



REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA
NATIONAL STATISTICAL INSTITUTE

REPORT

ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL STATISTICAL PROGRAMME AND THE ACTIVITY OF THE NATIONAL STATISTICAL INSTITUTE IN 2024

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LIST OF BULGARIAN ABBREVIATIONS

BSEC	Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization
CA	Customs Agency
EAMA	Executive Agency “Maritime administration”
EAVW	Executive Agency on vine and wine
EC	European Commission
ESA 2010	European System of Accounts 2010
ESS	European Statistical System
EU	European Union
ExEA	Executive Environment Agency
FMCS	Financial Management and Control system
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNI	Gross National Income
HIAU	Head of Internal Audit unit
HICP	Harmonized Index of Consumer Prices
HO	Head Office
IAU	Internal Audit unit
ICT	Information and communications technology
INTRASTAT	Information system for Intra-Community trade in goods
IPA	Institute of Public Administration
IS	Information system
KAIS	Cadastral-Administrative Information System
MAF	Ministry of Agriculture and Food
ME	Ministry of Energy
MEW	Ministry of Environment and Water
MF	Ministry of Finance
MH	Ministry of Health
MI	Ministry of Interior
NEA	National Employment Agency
NRA	National Revenue Agency
NRPP	National register of populated places
NSI	National Statistical Institute
NSP	National Statistical Programme
NSS	National Statistical System
NSSI	National Social Security Institute
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OP	Operational programme
PCHCRBA	Population Census and Housing Census in the Republic of Bulgaria Act
PPPs	Purchasing Power Parities
PR	Property registry
PRODCOM	Survey on output and sales of industrial products
PRODCOM.BG	Nomenclature of Industrial Production
RA	Registry Agency
R & D	Research and Development activity
RSO	Regional Statistical Office
RSU	Register of statistical units
SAR	State Agency for Refugees
SEDA	Sustainable Energy Development Agency
SSD	Statistical surveys Department
STS	Short-term Business Statistics
UN	United Nations
WG	Working group

LIST OF ENGLISH ABBREVIATIONS

ESTP	European Statistical Training Programme
FATS	Foreign Affiliates Trade Statistics
SDMX	Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange
VIES	VAT Information Exchange System

INTRODUCTION

The Report on implementation of the National Statistical Programme and the activity of the National Statistical Institute in 2024 is developed in compliance with Art. 9 (6) of the Law on Statistics.

The report is structured into five sections and presents the implementation of the tasks of the National Statistical Programme and the activities of the NSI and other Bodies of statistics in 2024.

The first section pays special attention to statistical surveys and activities performed for the first time in 2024.

The second section describes the results achieved on implementation of strategic goals laid down in the Strategy for Development of the National Statistical System of the Republic of Bulgaria for the period 2021 - 2027.

The third section presents the implementation of activities on the production of statistical information in the different thematic areas - demographic and social statistics, macroeconomic statistics, business statistics, statistics on agriculture, forestry and fisheries, multi-domain statistics, information technologies, statistical infrastructure and other activities.

The fourth section presents the resources needed in order to implement the activities of the NSI in 2024.

The fifth section introduces the audit assignments performed by the Internal Audit Unit and the activities implemented by the Inspectorate and the Finance Controller in 2024.

MAIN EVENTS IN 2024

- In the period 26-28 March 2024, a peer review mission of the OECD was held at the NSI as part of the accession procedure for full membership in the Committee on Statistics and Statistical Policy. The NSI was designated as a leading institution in the technical review of the compatibility of national legislation under legal instrument OECD/LEGAL/0417 - Recommendation of the Council for Good Statistical Practices.
- On June 18, 2024, the accession review of Bulgaria was held in the OECD Committee on Statistics and Statistical Policy. The review concluded with high praise for the NSI and its efficient coordination of the National Statistical System, as well as for the high quality of the official statistical information produced by the institute and the other national authorities, in accordance with OECD's standards and best practices.
- On November, 5, 2024, the Council of the EU formally adopted the Regulation amending Regulation (EC) No 223/2009 on European Statistics, which is the main legislative act defining the operation of the European Statistical System. The amended Regulation improves the access of national statistical authorities to administrative sources. In addition, for the first time, the Regulation includes a requirement to grant access to private holder data for the production of official statistics, while ensuring the protection of sensitive information and reducing the reporting burden on businesses.

1. INTRODUCING FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 2024

The National Statistical Institute:

- Used an administrative register as a source of statistical data on tertiary education - Register of all active, interrupted and graduated students and Ph.D. students. The Ministry of Education and Science (MES) through the National Centre for Information and Documentation keeps and maintains the register as an electronic database.
- Used the SIMS standard for filling in and submitting to Eurostat metadata and a quality report for the Labour Force Survey (LFS).
- Provided the European Commission (Eurostat) with data on the number of voters eligible to vote in the 2024 European Parliament elections.
- Tested the use of the SDMX technical standard for filling in and submitting data to Eurostat under the European System of Integrated Social Protection Statistics.
- Begun regular provision of data on hourly earnings in unadjusted and seasonally adjusted form to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).
- Used administrative data from the registers of insured persons and employment contracts for enterprises with fewer than 10 employees for the first time in the Structure of Earnings survey. This significantly contributed to reduce the respondent burden.
- Fulfilled the new requirements of Regulation (EU) No 2019/2152 of the European Parliament and of the Council in the field of annual PRODCOM survey based on the updated questionnaires, changes in the methodology and in the information technology system for collecting and validating input PRODCOM data, and provided the necessary reliable and internationally comparable statistical information.
- In accordance with the new requirements of Regulation (EU) 2019/2152 of the European Parliament and of the Council on European business statistics and Implementing Regulation (EU) 2020/1197, the NSI begun production and publication of new levels of aggregation and scope of short-term indicators in the field of services and construction. From 2024, the publication of a new indicator "Production Index in

Services" has started, switching from quarterly to monthly production of short-term indicators in the field of services. In 2024, a recalculation of all time series with short-term indicators to the new base year (2021) was also carried out.

- Started preparatory activities on the implementation of the new classification of economic activities (NACE Rev. 2.1), which will enter into force from the reference year 2025.
- Provided Eurostat with data on business characteristics of enterprises, and for the first time the entire set of tables was prepared.
- Started the publication of the indicator "Uncertainty in the future development of the business situation" in the business surveys in the industry, construction, trade and services sector.
- In connection with the accession of the Republic of Bulgaria to the OECD, the NSI participated in WG meetings of national experts on indicators for a number of surveys conducted by the institute.
- Launched a new annual survey "Hydrogen" which collects data on production, import, export, stocks and supplies of hydrogen for the preparation of the Energy Balances and the Overall energy balance sheet of the country.
- Reported disaggregated data on energy consumption in the Transport sector (land and rail) from the Overall energy balance sheet for 2022.
- Reported disaggregated data on energy consumption in the Service sector by aggregated economic activity codes for 2022.
- Completed and submitted the new table 28A from the Eurostat Transmission Program, concerning the structure of the debt of the General Government sector by subsectors.
- Published information on the indicator "Population Density" by types of territories and municipalities in the IS "Infostat".
- Prepared and disseminated data for the Population Grid (in a coordinate grid with a spatial resolution of cells of 100 m) with data from the 2021 Population and Housing Census.

2. IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC GOALS OF THE STRATEGY FOR DEVELOPMENT OF THE NATIONAL STATISTICAL SYSTEM, 2021 - 2027

Main direction in the activity of the NSI in 2024 was the realization of strategic goals and activities within the framework of the Strategy for Development of the National Statistical System of the Republic of Bulgaria for the period 2021 - 2027.

2.1. Goal 1: Modern and effective National Statistical System

Activity 2.1.3. Development and implementation of new methods and technologies

The National Statistical Institute started preparing a technical specification for the development of a new IS "Transport", which will unite all surveys conducted in the field of transport statistics. Preparations also started for the development of a new IS "Single Entry Point for Announcing Annual Financial Statements" and statistical reports in machine-readable format (IS SEP) and its integration with the NRA, NSI and the Commercial register and register of non-profit legal entities of the Registry Agency.

In 2024, work continued on expanding the system of tourism satellite accounts and linking them to the "Supply Use Tables" tables of national accounts.

The exchange of data provided by the NRA to the NSI regarding VAT declarations improved, thereby achieving completeness of the information submitted to the IS Business Statistics.

During the year, the development of the IS "Data Catalog" continued. It will contain information on all available structural and reference metadata in the NSI and will provide a universal, standard tool for systematizing NSI data. The IS "Data Catalog" will become a

centralized catalog for structural and reference metadata, which accesses all information systems from the point of view of documenting access rights. The goal is, by using the primary data sources and validating the primary data, to reduce redundant, contradictory or erroneous data and to maintain the quality of information at the highest possible level, and by systematizing the data in the Catalog, to reduce the number of duplicate data in different surveys. The system will play a role in the integration of available information sources and will have the ability to accept information via a data exchange standard.

In 2024, the NSI continued the development of web-based applications to replace the currently operating desktop applications with the aim of a convenient and easy way to enter data, accessibility on any device and a high level of data protection and security. An example of this are the web applications "Household Budget Survey", "Annual report of enterprises realizing forestry activity" and the modules of the web-based application for the IS "Culture". During the year, the new web applications "Annual report of agricultural holdings" and "Labor Force Survey" were put into operation as they replaced the corresponding desktop applications, and the actual data collection began.

During the year, the NSI developed code in the R programming language for processing administrative data from the MAF and for calculating average prices for agricultural land and rent.

Activity 2.1.4. Use more administrative and new data sources

In 2024, the NSI continued to interact with the institutions for the use of administrative data for the needs of the production of statistical information. The National statistical institute continued its good cooperation in data exchange with both bodies of statistics and ministries, state agencies and other institutions.

During the year, contacts, including meetings, were held with various administrations and organizations regarding the need for administrative data for the implementation of the new requirements of national and European legislation. In accordance with the OECD recommendations for the provision of monthly information on registered passenger cars, meetings were held with the National Police General Directorate at the Ministry of Interior, through which the opportunities for the provision of information were optimized. The Bulgarian Food Safety Agency (BFSA) has started to upgrade the Integrated Information System VetIS to create a reference for automated process of providing information from BFSA to the NSI for the purposes of national and European statistics. In 2024, together with the survey on average land prices and rent in agriculture, an experimental analysis carried out in parallel with administrative data provided by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food on average land rent prices, grouped by type of permanent use and by districts. The purpose of the analysis is to establish the possibility of future use of administrative data. In the field of consumer price statistics, in the regular production of data on the price indices of drugs affecting the cardiovascular system purchased with a prescription book, according to the positive list of the NHIF, a transition was made to the use of an administrative source - the National Health Information System. In addition, in connection with the study of the possibility of using administrative data in the field of banking services, a working group was established between the NSI, the BNB and the Association of Banks.

2.2. Goal 2: High quality and confidence in official statistics

Activity 2.2.1. Strengthening communication with stakeholders

In order to reduce the respondent burden, interaction with institutions on the use of administrative data for the production of statistical information continued in 2024.

In May 2024, the NSI together with the National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria, held training for representatives of municipalities on environmental surveys. The main goal was to provide methodological support to municipal administrations by presenting both the essence and context of environmental statistics, as well as specific

practical instructions for filling out survey forms and working with the IS "Environmental Statistics".

The main channel for dissemination of statistical information and easy access to it was the NSI's website. The number of visits to the site averages 7 845 visits per day.

During the year, 1 252 time series in Bulgarian and English were published, as well as the corresponding tables with the latest data and metadata in 46 statistical sections, 290 bilingual press releases and 167 news, as well as announcements for 99 competitions and 1 auction.

The number of press releases published with regional statistics at the time of reporting is 734.

The time series generated the most interest and downloaded the most times during the year are in English from the following areas:

- Consumer Price Indices;
- Industrial Production Indices and Industrial Turnover Indices;
- Construction Production Indices.

The Top 3 publications downloaded from the NSI's website in digital format are:

- Classification of economic activities (NACE.BG-2008);
- Road Traffic Accidents in the Republic of Bulgaria;
- Statistical Reference Book Census 2021.

There is also interest in digital copies of the earliest editions of the Statistical Yearbook, the first issue of which dates back to 1909.

The press releases that generated the greatest interest during the year were about inflation and consumer price indices, population and demographic processes, employees under labour contract, and gross average wages and salaries.

Publication of monthly data on turnover indices in services and production indices in services begun in the "Short-term business statistics" section.

Activity 2.2.2. Inclusion and active participation of the public

In fulfillment of Goal 2 "High quality and confidence in official statistics" from 2020, the NSI included the organization of outdoor exhibitions in its toolset for popularizing the statistical institution and its activities. In 2024, there were 7 exhibitions "Bulgaria's youth in the European family" presented in Sofia, Varna, Veliko Tarnovo, Vratsa, Plovdiv and Blagoevgrad. The numerous audience of all the cities had the opportunity to find answers to curious questions: which is the "youngest" city in Bulgaria, what is the share of employment of young people in our country in the different age groups from 16 to 29 years, how many are tertiary education graduates, what are their interests. Attendance was measured by organizing accompanying initiatives - a QR quiz and a game "Scan and win!".

Activity 2.2.3. Open quality management

Open quality management of the European statistics is a priority direction in the development of the ESS. Quality management of the European statistics requires all Member States to implement effectively the legislation in the field of statistics and principles of the European Statistics Code of Practice.

During the year, the NSI developed a methodology "Environmental Statistics and Accounts", which includes methodological and practical guidelines for environmental statistics and the production of environmental accounts. The effect of the guidelines implementation is to improve the overall statistical process and data quality. The quality of data on environmental goods and services reported under Regulation (EU) No 691/2011 on European environmental economic accounts also improved through a revision of the full time series, including the last reporting year. The activities were implemented within the project "Development of Guidelines for environmental statistics and accounts and pilot

implementation for Environmental goods and services sector data revision" funded by the EU.

In implementation of an EC project "Energy statistics: support to the Energy Union and further disaggregation of final energy consumption", the NSI developed and implemented a methodology and research to detail data on the final consumption of solid biofuels for energy needs (according to Regulation (EU) No. 2018/1099), and on final consumption in the transport sector (according to Regulation (EC) No. 1099/2008).

During the year, the NSI continued work on the methodology and tools for the new module "Ecosystem Accounts" in connection with the upcoming amendment to Regulation (EU) No. 691/2011 on European environmental economic accounts. The institute also implemented a methodology and survey on hydrogen in compliance with the requirements of Regulation (EC) No. 1099/2008 on energy sector statistics.

In June, a seminar was held - Annual Meeting "Environment and Energy Statistics" with the participation of experts from all the SSDs. The main objective of the event was to improve the work by increasing the expert capacity in SSDs, and as a result - improving the quality of statistical data.

In the field of consumer price statistics, the inventory of sources and methods for the production of the HICP, house price indices and house sales indicators, as well as the report on the sources and methods used to collect information necessary for calculating purchasing power parities, were updated and sent to Eurostat.

2.3. Goal 3: Transition from statistics to value-added statistics

Activity 2.3.1. Modern and effective communication

In 2024, the NSI continued and strengthened the good cooperation with national and regional media. During this period, over 290 press releases with statistical information and announcements of current statistical data, and 150 news topics from various national and international events were published on the NSI internet site and were disseminated to the media. The NSI continued to send informational press releases to the press centers of ministries and other institutions, as well as to the Bulgarian embassies abroad - a tradition that has lasted for more than 20 years.

During the year, the NSI began to announce statistical data published on the website without press releases. The announcements contain brief information about the data and the most important numbers.

Data from the latest survey from the Census 2021 programme – Time use survey - were announced in September. This concluded the work on the communication strategy for popularizing the census that was created in 2019.

This year, together with UNICEF, on the occasion of June 1 - Children's Day, a publication with statistical data on children was prepared.

During the year, the NSI continued the activities on targeted countermeasures against fake news related to statistical data and disinformation. The institute participated in several meetings related to the European Commission's initiative "Bulgarian Coalition against Disinformation" which is a partnership between Bulgarian and European institutions, journalists, representatives of the non-governmental sector and academia.

The National statistical institute receives periodic requests for data from the Factcheck.bg group of journalists to provide statistical information on topics about which fake news is spread.

Work continued on increasing the presence on social networks. During the year, news was also published on Instagram, where the NSI profile has nearly 300 posts. The most popular NSI profile on social networks is on Facebook. During the year, the number of followers on the NSI Facebook page exceeded 13,000 people.

In 2024, the NSI continued to use new technologies to optimize the dissemination of the information produced. Along with user service and the website, the main channels for communication with users were social networks. They are often used to inform the public and receive feedback when announcing results of statistical surveys and events conducted by the

NSI or with the participation of NSI representatives.

Statistical information rich in volume and content in press releases and periodical publications supply state institutions, businesses, the academic community and the whole society with timely, objective, useful and European-quality statistical information about the current state of the various economic, social, educational and cultural activities in the country. The NSI issued 17 publications - printed and electronic (on the NSI website) which are bilingual - in Bulgarian and English and contain national and regional data from various statistical areas. "Statistical Yearbook 2023", "Statistical Reference Book 2024" and "Statistics" magazine comprehensively cover statistical information and satisfy the needs of different categories of users.

Activity 2.3.2. New, consumer-oriented statistical products and services

In 2024, the NSI continued to develop the IS "Single Entry Point NSI". The information system will be a portal for users to access specific NSI information systems for entering the relevant reports. Users will have easier access and greater use of all applications and services they need. The purpose of the portal is to provide a single entry, after which the user will be able to work in the systems integrated without the need for repeated identification and authorization. In this way, respondents will be relieved in submitting information for the relevant NSI surveys.

IS "Business Statistics", IS "Business Cycles" and IS "Environmental Statistics" will be integrated in the current system "Single Entry Point NSI". Users will have direct access to these systems through the new information system. Within the framework of the project, integration with external systems will also be implemented, as well as connectivity with RegiX - the environment for inter-register exchange of the Ministry of e-Government. In the future, all the NSI systems used by external users for entering reports/surveys will be integrated into the system. This will lead to the elimination of unnecessary administrative burden for businesses and especially for enterprises in the categories of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises.

In accordance with Eurostat requirements, in 2024, the orientation of the production of statistics on foreign trade in goods towards the information needs of users continued through wider use of the data available in the NSI from the IS Statistical Business Register for the compilation of new indicators.

In response to the growing needs of various users for timely information, the NSI began upgrading the IS Foreign Trade by adding a Macrodata module to generate various statistical outputs. This will provide fast and convenient online access to data on the export and import of goods by using modern and secure IT solutions and tools.

Activity 2.3.3. Easily accessible and understandable statistics

The initiatives to increase statistical literacy and culture, which NSI has been working on for years, continued by organizing: the 7th European Statistics Competition for students, the Statistical essay competition for students and the exhibitions at the Open-Air Gallery "Bulgaria's Youth in the European Family". The European Statistics Competition included 523 teams from 148 educational centers in the country, and 56 students from 20 cities participated in the Statistical Essay Competition. The DATATHON competition was organized for the second time and 27 teams from 11 cities in Bulgaria took part. The NSI exhibition was shown in Sofia, Varna, Veliko Tarnovo, Vratsa, Plovdiv, Burgas and Blagoevgrad. The organization and registration of participants in the Eight European Statistics Competition has begun. Mass participation in statistical initiatives is a convincing proof that NSI is working in the right direction and attracts with each passing year more and more young people who expand their knowledge and skills in statistics.

Activity 2.3.4. Conditions for active participation of the media

The media is a key stakeholder, an important partner and a major user of the NSI data. The institute relies on open, timely and effective communication with them. One of the main

policies in this regard, laid down in the European Statistics Code of Practice, is the equality of the media, together with all users, in the dissemination of statistical products and services. This means that the media are informed in advance when and what data will be published through the Release calendar announced at the beginning of the year, and they receive the press releases always at the same time. This policy was strictly followed in 2024.

The media was a natural partner of the NSI in order to popularize the activities of the institution. During the year, the NSI held numerous meetings and interviews, answered their inquiries and proactively provided them with information related to current topics. The NSI established new contacts and new media and journalists were introduced to the work of the institute and the importance of statistical information for society.

2.4. Goal 4: Active cooperation with national and international partners

Activity 2.4.1. Promoting partnerships at national level

In 2024, in the field of consumer price statistics, the NSI took an active part, together with the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Economy and Industry and the Consumer Protection Commission, in the discussions held at the national level regarding the exchange of information and finding a mechanism for price monitoring in accordance with the National Plan for the Introduction of the Euro in the Republic of Bulgaria, adopted by Decision of the Council of Ministers No. 797, and institutional obligations regulated in the Law on the Introduction of the Euro in the Republic of Bulgaria.

In 2024, in the field of agricultural and forestry statistics, NSI experts participated together with other partner organizations in activities to improve interaction within the National Statistical System. NSI employees attended meetings of the National Committee on the National Committee for the Farm Accountancy Data Network, the Monitoring Committee of the Strategic Plan for the Development of Agriculture and Rural Areas 2023 - 2027, the Monitoring Committee of the Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Program 2021 – 2027. NSI experts took part in the working group for the preparation of proposals and amendments to Regulation No. 3 on the establishment and maintenance of a register of farmers, as well as in a working meeting with representatives of the EC on the transformation of the Farm Accountancy Data Network into an information system for the sustainability of agricultural holdings.

During the year, the cooperation and strategic partnership in data exchange between the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) and the National Statistical Institute continued based on an agreement signed between the two institutions in 2018. An interdepartmental expert council with representatives of the MES and the NSI carries out the exchange of information.

Activity 2.4.2. Extension of international cooperation

In 2024, the activities in the field of international cooperation were again aimed at strengthening the authority of NSI as a responsible and active partner both within the European Statistical System, and in a number of international organizations, including the United Nations, OECD, the Organization for Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), the International Labor Organization (ILO), the World Health Organization (WHO) and others.

This year, the full membership of our country in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) was a top priority for the institution. The NSI is the leading institution in the review under the Council's Recommendation for good statistical practice (OECD/LEGAL/0417) within the framework of the Committee on Statistics and Statistical Policy.

In the period 26 - 28 March 2024, a second mission of the OECD held at the NSI - a peer review with the participation of representatives of the OECD Statistics and Data Directorate and experts from the Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT), the Statistical Office of New Zealand and the National Bank of Belgium to assess the progress made by the National Statistical System in implementing the recommendations made by the OECD during

the first technical mission to Bulgaria in March 2023. The peer review ended with a unanimous high assessment of the work of the NSI, the quality, depth and scope of the activities of Bulgarian statistics, as well as the progress achieved over the past year. The cooperation and good coordination between the NSI, the BNB and other statistical authorities were also highly appreciated.

On 17-18 June 2024, at the OECD headquarters in Paris, a delegation from the NSI and the BNB led by the President of the NSI, took part in the 21st meeting of the OECD Committee on Statistics and Statistical Policy. During the meeting, the official hearing of the Bulgarian delegation was held within the framework of the accession review of Bulgaria to the OECD. In August, with an official letter from the Chair of the Committee on Statistics and Statistical Policy Mr. Geir Axelsen, the President of NSI was informed of the successful conclusion of Bulgaria's accession review to the Committee. The NSI received high praise for the well-developed legal and institutional framework, the solid data infrastructure, the good registers available and the strong expertise of the NSI employees in conducting surveys and censuses, enabling high response rate even in voluntary surveys in accordance with OECD's best practices and standards.

In addition, the NSI has been identified as a partner institution in the preparation of self-assessments for 17 technical reviews under OECD legal instruments within the framework of various thematic committees. In this context, the institute continued to provide the necessary timely and reliable information to the Bulgarian institutions for the conduct of these reviews, and NSI representatives participated in the hearing of Bulgaria before the Committee on Regional Development Policy and the Working Group "National Experts on Science and Technology Indicators" of the Committee on Science and Technology Policy.

In implementation of the activities set out in the National Roadmap for cooperation with the OECD for the period from 2023 to 2025, three communication events were organized - round tables on the topic "The National Statistical Institute as a full member of the OECD Committee on Statistics and Policy" in June in the South-West Planning Region, in September in the South-East Planning Region and in December in the North-Central Planning Region with the participation of RSO, local government bodies, territorial offices of the central administration, employer organizations and NGOs. The purpose of the round tables is to familiarize with the activities of the NSI and the progress achieved within the process of joining the OECD Committee on Statistics, as well as to discuss the opportunities for cooperation between institutions and the need of local authorities and businesses for statistical data.

The role of official statistics in applying for membership in regional and international organizations and the experience of the NSI in the process of joining the OECD Committee on Statistics and Statistical Policy was shared by the President of the NSI during the 19th International Conference of Young Scientists, organized by the University of National and World Economy on November 7 and 8, 2024.

Throughout the year, the NSI was an active partner within the European Statistical System (ESS). Our country was represented in all three regular meetings of the European Statistical System Committee (ESSC) - in Luxembourg, Luxembourg, and Tallinn, Estonia. A total of 13 implementing acts were examined and adopted at these meetings under the comitology procedure. Before the last meeting of the ESSC for the year in October, the traditional meeting of the Directors-General (109th DGINS Conference) on the topic "Charting New Frontiers of Official Statistics" was also held.

Among the more important forums within the ESS during the year were: the international conference in Bruges, Belgium (2 - 3 May 2024), dedicated to statistical literacy on the topic "Towards a more statistically literate future", which was held within the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU, as well as the meeting of the heads of the European statistical institutes on the topic "Towards an ESS Vision 2030", held in Balatonfüred, Hungary (12 - 13 September 2024) as part of the Hungarian Presidency of the Council of the EU.

The President of the NSI chaired a session on “Smart Surveys Implementation” during the 11th European Conference on Quality in Official Statistics in Estoril, Portugal (4-7 July 2024). Statistics Portugal hosted the event in close collaboration with Eurostat under the theme “Official Statistics as a Pillar of Democracy”.

On October 15 and 16, 2024, the President of the NSI took part in Conference of European Statistics Stakeholders on the topic “The beyond GDP agenda: past, present, visions for the future”. The event was jointly organized by Eurostat and the European Central Bank under the aegis of the European Statistical Advisory Committee (ESAC). The aim was to enhance the dialogue between producers, methodologists and users of European statistics by identifying users’ requirements, sharing producers’ best practices, exploring innovative ideas for data collection and analysis. The French national statistical office and Banque de France hosted the conference.

In 2024, NSI representatives continued to participate in the meetings of various working groups in the field of statistics at the European and national level. As usual, among the particularly important international meetings were those of the EU Council Working Party on Statistics (CWPS) in Brussels. The NSI had a representative at all meetings, and at various stages of the work, the Permanent Representation of the Republic of Bulgaria to the EU provided support.

In the first half of 2024, Belgium took over the Presidency of the Council of the EU. The Belgian Presidency coincided with the end of the European Parliament's term of office. The Presidency worked on four legislative dossiers: Regulation amending Regulation (EU) No 691/2011 as regards the introduction of new modules for environmental economic accounts; Regulation amending Regulation (EC) No 223/2009 on European statistics; Regulation on European population and housing statistics; Regulation on European labour market statistics based on business data. During this period, Coreper adopted negotiating mandates with the Parliament on all four dossiers and held successful trilogues.

The NSI achieved its goals set at the beginning of the negotiations and laid down in the Framework positions approved by the president of the NSI and adopted by the Council of Ministers.

Hungary took over the Presidency from 1 July until the end of 2024. At that time, the new composition of the Parliament also started working. The main activity of the Working group was aimed at finalising the adoption of the draft Regulation amending Regulation (EC) No 223/2009 on European statistics, which is the main legislative act determining the work of the European Statistical System. On 5 November 2024, the Council of the EU formally adopted the Regulation amending Regulation (EC) No 223/2009. The amended Regulation improves the access of national statistical authorities to administrative sources. In addition, for the first time, the Regulation includes a requirement to provide access to data to private holders for the compilation of official statistics, while ensuring the protection of sensitive information and reducing the reporting burden for businesses. Other key features of the amended Regulation (EC) No 223/2009 include promoting the data exchange between the statistical authorities of the EU Member States, as well as making innovative and experimental statistics an integral part of their main activity.

On the same date, the Council of the EU also formally adopted a Regulation amending Regulation (EU) No 691/2011 as regards the introduction of new modules for environmental economic accounts. The new rules extend the scope of European environmental economic accounts by introducing forestry accounts, ecosystem accounts and environment-related subsidies accounts. The amended Regulation aims to provide better information on the European Green Deal to help monitor and assess the EU's progress towards its environmental objectives.

In 2024, three NSI experts took part in face-to-face training courses within the framework of the European Statistical Training Programme (ESTP) on the following topics: "The European Statistical System - structure and functioning" (Copenhagen, Denmark); "Balance of Payments - introductory course" (Paris, France), "European System of Accounts

2010 - National Accounts" (Luxembourg, Luxembourg). Another six experts took part in a total of five online courses and webinars.

During the year, three NSI experts participated in trainings organized by the Joint Vienna Institute and the International Monetary Fund in Vienna, Austria, on the topics: "Institutional Sector Accounts - Advanced Course" and "Environmental and Climate Change Statistics with Macro Relevance".

Three experts participated in a Training Course on "National Accounts" organized by Eurostat and hosted by the National Institute of Statistics of Romania (Bucharest, Romania).

The NSI continued to participate actively in all international forums and discussions concerning current challenges and opportunities for official statistics.

In cooperation with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), in June 2024, the NSI leadership participated in the 72nd plenary session of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) in Geneva, Switzerland. This year, the plenary session held jointly with the UN initiative on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM Europe), which plays a leading role in setting guidelines for the development of geospatial information. The topics discussed during this year's session included: the integration of geospatial and statistical data, the use of artificial intelligence, large language models and machine learning in the development of official statistics and geospatial data, and the linking of data between different areas and sources.

The President of the NSI also represented the country at the 55th session of the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) held from February 27 to March 1, 2024 in New York. At the same time, a high-level forum was held, at which the implementation of the fundamental principles of official statistics was discussed.

The NSI President participated in the UN World Data Forum held in Medellin, Colombia from 11 to 15 November 2024. In parallel with the World Data Forum, a meeting of the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (HLG-PCCB) was also held. The NSI President is a member of this Group as one of the five representatives for the North America and Europe region. Four more meetings of the Group were held during the year to discuss the preparation of the next UN World Data Forum in 2026, global initiatives related to the financing of data and statistics, as well as the need to revise the Cape Town Global Action Plan.

In 2024, the NSI continued its membership in the International Statistical Institute (ISI) and the International Association for Official Statistics (IAOS). The President of the NSI took part in the 19th Conference of the International Association of Official Statistics and the International Statistical Institute, which was held on 15-17 May 2024 in Mexico City under the theme "Improving Decision-Making for All". On the first day of the conference, he chaired a panel session with a topic, also relevant to Bulgaria, "Movement from Register-Based Census to the Creation of a Statistical Population Register".

The President of the NSI together with experts took part in an online meeting of the Working Group on Exchange of Statistical Data and Economic Information of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC). The main goal of the meeting was presenting the final version of the compilation of main economic and social indicators for the countries of the Black Sea region, prepared by the BSEC Coordination Center for the Exchange of Statistical Data and Economic Information based on data provided by national statistical institutes of the Member States. The publication is available on the BSEC website.

On 4-5 July 2024, the Global Conference on Measuring New Forms of Employment, jointly organized by Eurostat and the International Labour Organization (ILO), was held in Brussels. Deputy President of the NSI took part in the event on behalf of Bulgaria. The global conference is a forum for discussion of central issues in the field of labour market and exchange of experience in measuring employment, both at national and international levels.

Deputy President of the NSI was elected as a member of the Executive Body of the Committee on Monetary, Financial and Balance of Payment Statistics (CMFB) for the 2025 and 2026 mandate, after an election procedure that was held among the members of the

Committee. The Committee was established with a Decision of the Council of the European Communities from the 25th of February 1991 with the aim of assisting the EC in drawing up and implementing the multiannual work programme in relation to monetary, financial and balance of payments statistics.

On 21 October 2024, representatives from the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for Europe visited NSI and had a meeting with the President of the institute and heads of departments from the Demographic and Social Statistics Directorate and Business Statistics Directorate. The WHO team was in Bulgaria in relation to the implementation of the Health Labour Market Analysis, which is one of the activities included in the biennial cooperation agreement signed between WHO Regional Office for Europe and the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Bulgaria for the period 2024-2025. The guests were informed about the statistical surveys conducted by NSI in the field of health and labour market. They highly appreciated the data provided by the NSI and the long-standing good cooperation between the NSI and the WHO in the field of Public Health Statistics.

In 2024, the NSI successfully completed the implementation of ten projects funded by grants from the European Commission and co-financed by the state budget in the field of demographic and social statistics, business statistics and multidomain statistics. During the year, the NSI applied for, concluded and is about to sign contracts with the EC for 11 new projects that will be implemented in the period 2024 - 2026. The funding attracted by them is 680,000 EUR or nearly 1 400,000 BGN.

Last year, a presentation on four projects funded by DG Eurostat was made, thus giving the HO and RSO experts the opportunity to become familiar with application, implementation and reporting stages of the grant agreements.

Activity 2.4.3. Improving the scope of agreements and partnerships

The National Statistical Institute continued to pursue a consistent policy for the development of bilateral cooperation with the countries of the European Neighborhood Policy - Eastern Partnership, Southern Partnership and the countries from the Western Balkans.

Within the instrument for pre-accession assistance IPA 2019, the NSI continued its work in the field of macroeconomic statistics with the Statistical Office of Kosovo in cooperation and as part of a consortium with GOPA Worldwide Consultants (lead partner), Statistics Netherlands and Statistics Finland. The aim of the project is to assist Kosovo in providing reliable data for calculating purchasing power parities (PPP) and the full inclusion of the country in regular statistical surveys in the field of PPP. In this regard, the last expert mission to Kosovo was carried out in February.

In July, the NSI submitted a project proposal on the topic "Organization of a training course in the field of statistics for young statisticians from the Western Balkans", to be financed by the Bulgarian Development Aid Programme of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It is planned to involve young statisticians from the statistical offices of Albania, Serbia, the Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo (two participants from each country), as well as two young statisticians from the NSI, which aims to create good professional contacts and conditions for future cooperation between statisticians from the region.

The NSI has bilateral agreements on cooperation in the field of statistics with the Republic of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Croatia, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, the Republic of North Macedonia, Palestine, Romania, Serbia. The Bulgarian side cooperates with these countries on the basis of three-year action plans. In 2024, the preparation of a Plan for joint activities between the NSI and the State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan for the next three-year period was launched.

At an invitation of the Executive Director of the National Statistics Office of Georgia, the President of the NSI and one of the Deputy Presidents, took part in the Regional Conference on theme "Accelerating progress towards inclusive development through gender statistics", which was held on 25-26 July in Tbilisi. The forum was part of the events marking

the 105th anniversary of the establishment of the statistical office of Georgia as well as the 25th anniversary of collecting Gender Statistics in Georgia.

At the invitation of the President of the Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT), the President of the NSI attended the opening ceremony of the ELSTAT stand at the 88th Thessaloniki International Fair. During this visit, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the two institutions and new areas of mutual interest were discussed, as well as opportunities for future development of the traditionally good relations between the statistical offices of the two countries. On the second day of his official visit to Thessaloniki, the President of NSI participated in a discussion on “Disaggregated data requirements to support public policies towards furthering sustainable local integration in Southeastern Europe”.

In 2024, the first official meeting between the leadership of the NSI and the National Bureau of Statistics of China took place. One of the NSI Deputy Presidents was part of a delegation of the Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, which together with the Embassy of the Republic of Bulgaria in Beijing, organized a visit to China, commemorating the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

The 17th International Conference on Applied Statistics was held in November 2024 in Bucharest, Romania. The event was organized by the National Institute of Statistics of Romania and the Department of Statistics and Econometrics of the Bucharest University of Economic Studies. At the invitation of the organizers, the President of the NSI participated in the scientific committee, and the Deputy Chairman Svilen Kolev, PhD moderated the first session of the conference dedicated to the challenges and opportunities facing official statistics and made a presentation on the topic "Innovative practices implemented in the NSI of Bulgaria as a result of the third round of European Statistical System Peer Reviews".

In the field of consumer price statistics, agreements were signed with four large retail chains in early 2024 to provide data on transactions read from fiscal devices (cash registers), called "scanned data". The regular provision of data used as a source of information for consumer price indices also begun. In the area of banking services, a working group was established between the NSI, the BNB and the Association of Banks, which aims to study the impact of bank fees on consumption and the consumer basket.

In 2024, work was launched to update the Agreement on Cooperation and Strategic Partnership in the Exchange of Information between the Ministry of Education and Science and the National Statistical Institute in connection with regulatory amendments and structural changes in both institutions. As a result of the joint work during the period September - December 2024, a draft of a new Agreement between the Ministry of Education and Science and the National Statistical Institute was prepared, along with annexes thereto.

3. REPORT BY THEMATIC DOMAINS

3.1. Demographic and social statistics

Population and housing census in the Republic of Bulgaria in 2021

Pursuant to Regulation (EU) 2017/712 of the Commission concerning the reference year and program for statistical data and metadata for the population and housing census, as provided for in Regulation (EC) 763/2008 of the European Parliament and of The Council, the NSI provided a reference infrastructure for the storage of census data according to the content, scope and structure defined in the Regulation, as well as established links between the national infrastructure and CensusHub. By the end of March 2024, census data and corresponding metadata and quality reports were submitted to Eurostat.

The work on the sixth wave of the Harmonized European Time Use Survey completed in 2024. Data and metadata from the survey were provided to Eurostat, as well as published in the IS Infostat.

Demographic statistics

In the field of demographic statistics, the main priority in 2024 was conduction of all statistical surveys included in the NSP. The regular processing and production of data on birth, mortality, migration, marriages and divorces surveys provided the necessary information to calculate the number and structures of the population and the main demographic indicators, in accordance with the requirements of Regulation № 1260/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council on European demographic statistics. The data for the reference year 2023 was published and submitted to the EC in accordance with the deadlines set. Work carried out on the preparation and provision of data in accordance with Art. 5, 6 and 7 of Regulation No. 862/2007 of the European Parliament and of the Council on "Statistics on the prevention of illegal entry and residence", "Statistics on permanent residence permits and third-country nationals permanently residing" and "Statistics on returns" with the source Ministry of Interior. The NSI continued to provide data to Eurostat under Art. 4 of Regulation No. 862/2007 of the European Parliament and of the Council on "Statistics on international protection" with the source SAR. During the year, data were provided under the "European Cities Statistics" project.

The NSI continued to provide weekly data on mortality to the EC, and to publish weekly data on mortality on the NSI website, once a month, 10 days after the end of the last reference week of the month.

In the field of population and demographic processes, the NSI prepared and provided data on questionnaires of the ILO, the World Health Organization, as well as on joint questionnaires of Eurostat, UN and OECD. During the year, the verification and correction of various documents, reports and strategies of other state institutions continued. In 2024, the NSI prepared and uploaded data for the National Strategy for Roma Integration.

In 2024, a voluntary data collection was carried out on the number of voters eligible to vote in the 2024 European Parliament elections.

Labour market

In 2024, the NSI started implementation of the additional module to the Labor Force Survey - "Young people in the labor market" as well as the preparation for the implementation in 2025 of the additional variables with an eight-year periodicity on the topic "Reconciliation of work and family life". Work on the EC project "Labour Force Survey (LFS) - "Pension and labour market participation" completed.

Data from the 2021 Labor Force Survey (quarterly and annual) were recalculated with population data based on the 2021 Census.

Data for the wage variable INCGROSS, for the reference year 2022, were collected and provided to Eurostat in accordance with the requirements of Regulation (EU) 2019/1700 of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a common framework for European statistics relating to persons and households and of Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2019/2240. Data from the Register of Insured Persons was also used to supplement missing information.

In the field of statistical information provided by enterprises on wages and labour costs, the work continued on the regular annual and short-term surveys of employment and labour costs. Their results were published in accordance with the deadlines set in the release calendar. The regular preparation, publication and submission of data to Eurostat for the indicators: labour cost index, job vacancy statistics and short-term business statistics continued. The quality reports and metadata for these indicators were also prepared. In 2024, regular submission of data on remuneration per hour worked to the OECD in unadjusted and seasonally adjusted form began. Work on the sixth consecutive four-year "Structure of Earnings Survey" completed, with the microdata being submitted and validated by Eurostat, and its results being published on the NSI website and in Infostat. Regular receipt of

information from the administrative register of insured persons continued, which contributes to improving the quality and completeness of statistical data on employees and average wages and salaries. For the first time, the Structure of Earnings Survey used entirely administrative data from the registers of insured persons and employment contracts for enterprises with fewer than 10 employees, which significantly helped to reduce the respondent burden.

In 2024, NSI representatives participated in the Eurostat working group on labor market statistics based on enterprise data, as well as in interdepartmental working groups related to the labor market.

The National Employment Agency, as the main contractor of the state employment policy, collects, processes and disseminates data on the participants and the results of the implementation of measures laid down in it. The implementation of statistical activities in 2024 was based on the collection of register data through the IS of the NEA - National database for labour market and ESF as well as national representative survey on employers' attitudes in the country towards hiring a labour force with certain skills.

The NEA successfully carried out the following activities in 2024:

- Participation in data provision for the preparation of Eurostat's project ESSPROS Unemployment benefits recipients. Annual data for 2023 on unemployed persons - recipients of periodic cash benefits on training as well as benefits in kind related to increasing their professional qualifications or key competences, was provided to NSI in the end of June 2024. The Agency prepared data on unemployment benefit recipients (UBR) for 2022. The data is exchanged with the NSSI where it is checked for "double counting".

- Preparation and provision of data on seasonal workers from third countries to the NSI according to Regulation № 862/2007 of the European Parliament and of the Council on Community statistics on migration and international protection;

- The process of preparing the dataset for the implementation of the active employment policy in 2023 completed. Information was collected from various sources on the participants and the funds paid under a total of 44 active programs, measures and projects financed with funds from the state budget and the ESF+. The data is part of the EC's LMP Database according to Eurostat methodology and is in the process of validation by the Commission.

- Conduction of a nationally representative survey among employers across the country on their labour force needs over the next 12 months. The survey was conducted through an online survey among 426 thousand active employers. The one-dimensional and two-dimensional distributions based on the survey together with the analytical report, were published on the EA website and are available to all interested parties.

- Regular weekly exchange of register aggregated data on registered unemployed persons, and unemployed persons who started work – Ukrainian citizens with temporary protection status pursuant to Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382 of 4 March 2022 establishing the existence of a mass influx of displaced persons from Ukraine within the meaning of Article 5 of Directive 2001/55/EC, and having the effect of introducing temporary protection.

- Continued the implementation of measures to eliminate gaps found during the Peer Review regarding compliance with the European Statistics Code of Practice and further improvement of the development of the National Statistical System of the Republic of Bulgaria.

Education and lifelong learning

In the past year, the exhaustive statistical surveys of educational institutions in Bulgaria were carried out in accordance with the requirements of national and European legislation. For the first time, an administrative register was used as a source of statistical data on tertiary education - the Register of all active, interrupted and graduated students and Ph.D. students (<https://students.nacid.bg/graduated>), which is kept and maintained as an electronic

database by the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) through the National Center for Information and Documentation. The use of MES administrative registers for surveys of pre-primary, basic, and secondary education continues in 2024. Data were provided on the joint questionnaires of Eurostat, OECD and UNESCO on financial and non-financial indicators in the field of education statistics.

Culture

In 2024, the National Statistical Institute continued to provide reliable and timely information on the cultural sector in Bulgaria. During the reporting period, surveys were successfully conducted covering the main cultural institutions - museums, theaters, libraries, cinemas, radio and television programs, as well as film and publishing activities. By adhering to the international methodological recommendations of UNESCO, the NSI guarantees the reliability of data at the national level. This supports the effective planning of cultural policies and strategies, contributing to the sustainable development of the sector and its adaptation to modern public needs.

Public health and healthy and safe working conditions

According to the national legislation, NSP and Regulation (EC) № 1338/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council on Community statistics in the field of public health and healthy and safe working conditions, the NSI carried out statistical surveys qualitatively and on time providing information in the various fields of public health statistics. According to the regulatory acts implementing Regulation (EC) 1338/2008:

- Individual data for 2022 on deaths and stillbirths by causes at the fourth character level of the International Classification of Diseases - X revision (ICD-X) were sent and validated;
- The joint questionnaires of Eurostat, OECD and World Health Organization on financial and non-financial indicators in the health statistics were provided with information. A report on the quality of data developed under the System of Health Accounts for the period 2017 - 2021 was also prepared.
- Preparations have begun for the fourth wave of the European Health Interview Survey, 2025.

In the area of non-financial indicators, efforts focused on further methodological development and improving data quality. In order to explore the possibility of more complete use of data from an administrative source (NHIF), a primary analysis was carried out using individual data for physicians and dentists in all institutions working under a contract with the NHIF. In order to ensure high-quality statistical data in implementation of Commission Regulation (EU) 2022/2294, a seminar was organized during the year with the participation of experts, representatives of the bodies of statistics in the field of public health - the RHI and the NCPHA, and the Ministry of Health, on the topic "Public health statistics - organization of statistical activity and improving the quality of information from jointly conducted surveys in accordance with European legislation".

National Health Data and eHealth Directorate at the National Center for Public Health and Analysis at the Ministry of Health performed all its statistical surveys and activities included in the NSP. As a body of statistics, it conducted the planned surveys on time and disseminated information on the main statistical indicators via the NCPHA Internet site, publication "Health Services" (jointly with the NSI), Brief statistical reference book "Healthcare" and thematic specialized bulletins of the NCPHA.

In implementation of the survey "Accidents at work", **the National Social Security Institute** processed information on accidents at work registered in 2022. The data was processed according to the methodology defined by the Statistical System "Accidents at work", which includes all classifications and variables necessary to characterize the accidents

at work. The methodology fully complies with the national legislation and ensures the application of the European statistics on accidents at work. The NSSI developed an electronic information publication “Accidents at work - number, distribution and indicators 2022”. The publication contains data on the number, distribution and indicators on accidents at work for 2022; comparative tables on the number and indicators on accidents at work registered in 2020, 2021 and 2022; comparison with data for previous years showing the trends of occupational injuries in the country. The data was published on the NSSI’s website under the section “Statistics”. The requirements of Commission Regulation (EU) 349/2011 implementing Regulation (EC) № 1338/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council on Community statistics in the field of public health and healthy and safe working conditions were met in relation to statistical data on accidents at work. Statistical information on accidents at work registered in 2022 was sent directly to Eurostat through the single entry point for exchange of statistical data e-Damis. The NSSI also sent an information on the scope and the number of insured persons for accidents at work distributed by economic activities of the NACE.BG-2008. The NSSI also submitted metadata on accidents at work to Eurostat through web application “ESS-Metadata Handler”. The statistical information on accidents at work for the period 2018 - 2022 was also sent to the International Labour Organization through the NSI.

In implementation of the survey “Occupational diseases”, the NSSI processed the information on the new cases of occupational diseases registered in 2022. Based on the data on cause of death provided by IS “Demography” of the NSI, the cases in which the person died in 2022 due to a recognized occupational disease in the past were also registered. The data was processed according to the methodology defined by the Statistical System “Occupational diseases”, which includes all the classifications and variables necessary to characterize the occupational disease. The methodology fully complies with national legislation and ensures the implementation of the Guide for the collection and provision of data on European statistics on occupational diseases (document version 24 of October 2023, Eurostat). The data was published on the NSSI’s website under the section “Statistics”. Data and metadata on occupational diseases were submitted directly to Eurostat electronically (e-Damis).

Incomes and living conditions

The Household Budget Survey, which assesses household income, expenditure and consumption in 2024, was conducted according to the deadlines set in the National Statistical Programme.

In 2024, the survey “Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (SILC)” was carried out under the framework Regulation (EU) 2019/1700 of the European Parliament and of the Council on household surveys. In addition to the standard target variables, the survey included additional variables on 6-yearly module “Access to services” under Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2022/2498 and 3-year module on children health under Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2019/2242. Activities to improve data processing and implement the technical requirements for the 6-year module for 2024 on access to services and ensuring data quality from the survey “Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (SILC)” are implemented under a grant agreement with the EC on the topic “Income and Living Conditions (ILC) - Statistical Infrastructure under IESS - SILC 2024 6-year module “Access to Services” - Pilot collection of annual data for 2023”.

The fieldwork was carried out between April and June 2024. The processing and analysis of the survey information were carried out according to the deadlines set in the NSP. Preliminary data with survey results was submitted to Eurostat in December 2024 in accordance with the new requirements on information timeliness.

In order to improve the scope and quality of income statistics in 2024, the NSI continued to use the NSSI’s data on the amount of pensions received, pension supplements

and additional benefits and allowances by type and month from the Pension Register, as well as annual data on persons receiving benefits and allowances under the Social Insurance Code (Register of benefits). The NSI supplemented the missing information on income and validated the data by using data on insured persons from the NSSI, data for persons receiving benefits from the Social Assistance Agency, and data for persons submitted an annual tax return from the NRA.

Social protection

Pursuant to Regulation № 458/2007 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European system of integrated social protection statistics in 2024, the completion of statistical data for 2022 under core system and module on pension beneficiaries ended. The core system contains data on revenues and expenditures by social protection schemes and by functions. The requirements of Commission Regulation № 110/2011 regarding the appropriate data transmission formats, the results, which shall be transmitted and the quality measurement criteria for the ESSPROS module on net social protection benefits have been met. The source of data on social protection statistics are the information systems and registers of ministries and departments managing social protection schemes. The NSSI provided annual data on revenues and expenditures under schemes 01 to 06 (ESSPROS core system), as well as data on the number of pension beneficiaries divided by schemes, by type of pension and by sex, in accordance with the form for providing information on module on pension beneficiaries.

In October, early estimates were prepared and sent to Eurostat for the social protection expenditures incurred in the country by ESSPROS functions relevant for 2023. The submission of early estimates under the core system is a pilot submission and is not the subject of implementation of a specific Regulation - the estimates are sent voluntarily by the countries willing to participate.

In 2024, statistical data on the recipients of benefits and unemployment benefits in Bulgaria were sent within the framework of the European system of integrated social protection statistics (ESSPROS) according to the methodology proposed by Eurostat for the voluntary collection of this type of data. The NSI, together with experts from the NSSI and the NEA, processed the available data from the register of recipients of unemployment benefits at the NSSI and the register of persons registered in the Labor office at the NEA.

As a result of the activities carried out, data was sent on the number of periodical cash unemployment benefits recipients in Bulgaria, including unemployment benefits under Art. 54a, para. 1 of the Social Insurance Code and under Art. 230 and 231 of the Law on Defense and Armed Forces of the Republic of Bulgaria, as well as scholarships, transport and accommodation expenses paid to unemployed persons participating in training for literacy, acquisition of professional qualification or key competences (for the duration of the training). In accordance with the requirement to eliminate double counting of recipients of benefits/assistance falling under the unemployment function, the NSSI made vertical aggregation of data on unemployment benefits recipients and of data on “occupational allowance” recipients for the same reference period. The first type of data (unemployment benefits recipients) was administrated by NSSI; the second type of data (“occupational allowance” recipients) was administrated by NEA. The questionnaire on qualitative information of module was completed and sent to NSI. The data was sent to Eurostat and covers 2022, showing the total number of recipients of at least one of the listed benefits during the year on the one hand and the average monthly number of benefits received during the period of reference year in total, by sex and by age group.

Crime and Justice

In 2024, the NSI carried out qualitatively and on time the annual statistical surveys on crimes, accused and persons convicted, and activity of the Local commissions for prevention of juvenile delinquency.

In fulfillment of its commitments as a national coordinator in the field of crime and criminal justice, and in accordance with national legislation, the NSI provided statistical information on:

- the joint UN/Eurostat questionnaire, which includes data from all stages of the criminal process, illegal migration, crimes related to attacks against information systems and regional data on crimes registered by the police, according to the definitions of the UN International Classification of Crimes for statistical purposes;
- data on human traffic, in accordance with the definitions of Directive 2011/36/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council on preventing and combating human traffic and protecting its victims;

In 2024, NSI experts actively participated in the preparation of the tools of the "Survey on gender-based violence" within the framework of the Eurostat Task Force.

Regarding the collection and provision of statistical data in accordance with the requirements of Directive 2014/42/EU and Regulation (EU) 2018/1805, NSI experts participated in activities related to harmonization of methodology, coherence of information and improvement of its quality.

In 2024, NSI employees participated in the following interdepartmental working groups in connection with the introduction of the requirements of:

- Directive (EU) 2024/1712 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 June 2024 amending Directive 2011/36/EU on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims;
- Directive (EU) 2024/1226 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 April 2024 on the definition of criminal offences and penalties for the violation of Union restrictive measures and amending Directive (EU) 2018/1673.

The activities of the interdepartmental expert working group for the phased introduction of the UN/Eurostat International Classification of Crimes for Statistical Purposes (ICCSF) into the country's statistical practice were resumed.

3.2. Macroeconomic statistics

Annual economic accounts and Quarterly accounts

In 2024, a benchmark revision of the data on gross domestic product (GDP) for the period 2018 - 2022 and Gross National Income (GNI) for the period 2014 - 2022 was carried out. Updates of quarterly and annual data were made for 2023 on GDP and its components by output method, income method and expenditure method; data on employment and person-hours worked; regional accounts; quarterly non-financial accounts by institutional sector. The revisions were related to changes in the methodology used and calculation procedures of specific statistical indicators and are a consequence of the work on the GNI verification cycle.

For non-financial national accounts, a benchmark revision of indicators was carried out for the period 2010 - 2022. Annual non-financial accounts by institutional sectors were revised for the period 1995 - 2022. Quarterly non-financial accounts by institutional sectors were revised for the period from 1999 to the second quarter of 2024. The revision in non-financial accounts by institutional sectors reflects the benchmark revision of the main macroeconomic indicators, the revision of the balance of payments data 6th edition and information from administrative sources.

In 2024, work continued on the development and improvement of national financial accounts. Pursuant to the Eurostat programme for data provision in the field of national accounts, data for 2023 was developed and submitted. The time series of data for the period 1995 - 2022 was benchmark revised.

The data from the survey "Monthly collection of declarations from economic operators carrying out activities with excise goods" of **the Customs Agency** were sent in the specified format and deadlines according to the Memorandum of Cooperation between the NSI, the BNB and the Ministry of Finance. Summarized data from the survey were provided to state institutions and organizations by virtue of a regulatory act or signed agreements.

Government Finance Statistics

Efforts in 2024 in the field of Government Finance Statistics were focused on further methodological development and improving the quality of data. A new updated Memorandum of Cooperation between the NSI, the BNB and the Ministry of Finance in the development, production and dissemination of data in the field of government financial statistics was signed. Based on the updated Memorandum, a new working group was formed between the three institutions. In the period 15 - 17 May 2024, a seminar of the working group on the topic "Development, production and dissemination of data in the field of government financial statistics" was held at the NSI training center in the village of Slivek.

The work on reporting the Notification tables for debt and deficit of General Government sector twice a year (preliminary and final data) continued. According to the ESA 2010, data for 2023 as well as revised data for the period 2020 - 2022 were provided.

Work continued on the development and publication of monthly, quarterly and annual data on the deficit of the EU Member States, based on the obligations under EU Directive 85/2011.

In accordance with the requirements for the provision of additional data based on EU Directive 85/2011, the work continued on providing information on an annual basis on non-performing loans to the "General Government" sector, for the liabilities of public corporations and the participation of government in the capital of corporations as a percentage of GDP.

According to the Eurostat Programme for data provision in the field of government finance statistics, data was developed and provided according to ESA 2010:

- Table 2. Main macroeconomic indicators for the institutional sector "General government" – new data for 2023 as well as revised data for the period 2010 - 2022;
- Table 9. Taxes and social contribution by type of taxes and by subsectors of "General government" – new data for 2023 and revised data for 2021 and 2022;
- Table 11 - General Government expenditure by function – new data for 2023 as well as revised data for the period 2010 – 2022;
- Table 25. Quarterly non-financial accounts of the institutional sector "General government" – new data for first and second quarter of 2024 and fourth quarter of 2023 as well as revised data for the period 2010 – 2023.

Monitoring Own Resources

In connection with the implementation of the own resources system (Decision of the Council of Ministers № 229 of 20.03.2021 determining responsible institutions in the Republic of Bulgaria for the implementation of the EU's own resources system), the NSI provided data on the amount of plastic packaging put on market at the national level. The data is necessary for the fulfillment of the country's obligations under the implementation of the European Union's own resources system.

An audit was carried out by the European Commission in 2024 regarding the implementation of the own resource system based on non-recycled plastic packaging waste. The NSI involved by competence by filling in the Questionnaire on the sources and methods for determining non-recycled waste from plastic packaging, as well as by presenting the work on preparing statistical data on packaging put on the market. During the discussions, answers were provided to the questions asked by the examiners, including the reservations they expressed.

In the area of national accounts, the quality report and the GNI questionnaire were submitted to the EU on time, with data corrections made based on revisions of new incoming information for the period 2014 - 2022.

Consumer Prices

The main priority in 2024 was the conduction of monthly statistical surveys of consumer prices, which provided the necessary information for the calculation of consumer price indices and inflation. In 2024, the ICP weights were produced according to Eurostat's methodological recommendations on the construction of HICP weights in case of large

changes in consumer expenditure.

During the year, the work continued on improving the methodology, construction and production of consumer price indices in connection with the harmonization with the European and international standards.

The NSI updated the sample of outlets and improved the selection of goods and services included in the consumer basket. The scope of some sub-indices was expanded, the system of statistical weights was improved through the expanded use of information from additional sources.

The inventory of the sources and methods for the production of the HICP, house price indices, house sales indicators and the report on the sources and methods used to collect information necessary for the calculation of purchasing power parities were updated and sent to Eurostat.

Within a pilot EC project, the preparatory work on the implementation of the COICOP 2018 classification in the field of HIPC successfully completed. The successful implementation of the planned activities created the necessary conditions for the introduction of the new classification in the consumer price indices from 2026, as well as for the compilation of the retrospective index series.

In the field of housing statistics work continued on incorporating methodological improvements, optimizing data collection and production processes, and introducing new data sources. The NSI continued to use two administrative sources – Property register to the RA supplemented with information from CAIS (Cadastral-Administrative Information System). This improved the quality and scope of the data and increased the reliability of the information collected.

In September 2024, Eurostat monitored the compliance of the HICP and real estate price statistics in Bulgaria under Regulation (EU) 2016/792. The verification carried out using a uniform methodology for all Member States, with the results formulated in a compliance report. The monitoring was based on: the 2024 inventory containing details of the data sources, definitions and methods used in the HICP for Bulgaria; the discussions during the Eurostat visit; the report from the previous compliance monitoring published in April 2015. According to the 2024 monitoring report, Eurostat assesses the HICP for Bulgaria as comparable with that of the other EU Member States, and includes an analysis of the list of sources and methods used in the production of the harmonized indices of consumer prices, as well as recommendations for future work.

In 2024, the NSI continued its participation in the European Comparison Programme on PPPs, which is part of the current EC programme on statistics, coordinated by Eurostat/OECD, and achieved the goals set in the European work plan for calculation of PPPs.

In 2024, the NSI conducted the planned six price surveys, two of which were on goods and services on harmonized European consumer baskets for the groups: E24-1 Food, beverages, tobacco and E24-2 Personal appearance. Four specialized price surveys were conducted: “Health services in hospitals”; for housing rents in selected real estate agencies in the capital; for selected conditional construction sites; for machinery and equipment. Additional national statistical information was prepared and sent to Eurostat in a timely manner.

In the field of consumer price, housing price and PPPs statistics in 2024, the NSI’s experts actively participated in the work of the Eurostat WG on Price Statistics, Real Estate Price Statistics and Purchasing Power Parities, as well as in Eurostat video conferences on “Commercial Real Estate Price Statistics” and “Harmonized Indices of Consumer Prices”.

3.3. Business Statistics

Annual Business Statistics

All activities on conducting regular annual surveys and data production in the field of SBS, statistics of foreign affiliates (FATS), foreign direct investments, expenditure on

acquisition of tangible fixed assets, sales revenue of enterprises providing business services, statistics of financial and non-financial enterprises and annual specific surveys on economic activities, as well as monthly and annual survey on output and sales of industrial products (PRODCOM) were performed with high quality and on time.

In 2024, the NSI made an update of IS “Business Statistics” in relation to the adoption of the euro in the Republic of Bulgaria, and the requirements of European regulations in the field of business statistics and changes at the national level.

The NSI prepared and submitted to Eurostat final data on the activity of enterprises in the field of business statistics at national level for 2022 in implementation of the requirements of Regulation (EU) № 2019/2152 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 November 2019 on European business statistics and repealing 10 legal acts in the field of business statistics and Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2020/1197 of 30 July 2020 laying down technical specifications and arrangements pursuant to Regulation (EU) 2019/2152. The scope of economic activities expanded by including all market-oriented activities from sectors K, P, Q, R, and S 96 of the Classification of economic activities (NACE.BG-2008), for which data should be provided to Eurostat.

In 2024, in the field of annual PRODCOM survey, the NSI provided the necessary reliable and internationally comparable statistical information based on the updated questionnaires, changes in the methodology and in the information technology system for collecting and validating the input PRODCOM data according to the new requirements of the Regulation (EU) № 2019/2152 of the European Parliament and of the Council. Preliminary annual PRODCOM data for 2022 at the levels of detail and technical format has been provided to Eurostat.

In 2024, the NSI provided data for completing questionnaires to the OECD, to other international organizations, for national statistical publications, under concluded contracts, agreements and requests for statistical information in the specified areas.

The NSI continued to work on the project “Global value chains - International Sourcing Survey” in the implementation of a Grant agreement with the EC in accordance with the revised methodology and tools of the module included as a mandatory three-year survey in Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2022/918 of 13 June 2022 laying down technical specifications of data requirements for the topic Global Value Chains pursuant to Regulation (EU) 2019/2152 of the European Parliament and of the Council.

The NSI’s experts took part in coordination procedures, consultations and online meetings organized by Eurostat in the following areas: Structural Business statistics, Statistics of foreign affiliates (FATS), Statistics on output and sales of industrial products (PRODCOM).

Short-term Business Statistics

In 2024, all surveys included in the NSP that provide the information needed to calculate indicators in the field of short-term business statistics were carried out with high quality and on time, in accordance with national and European legislation. All short-term indicators were calculated in accordance with the requirements of the STS regulations, as the same were published at national level and provided to Eurostat.

During the year, the work on evaluation, improvement of the methodology, improvement of STS data quality and maintenance of comparability of time series continued. The samples were updated to ensure better representation and to reflect changes in the structure of non-financial enterprises. The metadata for all indicators on the Eurostat’s and on the NSI’s website were updated.

The NSI received from the NRA within the agreed deadlines monthly information on the submitted VAT returns used to improve the quality and completeness of short-term statistical indicators in the field of trade and services.

In accordance with the new requirements of Regulation (EU) 2019/2152 of the European Parliament and of the Council on European business statistics and Implementing Regulation (EU) 2020/1197, the production and publication of new levels of aggregation and scope of short-term indicators in the field of services and construction begun. From 2024, the publication of a new indicator "Production Index in Services" started, switching from quarterly to monthly production of short-term indicators in the field of services. In 2024, a recalculation of all time series with short-term indicators to the new base year (2021) was carried out.

In 2024, the IS Business Cycles was successfully adapted to work with euros and put into operation on time.

NSI experts actively participated in training courses and in the following meetings organized by Eurostat: online meeting on transition to NACE 2.1 in the STBS, online meeting on metadata requirements for 2023, and annual meeting of the working group on Short-Term Business Statistics.

Energy Statistics

All activities on conducting the monthly, semi-annual and annual surveys and data production in the field of energy statistics were performed with high quality and on time.

The tools in the field of energy statistics was updated in accordance with the last amendment of the Regulation on the energy statistics - Commission Regulation (EU) 2022/132 of 28 January 2022.

In 2024, the NSI successfully completed the work on package № 2 "Further disaggregation of data on solid biofuels" of the project "Energy statistics: support to the Energy Union and further disaggregation of final energy consumption" in connection with the future monitoring of the Energy Union and the European Green Deal. As a result of the activity, a methodology and methods were developed for collecting and evaluating detailed data on solid biofuels used for energy needs in accordance with the breakdown in Annex IX to Regulation (EU) 2018/1999 on the governance of the Energy Union and climate action.

In 2024, experts in the field of energy statistics took part in coordination procedures and consultations regarding: the Integrated National Energy and Climate Plan; numerous legislative documents within the WG 14 "Energy"; the National Development Program Bulgaria 2030; National Report on the State and Protection of the Environment in the Republic of Bulgaria; 'Bulgaria - country report 2024'; and others.

In this thematic area, NSI experts joined the following working groups: "Energy statistics" and "Dimesa" of Eurostat, and WG14 "Energy" at the Ministry of energy. The NSI took an active part in trainings and conferences organized by:

- Eurostat: New statistical survey "Hydrogen"; "Consultation on the European Commission's Fourth Clean Air Review"; "Online presentations of grants in the field of environment and energy, with a focus on statistics on the European Green Deal, electric vehicles and charging stations, organized by Eurostat", and training on how to work with the new Eurostat and IEA energy questionnaires;
- Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" and "Utilities" magazine: fourth edition of the "Energy and Climate" Winter School;
- Energy Agency of Plovdiv: a demonstration webinar for their "SustainEnBio" tool for assessing biomass used for energy.

Transport Statistics

In the field of transport statistics, the main priority in 2024 was to conduct all annual and short-term surveys included in the NSP. They were implemented with high quality and on time in accordance with national and European legislation.

The collection, processing and transmission of rail transport data to Eurostat continued pursuant to the requirements of Regulation (EU) 2016/2032 of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EC) № 91/2003 on rail transport statistics, as regards the collection of data on goods and passengers.

In the field of transport statistics, the NSI with the assistance of the statistical bodies **Directorate General “Civil Aviation Administration” and the Executive Agency “Maritime Administration”** at the Ministry of Transport and Communications conducted surveys in the field of air transport and activities of inland waterway and maritime ports. The good cooperation between the NSI and the two agencies has led to increasing the quality of the received data through more detailed verification.

When conducting the statistical survey on air transport, all respondents submitted their reporting forms to the Directorate General “Civil Aviation Administration”. The NSI received summarized statistical information on air transport by the Directorate General “Civil Aviation Administration” within the deadline.

Executive Agency "Maritime Administration" carried out the surveys included in the National Statistical Program for 2024 on the activity of inland waterway and maritime ports.

The collection and submission of statistical information to Eurostat was carried out within the deadlines and in compliance with the specific nomenclatures and reporting forms of Regulation (EU) No 974/2018 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 4 July 2018 on statistics of goods transport by inland waterways, and Directive 2009/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 6 May 2009 on statistical returns in respect of carriage of goods and passengers by sea, and Commission Regulation (EC) No 1304/2007 of 7 November 2007 amending Council Directive 95/64/EC, Council Regulation (EC) No 1172/98, Regulations (EC) No 91/2003 and (EC) No 1365/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council with respect to the establishment of NST 2007 as the unique classification for transported goods in certain transport modes.

The information submitted by port operators and port owners covers 100% of the activity of the inland waterway and maritime ports of the Republic of Bulgaria related to cargo handling and passenger service.

During the year, the Executive Agency “Maritime Administration” continued its work on improving the quality of data on vessels and goods, taking into account Eurostat recommendations and the methodological assistance of experts from the National Statistical Institute with regard to the classification of new types of goods.

During the reporting period, the cooperation between the National Institute of Statistics of Romania and the National Statistical Institute of Bulgaria continued in connection with the regular exchange of statistical information on the transit of goods by inland waterways used in the production of statistical data provided to Eurostat.

In 2024, preparations began to work out a technical specification for the development of a new IS Transport, which will unite all the surveys conducted in the field of transport statistics.

The NSI continued to provide assistance to the Managing authority of OP “Transport and Transport Infrastructure” 2014 - 2020 on the provision of information on indicators for OPTTI results within the competence of the NSI. The NSI also took part in the meetings of the Monitoring Committee of the "Transport Connectivity" Program 2021 - 2027.

Tourism Statistics

In 2024, the tasks related to the organization and implementation of statistical surveys providing regular information on the development of tourism in the country regarding the trips of Bulgarian residents in abroad and arrivals of visitors from abroad to Bulgaria, the activity of accommodation establishments, tourist trips and tourism-related expenditure of the population, and tourism satellite accounts, were completed on time. All tourism surveys are developed in accordance with the recommendations of the World Tourism Organization and in accordance with the requirements of Regulation (EU) No 692/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council on European tourism statistics, and Commission Regulation (EU) № 1051/2011 implementing Regulation (EU) № 692/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council on European tourism statistics as regards the structure of quality reports and data transmission, and Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2019/1681 amending Regulation (EU) No 692/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council on European tourism statistics.

During the year, five new tables related to the activities of accommodation establishments were produced and published on the NSI website and in the IS Infostat.

Experts from the NSI participated in an online Eurostat workshop on tourism statistics related to short-term accommodation offered through online platforms, as well as an in-person meeting of the working group on tourism statistics.

Business Register

In 2024, the NSI put into operation a new information system "Statistical Business Register" (SBR). Active methodological work on data verification and evaluation continues. The Statistical Business Register is a key source for creating frameworks for statistical surveys in the NSI, as well as for compiling consistent and comparable business statistics.

The main priority in 2024 for the Business Register aimed at implementing the vision of the European Statistical System regarding the European System of Interoperable Statistical Business Registers in implementation of Regulation (EU) № 2019/2152 of the European Parliament and of the Council.

The Statistical Business Register aims to provide a full range of active statistical units "enterprises", "local units" and "groups of enterprises", as well as to record data on significant "units by the type of activity" and to provide conditions for sampling by definition criteria for monthly and quarterly statistical surveys. In order to maintain statistical units and their characteristics, the Business Register received daily data from the administrative sources Trade Register and Register of NPLE (non-profit legal entities) and Bulstat Register, annually and monthly data on the number of insured persons from the Register of Insured Persons by the NSSI, and from the annual statistical surveys for 2023.

In 2024, preparatory activities began in relation to the implementation of the new classification of economic activities (NACE Rev. 2.1), which will enter into force from the reference year 2025.

The Statistical Business Register is the main source of information for the preparation of data on family businesses and business demography. The information describes the life cycle of enterprises and presents data on the number of active enterprises, the number of newly born enterprises, the enterprise survival rates, the number of dead enterprises, as well as data on the change of their employment as of a certain moment.

The scope of SBR was studied in relation to the different types of units - legal and statistical and due mandatory characteristics for the reference year 2022. The NSI submitted

completed questionnaires to Eurostat on the quality, metadata and questionnaires on metadata of business demography of enterprises and on registrations and bankruptcies.

In 2024, the NSI continued to work on the project “Global value chains and multinational enterprises in business statistics” in implementation of a Grant Agreement with the European Commission.

NSI experts participated in online meetings, written consultations and activities with experts from Member States related to the Large Cases Unit (LCU) and the European Profiling organized by Eurostat. The NSI actively participated in Eurostat’s activities on profiling of multinational groups of enterprises as a profiler and partner country.

In 2024, the NSI participated in the following Eurostat working groups: “Business Demography”, “Business Registers and Statistical Units”, LCU Network Working Group.

Statistics on foreign trade in goods

The main priority areas in 2024 in the field of statistics on foreign trade in goods were: expanded use of administrative sources of information; providing timely and reliable statistical information and improving of data quality; adapting the national system for the production and dissemination of statistics on foreign trade in goods in accordance with the changed requirements of European legislation and users’ needs of foreign trade data; participation in the Eurostat’s work on the discussion of strategic issues concerning the future development of statistics on international trade in goods.

The NSI’s experts worked on the implementation of activities under the project “Development of the Information system “Foreign Trade” in order to add new functionalities and migration of the platform”.

The NSI took measures for better use of the data collected by the Customs Agency from customs declarations. In 2024, their scope was expanded, in accordance with the obligation to provide information to Eurostat from columns H6 (import of postal items up to 1000 EUR) and H7 (import of e-commerce up to 150 EUR). The NSI’s employees continued to use the simplified customs declarations issued in other countries received at the Customs Agency under the Uniform Permit for Simplified Procedures.

In 2024, the NSI continued to work on improving the quality of primary data declared by traders. The NSI’s experts made both direct contacts with the Intrastat operators and the National Revenue Agency. As a result, some inaccuracies in submitted Intrastat declarations were corrected. Methodological assistance was also provided to the respondents in declaring data in specific cases, which contributed to facilitating the business in fulfilling its monthly obligations to submit Intrastat declarations.

In fulfilment of its obligations, the NSI determined the thresholds for declaration and the thresholds for statistical value under the Intrastat system for 2025, as well as the types of data - subject of declaration.

The NSI continued to prepare and publish two press releases per month - on trade with third countries and on trade within the EU. Dissemination of data on statistics on foreign trade in goods continued through the IS “Foreign Trade” which gives users direct access to more detailed data than those published in press releases.

In 2024, the NSI submitted to Eurostat data on business characteristics of enterprises with the entire set of tables being prepared for the first time. Numerous responses to inquiries from various types of users of data on imports and exports of goods were also prepared. The obligations to the main users of data on foreign trade in goods - BNB, Ministry of economy and industry, MAF, Eurostat, UN and IMF on the production and provision of monthly detailed data and their updates - were implemented in a timely manner.

In 2024, the NSI's experts contributed to the overall innovation activity in the field of statistics on foreign trade in goods at European level through participation in Eurostat's steering, target and working groups. One of the key directions in joint work of the NSI, the NRA and the CA was the active participation in integration of the provisions on trade with third countries and the EU in the acts implementing the new Regulation on European business statistics. The experts from these three institutions participated in preparing the answers to a number of Eurostat's questionnaires and written consultations. The NSI's experts actively participated in the Eurostat's joint meetings of the Task Force on methodology of statistics on foreign trade in goods and the Task Force on quality, which ensure reliability and security of the microdata exchange for intracommunity exports between the Member states.

The NSI, together with Eurostat, prepared quality reports on the provided data - aggregated and detailed monthly data on the export and import of goods as well as microdata sent to the Member states.

In 2024, the "Analyses and Prognosis" Directorate in **the National Revenue Agency** continued the monthly publication of data on the sales of liquid fuels realized on the territory of the country. The published time series cover the period since January 2019 and refer to the sales of liquid fuels of different characteristics, which allows the preparation of multi-layered analyzes of the fuel market in the country. In accordance with the policy to increase data quality and ensure the best estimates at a given point in time by using later information and/or refining the objects - final distributors, the time series for the period January 2024 - December 2024 were revised at the beginning of 2025.

The National Revenue Agency continued its activity to improve the quality of data declared by the obligated persons (Intrastat operators). Operational activities were improved, methods for controlling the reliability and quality of declared data were optimized. In this regard, their comparison with data available in other administrative sources continued: VAT declarations and the IS Fiscal Control. Comparisons and comparative analyses carried out on the main branches of risk groups of goods with data from the Fiscal Control System.

The NRA maintains and monthly updates the register of taxpayers under the Intrastat system. In 2024, the number of traders registered for the purposes of the Intrastat system is over 7 thousand obligated persons.

Work continued on improving and developing the IS Intrastat in accordance with the changes in national and European legislation. In connection with Bulgaria's upcoming entry into the Eurozone and the introduction of the euro as the national currency, an analysis was carried out and a Technical specification was developed for the necessary changes in the IS Intrastat, in accordance with the requirements of the National Plan for the Introduction of the Euro in the Republic of Bulgaria.

The data from the survey "Monthly collection of declarations from persons/economic operators carrying out import/export of goods to/from third countries" of **the Customs Agency** were sent in the specified format and terms according to the Agreement on cooperation and exchange of information between the NSI and the CA. Summarized data from the survey were provided to state institutions and organizations by virtue of a regulatory act or signed agreements.

3.4. Statistics on agriculture, forestry and fisheries

In 2024, NSI experts participated in Eurostat-initiated discussion and working groups to prepare a manual and discuss the need for new future legislation in the field of agricultural prices and for methodological improvements in the field of agrimonetary statistics.

In compliance with Bulgaria's obligations arising from the legislation in force and agreements in the field of accounts and prices in agriculture and forestry in 2024, the NSI developed and sent to Eurostat data on:

- annual data on economic accounts for agriculture - second estimate of farm incomes for 2023, final data for 2023 and first estimate of farm incomes for 2024 pursuant to Regulation (EC) № 138/2004;
- annual data for the regional economic accounts for 2022 (NUTS1 and NUTS2);
- annual data for 2023 and quarterly and annual data (projection) for 2024 on prices and price indices of output and input in agriculture;
- annual data for 2023 on the average price of agricultural land and rent in agriculture (at NUTS2);
- annual data for 2022 for the European Forest Accounts (EFA).

In 2024, annual data for the agricultural sector (preliminary and final for 2023) and quarterly data for 2024 (including flash estimates) were developed for the purposes of preparing non-financial national accounts in current and constant prices.

Data and press releases on the economic accounts for agriculture and the prices and indices in agriculture and forestry were prepared and published on the NSI's website and in the IS "Infostat", according to the Calendar presenting the results of the statistical surveys carried out in accordance with the National Statistical Programme for 2024.

According to the deadlines in the Editorial Plan for 2024, tables with data for publication in the printed and electronic editions of the NSI were prepared.

In 2024, the "Agrostatistics" Department, Ministry of agriculture and food, conducted 19 statistical surveys in the field of statistics on crop production, livestock breeding, fruit and vegetable processing, land use and farm incomes.

In the field of crop statistics, at the beginning of 2024, the surveys' results on sown/planted and harvested areas, average yields and production of field crops, vegetables, vineyards and fruit species - harvest 2023 were published. Within these surveys, information was also collected on the use of seeds, the size of the areas of permanent plantations that have not started fruiting, the agrotechnical measures carried out, as well as on the realization of the production by directions, and others. The surveys for the harvest 2024 were prepared. Survey conducted on wheat and barley yields before the harvest 2024, as well as survey on the activities of fruit and vegetable processing enterprises in 2023.

The survey on land cover and land use in Bulgaria (BANSIK 2024) was conducted in June-August 2024. Data were obtained on the agricultural area, including the main crops at the level of six statistical regions (NUTS 2).

In the field of statistics on livestock breeding, the results from conducted as of November 1, 2023 survey on the number of farm animals in Bulgaria were published. The survey collects information on bovine animals, sheep and goats, and pigs by type and category, production and realization of milk and animals slaughtered. The survey as of November 1, 2024 was prepared. The surveys on poultry and beekeeping in Bulgaria in 2023 were carried out and the survey on beekeeping in 2024 was prepared.

Information on the activities of slaughterhouses, dairies and hatcheries was collected on a monthly (for 2024) and annual (for 2023) basis. As a result of surveys on the activity of red and white meat slaughterhouses for 2023, information was collected on the production of meat from certain species and categories of animals according to the EU legal base. The survey on the activity of milk processing enterprises in 2023 provided information on the processed milk, the milk products and on their sale (in kind and value).

In implementation of Framework Regulation (EU) 2018/1091 and Implementing Regulation (EU) 2021/2286 under the project "Integrated Farm Statistics 2023 (IFS2023)", information was collected and entered into a subsystem of the Information System for Agricultural Statistics (ISAS) for over 44 000 farms included in the survey sample. The reports of the hired interviewers from the 28 regional Agriculture directorates were

completed. The planned checks and control of the data were completed, as well as the cross-checks for the comparability of the individual data from IFS2023 with the data from the product surveys and administrative sources. The data are subject to validation with the controls sent by Eurostat, checks for the accuracy of the sample. The final deadline for submitting the file to Eurostat, together with the quality report, is by the end of 2024. In implementation of Framework Regulation (EU) 2018/1091, a survey on the structure of fruit species was also conducted (in 2023), obtaining information on areas, age structure and density of the various significant types of plantations in the country, which is yet to be published.

For the functioning of the Farm Accountancy Data Network in 2024, information on the income of farms was provided, necessary for making management decisions at the national level and for measuring the impact of the Common Agricultural Policy on Bulgarian agriculture. Data collection questionnaire for the reporting year 2023 was updated as regards subsidies in implementation of Commission Regulation (EU) 2015/220. The established farm accountancy data network for data entry, control, validation and analysis of results at the national and regional level was improved. The individual farm data from the selection plan for the reporting year 2023 were collected and entered into the RICA-1 system of the European Commission. Information on farms not applying accountancy was collected for reporting year 2024. The results for 2 235 farms for the reporting year 2022 were validated by the Directorate General "Agriculture and Rural Development" to the European Commission. With the adoption of Regulation (EU) 2023/2674 at the end of 2023, Regulation (EC) No 1217/2009 was amended with regard to the transformation of the FADN into a Farm Sustainability Data Network (FSDN). The aim is to extend the scope of the system and to collect additional data on environmental and social agricultural practices related to the CAP and the Farm to Fork Strategy. Twenty-nine new topics are added to the existing 13 topics in the FADN, some of which are related to the application of innovation and digitalization, risk management, soil management, irrigation, use of plant protection products, emission balance, carbon capture in agriculture, organic farming, quality certificates, animal welfare, use of antimicrobials, working conditions and others.

With the adoption of Regulation (EU) 2022/2379 on statistics on agricultural input and output (SAIO), the procedure under the second regulation updating the legal framework for agricultural statistics completed. Topics and subtopics for the production of European statistics on plant production, livestock production, nutrients and plant protection products have been included. The first reference period for the implementation of SAIO is 2025. The implementing regulations were adopted, with the exception of the implementing regulation on nutrient statistics and quality reports, which will be adopted by the end of 2024. The requirements for all variables must be aligned with the new requirements of the framework regulation and the implementing regulations.

In implementation of Regulation (EC) 1185/2009 concerning statistics on pesticides, a statistical survey on the use of pesticides for the five most common agricultural crops in the country - wheat, barley, rapeseed, sunflower and grain maize was prepared. It will be carried out at the end of 2024 and the beginning of 2025.

Data on the amount of active substance nitrogen and phosphorus in fertilizers used in agriculture are sent annually to Eurostat at national level. The MAF has a commitment to send to Eurostat on a biennial basis data on Gross Nutrient Balance (GNB) in accordance with the Agreement on Statistical Data on Nutrient Balances, referring to gross nitrogen and phosphorus balance, biological nitrogen and phosphorus fixation, atmospheric nitrogen deposition, which are elements related to the local conditions of each country.

Representatives of the "Agrostatistics" department participated in the regular discussions of the progress on the actions taken by the bodies of statistics on the recommendations of the third Peer review for the Republic of Bulgaria within the framework of its membership in the European Statistical System (ESS) in 2022.

A draft Ordinance was prepared to amend and supplement Ordinance No. 3/1999 on the creation and maintenance of a register of farmers. In 2024, the renovation of the MAF

website continued, with the metadata and methodological notes for the surveys in the field of agriculture conducted by the Agrostistics Department being periodically supplemented and updated. The calendar for dissemination of the results of the statistical surveys in 2024 conducted by the MAF by topics and dates was also updated on the MAF website. The publication of public information in an open format on the Open Data Portal continued.

The results of the surveys conducted by the Agrostistics Department are published regularly in the specialized bulletins on the MAF website, in the annual publications of the NSI - Statistical Yearbook, Statistical Reference Book, in the electronic overview of statistical information, in the electronic tables of Eurostat and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

3.5. Multi-Domain Statistics

Business trends

In 2024, with the financial assistance of the European Commission under the project "Business surveys and Consumer survey", the conduct of all statistical surveys in the field of business trends under the "The Joint Harmonized EU Programme of Business and Consumer surveys" continued. The aim of this programme is to provide timely information for the development of quality short-term forecasts for the development of the business climate in Bulgaria.

The monthly business surveys in industry, construction, retail trade and the service sector collect information from managers about their opinions on current or expected changes in a certain range of economic indicators, assessing the current and future economic situation in the country. The information from them is extremely up-to-date as the data refer to the month in which the surveys are carried out. The indicators from these surveys can be used as components of composite leading indicators for analysis and detection of turning points in the economic cycle. In addition, this year the publication of the indicator "Uncertainty in the future development of the business situation" began in the four sectors.

The quarterly Consumer survey provided data on the trends in the development of public opinion on key economic processes and phenomena such as the general economic situation in the country, inflation, unemployment, savings, intentions with regard to major purchases on long-term use objects, and the purchase of a home or a car.

In 2024, an expert from the NSI participated in the regular meeting on business and consumer surveys of the European Commission, held jointly with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

Indicators for monitoring national and European policies

In 2024, the NSI continued the work on providing statistical data necessary for reporting the result indicators under the OP for the programming period 2014 - 2020.

In fulfilling its functions as a national coordinator, the NSI continued reporting statistical data to the statistical departments of international organizations and according to the National set of indicators for monitoring and reporting on progress towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals 2030 (UN SDGs). The data in the National set of indicators for monitoring and reporting on progress towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals were updated twice in 2024 - in March and in October.

The information published in IS "Monitorstat" was periodically updated with the latest data. The indicators on national and international strategies were simultaneously updated.

In 2024, the NSI actively worked on the project to upgrade the IS Monitorstat in implementation of an investment from the National Recovery and Resilience Plan C10.I10 "Upgraded strategic planning system".

Decision No. 156 of March 8, 2024 of the Council of Ministers launched the preparation of the Second Voluntary National Review of the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The NSI representatives participated in two meetings of the

Permanent Working Group to the Development Council to report on progress in the implementation of the UN SDGs.

NSI provided consultations and statistical data necessary for the lead institutions in the preparation of the report on the goals.

Roundtables were held with stakeholders, and NSI participated in three roundtables: on goals 1, 4, 5, 10, on goals 8, 9 and 12, and on goal 13.

Environmental statistics and accounts

Main priority in the field of environmental statistics and accounts is the improvement of the methodology and the provision of reliable information on the state, types of pressure and the main trends of the impact of the economy on the environment.

The NSI made some improvements to the IS Environment Statistics based on experience gained from the previous year and to facilitate work with it. The system was adapted in connection with Bulgaria's upcoming entry into the euro area.

The work on the project "Development of Guidelines for environmental statistics and accounts and pilot implementation for Environmental goods and services sector data revision", funded by the EC, is in its final stage. The overall objective of the project is to improve the quality and comparability of environmental data at national and European level in the long term. A written document Methodology "Environmental Statistics and Accounts" was prepared as a result of the project. It contains methodological and practical instructions for environmental statistics and accounts. The data on environmental goods and services were revised in order to ensure consistency and data quality in the time series reported under Regulation No. 691/2011 on European environmental economic accounts.

Environmental experts took part in a number of coordination procedures and consultations at European and international level (for example, on amending Regulation No. 691/2011 on European environmental economic accounts, consultations on the Statistical classification of products by activity in the European Economic Community), as well as at national level (National Report on the State and Protection of the Environment in the Republic of Bulgaria, National set of indicators for monitoring and reporting on progress towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals), and others.

In 2024, the participation of NSI's experts continued in the following Eurostat's working groups: DIMESA, WG on environmental accounts, WG on monetary accounts and statistics, WG on waste statistics. At national level, the experts participated in: Expert group on plastic waste statistics, Interdepartmental WG to coordinate the development and updating of a national set of indicators for monitoring and reporting on progress towards the UN SDGs, Interdepartmental WG on National Food Loss and Waste Reduction Programme (2019-2024), Interdepartmental WG to prepare National report on the state and protection of the environment in 2022, Interdepartmental WG 20 "Environment" of the Foreign Affairs Council.

In 2024, environmental experts participated in various international events and seminars, such as a meeting with OECD representatives on the topic "Review of the "Statistical System and Statistics of Bulgaria" - Environmental Economic Accounts, an online consultation in connection with the preparation of a report by the European Commission for the Fourth Clean Air Review and an OECD/UNECE seminar on the implementation of the system of environmental economic accounts. The NSI also participated in Eurostat webinars on the coherence between air emission accounts and energy flow accounts, the use of a GIS plug-in tool and testing of the methodological notes with guidance on ecosystem services pollination, local climate regulation and air filtration, methods for estimating ancillary/own-use/non-market output in the accounts for the environmental goods and services sector.

Housing statistics

In 2024, the processing and production of data on the housing fund continued including the newly commissioned residential buildings and demolished residential buildings. The web-based application "Residential building questionnaire" facilitated the respondents and increased the quality of the collected information.

Regional statistics and geographic information systems

During the reporting period, the work continued on the preparation and dissemination of statistics by regional breakdown. The data published in the electronic publication "Regions, districts and municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria" were presented at the lowest level in compliance with the methodologies of the surveys and the requirements for statistical confidentiality.

The results from specialized statistical surveys "Disasters, accidents, incidents and crisis occurred", "Administrative-territorial and territorial division of the Republic of Bulgaria", and "Land use distribution of the Republic of Bulgaria" were published promptly on schedule. Part of them were based on spatial data from the current cadastral map of the country.

For the first time, the NSI published information on the indicator "Population Density" by types of territories and municipalities in the IS "Infostat".

During the year, the activities continued on two EC projects in the field of regional statistics – "Data collection for city and subnational statistics" and "Improvement and re-development of demography, migration and population and housing census statistics".

For the first time, the NSI prepared and disseminated data for the Population Grid (in a coordinate grid with a spatial resolution of cells of 100 m) with data from the 2021 Population and Housing Census. A Population Grid for 2021 and 2022 was also developed and it is due to be published on the NSI website in 2025.

Science, technology and innovation

In 2024, work continued on the production and dissemination of statistical data on research and development (R&D) and innovation in accordance with the Eurostat methodology and the requirements of Commission Implementing Regulations (EU) No 2020/1197 and (EU) No 2022/1092.

The data produced from the regular statistical survey on R&D, Government budget appropriations or outlays on R&D, and innovation activity of enterprises in 2020 - 2022 were published on the NSI's website as well as in the IS "Infostat" and sent to Eurostat within deadlines and in the required technical format and quality. A quality report on the innovations data for 2022 was prepared and submitted to Eurostat.

The necessary preparatory work was carried out for the statistical survey on the innovation activity of enterprises in the period 2022 - 2024. In accordance with the harmonized questionnaire and methodology of Eurostat (CIS 2024), the statistical tool and the terms of reference for processing the survey data were updated.

In 2024, the NSI continued to provide statistical data on R&D and innovation by indicators for monitoring and evaluation of European and national policies, such as the National Development Programme "Bulgaria 2030", as well as result indicators under OP "Innovation and Competitiveness 2021 - 2027".

In connection with the accession of the Republic of Bulgaria to the OECD, experts from the NSI participated in a meeting of the working group of national experts on science and technology indicators at the OECD.

The NSI's experts participated in online meetings and written consultations with Eurostat on R&D statistics and innovation.

In 2024, NSI experts participated in the thematic working groups and monitoring committees of operational programs “Competitiveness and innovation in enterprises” 2021 – 2027 and „Research, Innovation and Digitalization for Intelligent Transformation” 2021 - 2027 as well as in Working group 16 “Education, mutual recognition of professional qualifications and scientific research” at the Ministry of education and sciences.

Information society

In the field of statistics on information society, in 2024 the NSI continued the work of conducting two annual statistical surveys on the ICT usage by individuals and in enterprises. In accordance with the need to provide data for monitoring of the priority goals under Europe’s Digital Decade 2030, key variables were updated and new indicators were included to measure the progress of digital transformation in society and the economy.

The statistical data on the ICT usage and e-commerce in enterprises were collected and provided to Eurostat in accordance with the requirements of the Regulation (EU) 2019/2052 of the European Parliament and of the Council on European business statistics, and Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2023/1507 concerning the data for the reference year 2024.

The statistical data on the ICT usage in households and by individuals were collected and provided to Eurostat in accordance with the requirements of Regulation (EU) 2019/1700 of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a common framework for European statistics relating to persons and households, and the Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2023/1484 concerning the data for reference year 2024.

Over the past year, NSI experts participated in a Eurostat working group on information society statistics, as well as joined the activities of a permanent working group of the Digital Decade Council and a thematic working group "Research, Innovation and Digitalization for Smart Transformation" (2021-2027).

3.6. Information and communication technologies, statistical infrastructure and other activities

Information and communication technologies

In 2024, the NSI worked on development of a new IS "Single entry point", which will provide respondents with a single entry point to a specific list of NSI systems to work with. This will eliminate the different ways to enter in different systems and will ensure secure access to the systems based on the respondents' verified and valid QES.

A new IS "Monitorstat" was developed during the year. The main goal of the project is to provide a universal, standard tool for strategic planning, implementation monitoring and reporting of all strategic and operational documents at the central level.

During the reporting period, the NSI built a structured analytical database that will allow for multidimensional analyses of data from the IS Foreign Trade. The IS Business Statistics was updated for the next reporting period, and a new Digital Library was implemented in the NSI.

In connection with the transition to the euro, the projects to update the information systems "Business Statistics", "Infostat", "Business Cycles", "Consumer Prices" and "Environmental Statistics" were finalized.

In 2024, the NSI decommissioned the "Register of Statistical Units" and implemented the "Statistical Business Register" in its place. Lime survey was also migrated to a new version.

During the year, the NSI launched activities to prepare technical specifications for the development of two new information systems - "Construction of the IS "Single Entry Point for the announcement of annual financial statements" and "Development of the IS "Foreign Trade" by adding a "Macrodata" module in order to form various statistical outputs and

provide after-sales support for a period of 12 months.

Cubes were implemented for internal use by the Head Office and the RSOs, and for generating reports on requests from respondents regarding data from the 2021 Census.

In 2024, the NSI continued to provide data to Eurostat from the "Population and Housing Census of the Republic of Bulgaria 2021" and connection to Eurostat's Censushub. The necessary software installations were made, three databases were created and the connections to the databases were configured. A methodology was created for loading data into Censushub according to Eurostat's requirements. According to this methodology, 40 hypercubes are configured, which are presented in stages in Censushub. The Grid data was loaded into Censushub.

In 2024, the NSI successfully continued to use Eurostat's single entry point for the exchange of statistical data EDAMIS 4 (Electronic Dataflow Administration and Management Information System) which guarantees secure exchange of confidential data.

In order to maximize the protection of individual data during the exchange of microdata for intra-community trade, the NSI established connectivity with Eurostat and other ESS members through Eurostat's secure TESTA network.

The document flow of the NSI was implemented by a new version of AIS "Document Flow", which provides the possibility of electronic document circulation, classification of documents and others. The integration of AIS "Document Flow" with the "Secure Electronic Delivery Service" of the Ministry of Electronic Governance was implemented.

The NSI uses ScholarOne, the new platform implemented for the "Statistics" magazine with the ability to publish and review scientific articles and materials.

The NSI developed web-scraping tools for its surveys and began actual data collection using these methods.

In order to facilitate respondents, the Support Center provides assistance on technical issues regarding the IS "Business Statistics", IS "Business Cycles", IS "Environmental Statistics", "Labor Force Survey".

The system for management and control of requests (NVision help desk) guarantees timely information, event records, and a knowledge base for emerging cases, their solutions and response time.

In 2024, the NSI continued to enrich the datasets on the new national open data portal <https://data.egov.bg/>. The resources will be available in JSON-stat format and will be updated automatically.

The IS "Infostat" is one of the main channels for providing statistical information. The data from the "Population and housing census of the Republic of Bulgaria" were also provided through IS "Infostat". The possibility of quick and easy access to the constantly updated and enriched information in the system is one of its main advantages. During the year, the NSI's experts strove to meet users' expectations for accuracy and timeliness of the data provided.

The NSI's website is not only the main channel for free dissemination of official statistical data, but also provides useful and well-structured up-to-date information on the activities of the institute in order to increase the statistical culture of users concerning the statistical surveys conducted by the NSI and data use.

The main priority during the year was the increase of the capacity and back up of the information systems by using effective means for storing and restoring the information systems and the data from the statistical surveys. Reliable policies applied to database back up and back up of the information system components through specialized software in different locations. The NSI's priorities were connected with expanding the possibilities to use administrative sources and implement the SDMX standard for preparing and providing data from statistical surveys.

In 2024, users access to statistical data and their understanding facilitated by providing attractive and interactive images, more personalized services such as on-demand data and self-service analysis. Data exchange improved and the NSI access to administrative databases and registers ensured by developing and expanding partnership relationships with

administrative data holders. Partnerships with public and private data holders and the technology sector encouraged to facilitate access to data for statistical purposes, the integration of data from multiple sources and the use of modern technologies. Building capacity to manage and develop the spatial data infrastructure was prioritized.

Priorities for the NSI were also the digitization of services, the implementation of the smart data strategy, as well as the use of Machine learning in official statistics.

In the field of information technology, the development of information systems in the various fields of statistics and the establishment of secure channels for data exchange within the National Statistical System continued.

In 2024, an internal audit was carried out according to the Integrated Management System, which integrates ISO 27001:2022 and the Quality Management System (QMS) according to ISO 9001:2015.

In August 2024, an external recertification audit was conducted for ISO/IEC 27001:2022 and QMS according to ISO 9001:2015.

Development of statistical information systems

In 2024, the NSI continued to develop and improve web-based applications for the needs of various statistical surveys: “Health care establishments and creches”, “Short-term statistics on residential buildings and housing fund”, “Income and living conditions statistics”, “Housing price index”, “Survey on prices of seeds and planting stock”, “Survey of Bulgarian and foreign citizens entering and leaving Bulgaria”, “Accommodation establishments”, “Survey on tourist trips”, “Consumer survey”, “Industrial products in kind - by nomenclature PRODCOM.BG-samples”, “Vocational Training of the employees in the enterprises”, “Prices of veterinary medical products”, “Prices of mineral fertilizers”, “Prices of plant protection products”, “Producer prices in agriculture”, “Producer prices of organic agricultural products and live animals”, “Prices of forages”, “Producer prices in forestry”, and others. The development of web applications facilitated and accelerated the work on data entry and control and shortened the deadlines for providing the resulting statistical data. The applications provide both an easy and convenient way to enter data, ongoing control during data entry, as well as general control of all entered data. Convenient reports were developed in the applications in order to monitor the status of the entered data, the number of respondents who replied, etc. The applications are used both by the NSI, the RSOs and SSD employees and by the respondents.

The NSI continued to develop and improve desktop applications: “Trade deflators”, “Service deflators”, “Household Budget survey”, “Agricultural land prices and rent”, “Housing price indices and indicators”, “Prices CIF/FOB”, “Import and export price indices”, “Catalog of goods”, “Activity of insurance and reinsurance enterprises”, “Libraries”, “Museums”, “Performing arts - theatres”, “Radio programme activity”, “Television programme activity”, “Passenger bus transport”, annual information for “Vocational training in vocational training centers, vocational gymnasiums and vocational colleges” and others.

During the past year, the work on development of analytical outputs, specific analyzes and data processing for different statistical surveys continued by using the statistical package SPSS Statistics Server and SAS, which are the main analytical platform in the NSI.

In 2024, the work on the actual data collection continued with the developed web scraping tools for the purposes of price surveys in the NSI.

During the year, the NSI developed and implemented new web applications - "Annual Report of Agricultural Holdings" and "Labor Force Survey", which replaced the previously used desktop applications and the actual data collection with them began.

ICT infrastructure

In 2024, the main priority was the development of the information and technological infrastructure to achieve reliable operation of information systems and to ensure the continuity of services provided to respondents and users of statistical information.

The NSI maintains and develops modern data centers – main (Data Center) and

recovery (Disaster Recovery Center) that meet the high requirements for storage and protection of data and information assets.

A process of development and modernization of data storage systems in the NSI was performed in July.

In 2024, the NSI upgraded the continuity of the services provided in the Head Office and in the RSOs, and modernized the data centers and communication infrastructure through new hardware assets in the regional structures of the NSI.

The NSI carried out continuous monitoring and maintenance of the operability of the technical means and information systems that build the information infrastructure.

One of the highlights of the activity was the administration of the operating systems, the antivirus protection tools and the updating of the software used in the NSI.

Methodology, statistical metadata, classifications and standards

In 2024, the National Statistical Institute continued to work on the four-year ESSnet project “Trusted Smart Statistics - Web Intelligence Network”. The project is the result of the previous activities carried out in the period 2016 - 2020 in the course of the ESSnet on Big Data I and II projects aimed at multifunctional statistics based on a range of non-traditional data sources. The objective of the project is to contribute to the establishment of a Web Intelligence Network (WIN) in the ESS and beyond by using the services of Eurostat’s Web Intelligence Hub (WIH) and to integrate them into national statistical production systems.

One of the main tasks in 2024 was to keep the statistical classifications up to date and to provide methodological assistance to users. In 2024, the NSI worked on the new version of the NACE Rev. 2.1 according to Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2023/137 of 10 October 2022 amending Regulation (EC) No 1893/2006 establishing the statistical classification of economic activities NACE Revision 2. The structure, explanatory and methodological notes of the NACE Rev. 2.1 and correspondence tables between the NACE Rev. 2 and the NACE Rev. 2.1 were developed. The classification was approved by order of the President of the NSI and was published in the State Gazette. The new classification version of the NACE Rev. 2.1 comes into force on 01.01.2025. The NSI held a training on the topic "Implementation of the new version of the NACE Rev. 2.1", and introduced to participants from the NSI Head Office and the RSOs the changes in the classification, which reflect technological development and structural changes in the economy over the last two decades. The classification allows the modernization of European statistics and contributes through more comparable and relevant data to better economic governance at the international, European and national level.

In 2024, the structure of the new version of the product classification CPA 2.1 was developed, which also enters into force on 01.01.2025.

In order to facilitate the users to use the classifications, the employees continuously prepared statements on respondents’ inquiries, which are a tool for classifying statistical units for the correct interpretation of the Classification of Economic Activities, as well as they assisted statisticians in conducting statistical surveys and improved international comparability.

The NSI developed transition code tables for the purposes of statistical processing and the continuation of time series based on the changes occurred in the Combined Nomenclature 2025. The new version of the Nomenclature of Industrial Production - PRODPROM 2024, the list of Z Codes and the corresponding tables were developed for the purposes of the PRODCOM survey. For the purposes of foreign trade statistics and IS INTRASTAT of the NRA, the self-explanatory texts of the Combined Nomenclature 2025 were updated annually.

In 2024, the NSI continued to implement its obligations to the BNB as a data correspondent under the Special Data Dissemination Standard Plus (SDDS Plus) of the IMF: maintaining data files, preparing the advance release calendar, submitting the data and the calendar, and coordinating the annual metadata certification.

The NSI continued its participation in maintaining the National Classification of Occupations and Positions 2011 and in updating the list of job titles and corresponding tables.

During the year, the maintenance of the content and proper functioning of the National Register of Populated Places continued.

In 2024, the NSI prepared a "List of Standard Statistical Indicators for 2024". The list contains the statistical indicators on which the NSI provides free of charge information from the statistical surveys included in the NSP.

4. RESOURCE PROVISION

Staff

The National Statistical Institute consists of a Head Office (HO) and six Regional Statistical Offices (RSO). The Regional Statistical Offices perform the functions and tasks of the NSI for production and dissemination of statistical information at regional level. The Regional Statistical Offices are as follows: The RSO - Severozapad, The RSO - Sever, The RSO - Severoiztok, The RSO - Yugoiztok, The RSO - Yug, The RSO – Yugozapad.

The structural units in the NSI's Head Office are organized into General administration and Specialized administration according to the Administration Act.

The total number of personnel within the NSI as of October 31, 2024 was 968, of which 321 employed at the Head office and 647 - at the RSOs. According to the Rules of Procedure of the NSI, the Head Office is organized into six directorates: "Business statistics", "Demographic and Social statistics", "Macroeconomic statistics", "Multi-Domain Statistics, Methodology and Registers", "Information systems and Infrastructure", "General administration" and structures directly subordinated to the President of the NSI: "Security of Information, Information and communication technologies and DM" Division, "Inspectorate" under Art. 46 of the Administration Act, Finance Controller, "Internal Audit" Unit, "International Relations and Projects" Department and "Communications and Secretariat" Department. Five directorates are in the specialized administration and one directorate - in General administration.

Conducting competitions for vacant positions

From the beginning of January 2024 to the end of October 2024, 99 competitive procedures were launched for the appointment of employees to vacant positions in the NSI, of which 77 in the HO and 22 in the RSO. Fifty-two competitions in the NSI completed with the appointment of applicants.

The number of competitions in the HO increased dramatically compared to 2023, when 66 competitions were announced, which can be explained by the problem related to the shortage of employees or their retention caused by the high payment level of competitors on the labor market.

Table 1. Competitions

(Number)

Structures	announced	terminated	terminated due to the non-admission of applicants	terminated due to lack of applicants	ended without ranking	ended with ranking without appointment	ended with appointment
HO	6	2	4	12	12	3	38
RSO	5	1	0	1	1	0	14
NSI	11	3	4	13	13	3	52

It is noteworthy that unsuccessful procedures were terminated due to lack of applicants or ended without ranking, and they prevailed in the NSI Head Office compared to the RSOs. These facts could be explained by a lack of specific professional experience, knowledge and skills that the applicants do not possess, as well as by the lower unemployment rate in Sofia compared to other cities. It can be noted that the number of competitions that ended with appointment is almost the same as in 2023. Last but not least, is the remuneration offered for some of the positions compared to the same ones in other administrations or in the private sector.

Employed by age and education at the NSI

The structure of the NSI's staff by age groups and by education is presented in Tables 2 and 3, total for the NSI, including for the Head Office and the RSO.

Table 2. Structure of the actually employed by age groups in the NSI

(Number)

Age category (years)						
Structures	up to 29	30 - 45	46 - 55	56 - 65	over 65	Total
HO	20	102	106	54	1	283
RSO	17	204	200	179	8	608
NSI	37	305	311	229	9	891

Employees aged 46-55 predominate in the NSI Head Office, and their number increased as compared to 2023. They are followed by employees aged 30-45. In RSO, the number of employees from 30 to 45 years of age is the highest. Compared to 2023, there was a decrease of four in them.

In the NSI, there is an increase in the share of workers over 65 compared to 2023 when there were seven persons. This trend is more pronounced in the RSO where they increased from six to eight persons. The number of young people up to 29 years old in the NSI compared to 2023 increased - from 13 to 20 employees in the HO, and from 15 to 17 employees in the RSO.

Generally, the age structure of the employees in the NSI is a reflection of the demographic trend in the country. In Sofia, there is an increase in the number of employed up to 29 years of age, while in other cities their number slightly increases so as the number of employed over 65 years of age. Work in the state administration is not attractive enough for young people, which gives rise to the need to take special measures to attract them. A significant problem is the need to have a document proving an acquired educational and qualification degree - a diploma for completed education according to the Regulation on conducting competitions and selection for mobility of civil servants, which prevents the appointment of students from higher classes of higher education institutions.

Table 3. Structure of actually employed in the NSI by education

(Number)

Education degree							
Structures	Doctor	Master	Bachelor	Professional bachelor	Secondary education	Primary education	Total
HO	12	222	37	4	8	0	283
RSO	2	397	104	13	92	0	608
NSI	14	619	141	17	100	0	891

The data shows that 89% of NSI's employees have a tertiary education, as more than half have a Master's degree. Bachelors come in second place - 141 employees. The number of

employees with the educational-qualification degree "doctor" in the HO of the NSI increased by one compared to 2023.

Compared to the previous reporting period, there is a decrease in NSI employees with secondary education (in 2023 - 103).

Another interesting trend is that there is an increase in bachelors in the HO compared to 2023, when there were 26, and decrease of eight in the RSO compared to 2023.

Table 4. Training of NSI employees in Bulgarian universities

Type of education	(Number)		
	NSI	HO	RSO
Doctor	7	4	3
Master	15	7	8
Bachelor	9	1	8
Total	31	12	19

Table 4 summarizes the data for NSI employees who are currently continuing their education to acquire a higher educational qualification. Their total number has increased compared to 2023 when there were 21.

In conclusion, we may summarize that the profile of NSI employees by acquired education has changed within the last year. There is a slightly increase in the number of employees with a higher educational qualification such as "doctor", "master", "bachelor" and "professional bachelor" at the expense of employees with secondary education. The number of employees who continue their education to acquire a higher educational degree also increases.

In 2024, three NSI experts participated in training under the European Statistical Training Programme (ESTP), on the following topics: "Balance of Payments - Introductory Course 2024" (Paris, France), "ESA 2010 - National Accounts" (Luxembourg, Duchy of Luxembourg) and "The European Statistical System (ESS) - its structure and ways of working" (Slangerup, Kingdom of Denmark). Two NSI experts participated in training organized by the IMF on "Institutional Sector Accounts - Advanced" (Vienna, Austria), one employee participated in the 9th Joint OECD/UNECE Seminar on the Implementation of the System of Economic Environmental Accounts (Geneva, Swiss Confederation) and three employees participated in a seminar on "National Accounts" (Bucharest, Romania). Three experts participated in two online international courses and webinars.

In the field of energy statistics, two experts participated in a training organized by Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" – the fourth "Energy and Climate" Winter School.

After researching and analyzing the available skills and competencies of NSI employees and identifying their shortages in certain areas, the NSI arranged training courses specifically for them, with individual programs and using the services of academic lecturers with high expertise and specialization in the specific type of training. The experience of the last year shows that combining a lecture format with interactive teaching methods, combined with conducting training on-site at the NSI, leads to greater practical applicability and efficiency of the training process.

The following trainings were held in the NSI on the spot during the year:

- Introduction in R;
- Work with Microsoft Excel (advanced);
- Work with software for statistical data processing IBM SPSS Statistics – for beginners;
- Work with software for statistical data processing IBM SPSS Statistics – for mid-advanced;
- Designing representative samples with Complex Samples;
- "Seasonal data adjustment course with JDemetra+";

- Internal auditors of quality management systems (ISO 9001:2015) and information security (ISO/IEC 27001:2022) according to the guidelines of ISO 19011:2018;
- Training on the protection of classified information;
- Changes in the Household Budget Survey in accordance with the new framework Regulation 1700/2019;
- Seminar between the NSI, the BNB and the Ministry of Finance on the topic: "Development, production and dissemination of data in the field of government financial statistics";
- Maintaining and improving the integrated system for quality management and information security in the NSI;
- Annual meeting in Slivek "Environmental and Energy Statistics";
- Ethical norms, behavior and work with users and respondents;
- Training on the topic "Implementation of the new version of the NACE Rev. 2.1".

The following trainings were conducted in external organizations:

- Amendments to the Public Procurement Act of October 20, 2023 and its Implementing Regulations. Problem areas in the award process, new sample notices, effective from February 1, 2024. Negotiation procedures. Problem areas in the work of the evaluation committee;
- Administrative criminal liability for violations of the Public Procurement Law and the regulations for its implementation;
- Mandatory initial training/course on the protection of classified information for information security officers, organized by the State Commission for Information Security (SCIS);
- Public procurement from A to Z - implementation of the regulatory requirements and changes in the Public Procurement Act of October 20, 2023 and the Regulations for its implementation by contracting authorities and contractors;
- Software;
- Seminar on the process of transposing into Bulgarian legislation Directive 2022/2041 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 October 2022 on adequate minimum wages in the European Union;
- The new changes in the Regulations for implementation of the Public Procurement Act, prior control under Article 237b of the Public Procurement Act and the control of the Public Procurement Agency;
- Annual training on health and safety at work according to Regulation No. 4 of 03.01.1998 on the training of representatives in the Committees on working conditions;
- Occupational health and safety training in accordance with Art. 6, para. 1, item 2 and item 3 of Regulation No. RD-07-2 of December 16, 2009 on the conditions and procedure for conducting periodic training and instruction of workers and employees on the rules for ensuring health and safety at work.

Experts from the NSI actively participated in trainings organized by the Institute of Public Administration and the Public Finance School.

In 2024, as in previous years, activities to improve working conditions continued. New office chairs, laptops, as well as computers with monitors were purchased and provided for use by employees of the NSI Head Office and the Regional Statistical Offices.

The vehicle fleet of the NSI Head Office was renewed, with new vehicles purchased to meet the needs of the institute.

In SSD - Pernik and SSD - Targovishte, the flooring in the work offices of the employees was replaced with new laminate.

The fence of the NSI recreation center in Borovets Resort was built. The administrative building of RSO - Severozapad in the town of Lovech was renovated, as well as emergency repairs to the site water supply system in the recreation center in the town of Kiten.

Over 190 emergency and routine repairs were carried out based on requests entered in

the Book of Damage and Repairs at the NSI Head Office by employees of the institute.

A tenant was selected after a procedure for renting a departmental café for catering services in the NSI Head Office.

Contracts with operating companies, contracts for supplies, provision of services, maintenance, and subscription services were renewed and signed.

All requirements for maintaining strict fire safety in the NSI Head Office were met in accordance with the requirements of regulatory documents.

Budget

The implementation of the NSI's Budget 2024 is in compliance with the adopted Law on the State Budget of the Republic of Bulgaria for 2024 and current adjustments made (Annex 1). Planned revenues as of 31.12.2024 were implemented according to the specified plan - 43%. The implementation of the total expenditure for the same period amounts to 99%, including current costs (wages, salaries and other payments to staff and maintenance) - 99%.

5. INTERNAL AUDIT AND ADMINISTRATIVE CONTROL

The Internal Audit Unit performs internal audit of all structures, programmes, activities and processes in the NSI, including the second-level spending units in the NSI and/or the administrators of resources of the European Union. In carrying out audit engagements for providing assurance and consulting, the IAU complies with the requirements of the Law on Internal Audit in the Public Sector, the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing, the Code of Ethics of Internal Auditors, the Statute of Internal Audit and the approved by the Minister of finance methodology for internal audit in the public sector.

In the first quarter, and in compliance with the requirements of Art. 40, para. 5 of the Law on Internal Audit in the Public Sector, an annual report and questionnaire on the activity of the IAU for 2023 were prepared, presented and sent electronically to the Minister of Finance through the web-based module "Annual reporting" within the specified time.

In compliance with the legal requirements, the head of the IAU carried out an inspection of the summary report and questionnaire on the status of the financial management and control systems (FMCS) in the NSI in 2023. He gave an opinion on the conformity of the information submitted in the report and questionnaire with the findings of the performed internal audits. The report and the questionnaire for the FMCS were sent within the specified deadline.

On the basis of Art. 14, para. 1, item 2 of the Law on Internal Audit in the Public Sector, the Internal Audit Unit at the NSI, in addition to a head, also has three full-time positions for internal auditors. The same positions have been vacant for the period from 01.01.2024 to the present, which is why the unit does not have sufficient human resources necessary for its activities. This in turn greatly hinders the full and effective implementation of the unit's activities, as well as ensuring optimal audit coverage. After a competition, a new head of the Internal Audit Unit was appointed and the necessary actions were taken in a timely manner to announce and conduct the relevant competitions to fill the vacant positions of professionally trained internal auditors. In 2024, four competitions for internal auditors were held, which were unsuccessful due to the applicants' incompetence or lack of applicants. Despite the difficulties associated with recruiting the necessary personnel, the Internal Audit Unit will continue its efforts in 2025 to fill the unit by conducting competitions for internal auditors. The goal is for the unit to have adequate human resources, which is a basic prerequisite for achieving the set goals.

In June, the Annual plan for the activities of the Internal Audit Unit at the NSI for 2024 was prepared and approved by the President of the NSI. Due to the above circumstances, the annual plan covers the second half of 2024 and is based on the actually available human resources. The plan defines the subject, scope, objectives and resources for the implementation of the internal audit activity. The Annual Plan for 2024 has been prepared

based on the Strategic Plan for the Internal Audit Activity 2023 - 2025 approved by the President of the NSI.

At the initiative of the President of the NSI, the head of the IAU fulfilled an audit engagement for consulting on the topic: "Analysis and assessment of personnel remuneration costs in RSO Severozapad for the period 01.01.2024 - 30.09.2024." The purpose of the audit engagement is, after a review and analysis of personnel remuneration costs, to express an opinion on the possibility of realizing savings under the relevant budget paragraphs in RSO Severozapad. An audit report with the relevant opinion was prepared for the results of the engagement, which were provided to the President of the NSI.

At the end of the reporting period, an assurance audit engagement was launched, an annual plan for internal audit activities for the following year was elaborated, and issues related to the preparation of the annual reporting were prepared.

The reporting of the audit activity of the IAU in the NSI for 2024 will be carried out by 28.02.2025 with the preparation of a report and questionnaire. They will be provided to the President of the NSI and will be submitted via the annual submission module to the Ministry of Finance within the legally specified deadlines.

The activity of the **Inspectorate of the NSI under Art. 46 of the Administration Act** in 2024 was in compliance with the Strategy for Development of the National Statistical System, 2021 – 2027 and the National Statistical programme, and related to the goals and priorities laid down in the Strategic Plan for the activity of the Inspectorate of the NSI for the period 2021 - 2025 and the Annual Plan for the activity of the Inspectorate of the NSI in 2024. Throughout the year, administrative control was carried out to ensure compliance with the requirements of the legislation in the performance of the functions by each unit of the NSI and control over the activities carried out with a view to the effective functioning of the administrative structures in the Head office and the Regional Statistical Offices. The efforts mainly aimed at improving the quality and expanding the scope of the administrative control carried out over the activities of the general and specialized administration of the NSI.

In the implementation of the powers of the Inspectorate under Art. 46 of the Administration Act, the achievement of the following main objectives was of primary importance:

- To create optimal conditions for work of the structural units in order to implement the state policy in the field of statistics;
- To implement timely and effective measures to limit the corruption risk within the central and territorial structures of the NSI;
- To create a sustainable environment supporting the compliance with laws, by-laws and internal departmental acts, rules and procedures, with a view to prevent violations and negative events in the functioning of the administration, and work improvement;
- To increase the training and professional qualification of inspectors as a condition for the objectivity and effectiveness of the administrative control carried out.

The realization of the goals was determined by the performance of the following main tasks:

- carrying out *planned inspections* for the implementation of administrative control of all structures, activities and processes in the units of the HO and RSOs;
- carrying out *unplanned inspections* based on received reports or by order of the President of the NSI and proposing measures to prevent and eliminate violations;
- implementation of *ongoing administrative control* over the correct implementation and compliance with the legislation and internal regulations in the performance of the assigned functions by the directorates of the administrative units in the HO and RSO;
- *verification of the declarations* under Art. 49 para 1 of the Counter-Corruption Act.

The work of the inspectors aimed at increasing efficiency in planning and improving the organization, strict application of regulatory requirements and compliance with the factors on which the optimization of work depends. Serious attention was paid to the observance of deadlines in the assignment, execution and completion of official tasks.

During the reporting period, the Inspectorate of the NSI under Art. 46 of the Administration Act carried out a total of 23 inspections, of which 16 planned (including 12 monthly inspections) and 7 unplanned (based on received reports).

In implementation of the Annual Plan for the activities of the Inspectorate in 2024, the following four planned inspections were carried out:

- thematic inspection and evaluation of the organization of the activity and compliance with the regulatory requirements when evaluating the implementation of the position by the employees of the HO and the RSOs of the NSI in 2023;

- thematic planned inspection on compliance with the requirements for the collection, reporting, storage and publication of the declarations under the Counter-Corruption Act submitted by the employees of the HO and the RSOs of the NSI, and on declarations not submitted in the specified deadline;

- complex planned inspection of the overall activities of the RSO - Severozapad to find the actual status of the organization and implementation of tasks, as well as compliance with the regulatory acts of the general and specialized administration of RSO – Severozapad;

- complex planned inspection of the overall activities of the RSO - Severoiztok to find the actual status of the organization and implementation of tasks, as well as compliance with the regulatory acts of the general and specialized administration of RSO – Severoiztok.

For the implementation of internal administrative control in 2024, the Inspectorate carried out 12 monthly inspections. Monthly reports containing the findings, analyses, conclusions and recommendations of the administrative control were prepared and submitted for approval by the President of the NSI. The subject of the inspections consisted of: identification of violations of the regulatory framework; manifestations of corruption and ineffective work of the administration; checks on signals against illegal or incorrect actions or inactions of NSI employees; establishing violations under Art. 53 and Art. 54 in connection with Art. 25, Art. 26 and Art. 27 of the Law on Statistics; checks of the declarations of incompatibility of newly appointed employees in the HO and the RSO and their publication in the registers on the NSI website; accepting declarations of assets and interests and performing the tasks regulated in the Counter-Corruption Act and the Ordinance on the organization and procedure for inspection of conflict of interest declarations; implementation of the resolutions of the NSI's top management; review of the contracts concluded and executed during the month; issued and executed/unexecuted orders of the NSI's top management; the realized international working trips of NSI's employees; the prepared reports from participation in international working trips and tasks arising from them for the NSI. The implementation of the decisions of the President's Council was carried out with particular importance. The implementation and reporting of the tasks assigned to the NSI's employees through AIS "Document Flow" was controlled.

In 2024, a monthly control of the implementation of the tasks set out in the NSP and the Editorial Plan for 2024 was carried out. The timely implementation of the conducted statistical surveys and publications from the Release calendar as well as the issued publications and press releases was monitored.

In 2024, the Inspectorate carried out permanent control for the implementation of the provisions of the Counter-Corruption and Unlawfully Acquired Assets Forfeiture Act and the Ordinance on the organization and procedure for inspection of conflict of interest declarations. All relevant internal regulatory documents and acts were updated in accordance with the newly adopted Anti-Corruption Act.

In the legally determined deadlines, the information from the declarations sent by NSI's employees under Art. 49, para. 1, item 2 and item 4 of the Counter-Corruption Act was processed, stored and published in registers in compliance with the provisions of the Law on Personal Data Protection.

Inspections of the declared facts in the submitted declarations under Art. 49, para. 1, item 1 and item 3 of the Counter-Corruption Act by the newly appointed employees in the HO and the RSOs of the NSI were periodically carried out to find incompatibility according to the requirements of the relevant legal acts. Incompatibility was found for three newly appointed employees, of which two employees took the necessary actions to eliminate the incompatibility within the time limit following the recommendations given by the Inspectorate. Due to the presence of incompatibility not eliminated within the legally established time limit, the employment relationship of one employee was terminated.

In 2024, the Inspectorate carried out seven unplanned inspections based on received reports and proposals related to the activities of the general and specialized administration. A preliminary investigation was carried out on each of the received signals and actions were taken to clarify the facts and circumstances of the case. When examining the received signals containing allegations of violation of the legislation, the civil service or the style of management, the main efforts of the inspectors under Art. 46 of the Administration Act were directed at fully clarifying each specific case in order to prepare a comprehensive and objective opinion, as well as recommendations for taking effective measures to solve the identified problem, as well as to prevent it from occurring in the future. Reports with the results of the inspections were timely prepared and submitted for approval by the president of the NSI. After the clarification of each individual case, responses were sent to the whistleblowers within the statutory period.

During the implementation of administrative control, the Inspectorate made a total of 24 recommendations and 10 proposals, the implementation of which was subject to subsequent inspections.

Inspectors from the Inspectorate participated in 11 training courses organized by IPA for improving professional qualifications.

The control activity of the Inspectorate was tailored both to the available personnel and to the unplanned tasks related to reports of admitted irregularities or by order of the President of the NSI. The reduced number of inspectors did not affect the performance of the assigned tasks and the implementation of the powers of the Inspectorate under Article 46 of the Administration Act as a whole.

For the period from 01.01.2024 to 25.10.2024, 1,290 dossiers with documents were recorded and checked in the register of the **Financial Controller**, and 1,290 checklists for commitment and expenditure were issued.

The proclamation of the Financial Controller on the proposals for commitment or expenditure was implemented within the deadlines set by the President of the NSI and described in the Internal Rules on implementation of ex-ante control of legality in the NSI.

During the period, the Financial Controller often needed to request additional documents or information, as well as to make on the spot visit in order to optimize the control and to give an accurate and efficient statement in the checklist filled by him.

In the first half of 2024, the Financial Controller prepared the summarized questionnaire and the report on the status of the FMCS at the NSI in 2023 and sent them electronically to the Ministry of Finance.

In August 2024, the Financial Controller prepared new Internal Rules on implementation of ex-ante control of legality in the NSI. They were approved by order of the President of the NSI and published on the Institute's Intranet site in the FMCS section.

In pursuance of the annual training plan for 2024, the Finance Controller participated in four trainings organized and carried out by the Public Finance School of the Ministry of Finance. The first training on the topic "Violations of the rules in the award of public procurement contracts, leading to administrative criminal liability" was conducted in the period 23-28.03.2024. The second training on the topic "Public Procurement Management and Control" held during the period 24-25.04.2024. The third training on the topic "Public Procurement Legislation, Implementation, Examples from Practice" held from 20.05. to 21.05.2024. The fourth training on the topic "Financial Management and Control Systems in Public Sector Organizations - Essence and Basic Requirements" was held on June, 25 and 26,

2024. For the excellent results of the final tests and the successful completion of the trainings, the Financial Controller received certificates and provided them to the “Human Resources” Department, General Administration Directorate at the NSI’s HO for storage and addition to the civil servant’s dossier.

During the period of ex-ante control for legality, illegal actions were not detected in the Head Office of the NSI.

In 2024, the **Data Protection Officer** carried out regular supervision for the compliance with the legislation of the Republic of Bulgaria and the requirements of the law of the European Union in the field of personal data protection, to ensure the rights of data subjects, as well as the principle for statistical secrecy regulated in Regulation (EC) No. 223/2009 on European statistics and the Law on Statistics. The proposals for European legislation - regulations, delegated and implementing regulations, positions of the NSI in the Working Party "Statistics" of the Council of the EU, respectively for the meetings of the European Statistical System Committee, were mandatorily checked for compliance with the European and national law in the field of personal data protection and the recommendations of the European Data Protection Supervisor.

The Data Protection Officer participated in the activities of the working groups for the preparation of draft cooperation agreements with the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Education and Science, which will replace the previous agreements.

Appendix 1. Information on the NSI budget for 2024

Indicators (in BGN)	Law on State Budget of the Republic of Bulgaria for 2024	Specified plan for the year as of 31.12.2024	Report as of 31.12.2024	Implementation of the plan/ report (%) as of 31.12.2024
1	2	3	4	5
I. REVENUES - TOTAL	950 000	950 000	406 826	43
Own revenues	950 000	950 000	406 826	43
Non-tax revenues	950 000	950 000	406 826	43
Property revenues and incomes	950 000	950 000	480 504	51
- Net revenues from sales of services, goods and production	850 000	850 000	415 786	49
- Rental property revenues	100 000	100 000	64 718	65
State fees				
Fines, sanctions and penalties				
Other revenues			20 823	
Revenues from the sale of non-financial assets				
VAT paid			-94 501	
II. EXPENDITURES - TOTAL	29 216 600	40 020 636	39 504 217	99
Total expenditure	29 216 600	40 020 636	39 504 217	99
Current expenditure	29 216 600	37 660 092	37 175 867	99
Personnel	23 778 100	32 080 790	31 607 987	99
Salaries and remunerations to the personnel under the Labour Code and the Civil Service Act	1 191 075	23 178 190	22 856 901	99

Salaries and remunerations to the personnel under the Labour Code	1 958 300	2 700 000	2 652 341	98
Salaries and remunerations to the personnel under the Civil Service Act	15 232 775	20 478 190	20 204 560	99
Other salaries and payments to the personnel	1 254 825	1 695 600	1 680 166	99
Mandatory social security contributions from employers	5 332 200	7 207 000	7 070 920	98
Social insurance contributions from employers for the State Social Insurance (SSI)	3 220 100	4 335 000	4 273 484	99
Health insurance contributions from employers	1 316 900	1 765 000	1 750 206	99
Contributions to additional compulsory insurance from employers	795 200	1 107 000	1 047 230	95
Maintenance	5 275 500	5 311 302	5 291 693	99
Taxes paid, charges and administrative sanctions	115 000	215 000	213 907	99
Expenditure for membership contributions and participation in non-profit organizations and activities	48 000	53 000	52 260	99
Current international transfers provided			10 020	
Capital expenditure	0	2 360 544	2 328 350	99
Fundamental repair of tangible fixed assets	0	0	-21 394	
Acquisition of tangible fixed assets	0	107 400	107 400	100
Acquisition of intangible fixed assets	0	2 253 144	2 242 344	99
NATURAL INDICATORS				
Staff positions - total	968	968	880	
Average annual full-time positions - total	968	968	888	
Staff positions	968	968	880	
III. TRANSFERS	28 266 600	39 070 636	38 884 337	99
III. A. TRANSFERS (SUBSIDIES, CONTRIBUTIONS) BETWEEN CENTRAL/STATE BUDGET AND OTHER BUDGETS	28 766 600	39 672 234	39 485 086	99
Transfers (grants/contributions) from the central budget (Net) - Transfers (subsidies) from the central budget (+)	28 766 600	39 672 234	39 485 086	99
- Transfers received (+) - Transfers granted (-) - Transfer from MLSP under programmes of temporary employment (+/-)		21 402	21 402	100

III. B. TRANSFERS BETWEEN BUDGETS AND ACCOUNTS FOR EU FUNDS	-500 000	-623 000	-622 151	99
III. Г. TRANSFERS FOR ASSUMED INSURANCE CONTRIBUTIONS AND TAXES			-9 842 802	
IV. BALANCING ITEM (+/-) (I - II + III)			-213 054	
V. FINANCING OPERATIONS			213 054	

Appendix 2. Organizational chart of the NSI (as of February 03, 2025)

Organization Chart 03.02.2025



