Faculty, Human Resources and Social Protection Department	University of National and World Economy
73	Mr. Prof. Dr. Stoyan Totev	Member of the Council	Scientific council in Economic Research Institute at Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

№	Name	Position	
74	Mr. Aleksandar Naydenov, Phd	Lecturer in Statistics Department	University of National and World Economy
Representatives of data providers:			
75	Ms. Dafinka Pasova	NIKIMI JSC. – Construction industry	
76	Ms. Emilia Aronova	VODSTROY 98 – Construction on water supply installations	
77	Mr. Michail Petrov	Amrest EOOD – Operator of restaurants	
78	Ms. Svetlana Lalova	Enterprice Communications Group OOD	
79	Mr. Yordan Donchev	Ocean EOOD	
Participants of ONAs:			
80	Ms. Diana Atanasova	Head of Department	Agrostatistics Department , Ministry of Agriculture and Food
81	Ms. Vasilka Galabova		Agrostatistics Department, Ministry of Agriculture and Food
82	Ms. Radomira Bruseva		Agrostatistics Department, Ministry of Agriculture and Food
83	Ms. Galina Lukarska		Agrostatistics Department, Ministry of Agriculture and Food
84	Ms. Teodora Semerdjieva		Agrostatistics Department, Ministry of Agriculture and Food
85	Mr. Krasimir Ivanov		National Revenue Agency
86	Ms. Daniela Yaneva		National Revenue Agency
87	Mr. Petar Iliev		National Revenue Agency