

# **REPORT**

## **ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL STATISTICAL PROGRAMME AND THE ACTIVITY OF THE NATIONAL STATISTICAL INSTITUTE IN 2021**

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**LIST OF BULGARIAN ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>BSEC</b>	Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organisation
<b>CA</b>	Customs Agency
<b>CCC</b>	Central Census Commission
<b>EC</b>	European Commission
<b>ESA 2010</b>	European System of Accounts 2010
<b>ESS</b>	European Statistical System
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>FMCS</b>	Financial Management and Control system
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>GNI</b>	Gross National Income
<b>HIAU</b>	Head of Internal Audit unit
<b>HICP</b>	Harmonized Index of Consumer Prices
<b>HO</b>	Head Office
<b>HPC</b>	Hybrid Private cloud
<b>IAU</b>	Internal Audit unit
<b>HIAU</b>	Head of Internal Audit unit
<b>ICT</b>	Information and communications technology
<b>INTRASTAT</b>	Information system for Intra-Community trade in goods
<b>IPA</b>	Institute of Public Administration
<b>IS</b>	Information system
<b>MF</b>	Ministry of Finance
<b>MH</b>	Ministry of Health
<b>MI</b>	Ministry of Interior
<b>NRA</b>	National Revenue Agency
<b>NRPP</b>	National register of populated places
<b>NSI</b>	National Statistical Institute
<b>NSP</b>	National Statistical Programme
<b>NSS</b>	National Statistical System
<b>NSSI</b>	National Social Security Institute
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
<b>OP</b>	Operational programme
<b>PCHCRBA</b>	Population Census and Housing Census in the Republic of Bulgaria Act
<b>PHC</b>	Population and Housing Census
<b>PPPs</b>	Purchasing Power Parities
<b>PRODCOM</b>	Survey on output and sales of industrial products
<b>PRODCOM.BG</b>	Nomenclature of Industrial Production
<b>R&amp;D</b>	Research and Development activity
<b>RSO</b>	Regional Statistical Office
<b>RSU</b>	Register of statistical units
<b>SAR</b>	State Agency for Refugees
<b>SSD</b>	Statistical surveys Department
<b>STS</b>	Short-term Business Statistics
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>WG</b>	Working group

**LIST OF ENGLISH ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>CAPI</b>	Computer-Assisted Personal Interviews
<b>CAWI</b>	Computer-Assisted Web Interviews
<b>ESTP</b>	European Statistical Training Programme
<b>FATS</b>	Foreign Affiliates Trade Statistics
<b>FRIBS</b>	Framework Regulation Integrating Business Statistics
<b>SDMX</b>	Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange
<b>VIIES</b>	VAT Information Exchange System

## INTRODUCTION

The Report on implementation of the National Statistical Programme and the activity of the National Statistical Institute in 2021 is developed in compliance with Art. 9 (6) of the Law on statistics.

The report is structured into six 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 2021.

The **first section** pays special attention to statistical surveys and activities performed for the first time in 2021.

The **second section** describes the results achieved on implementation of horizontal priorities 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 2021.

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 2021.

The **sixth section** includes statistical surveys and activities not performed due to the emergency worldwide epidemiological situation related to the spread of the COVID-19.

## MAIN EVENTS IN 2021

- Pursuant to Regulation (EC) № 763/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council and the 2021 Population census and Housing census in the Republic of Bulgaria Act the 18th Population census was conducted in the country in the period from September 7 to October 10.
- A Commitment on confidence in statistics was approved by Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria and signed by the Prime Minister. The document is considered by the EC as a guarantee of the independence of official statistics.
- The NSI coordinates the activities of the Working Group on Exchange of Statistical Data and Economic Information at the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organisation.

### 1. INTRODUCING FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 2021

The National Statistical Institute:

- developed additional tables on various indicators of COVID-19 deaths in the context of increased demand for timely and quality statistical information on deaths by causes. They are available to national and international users on the NSI website;
- expanded the scope of standard indicators in the field of statistics on health resources. The new tables are available for the users in the IS Infostat;
- used a combined method to collect data in a sample survey among households. In the framework of the EC project “Survey on gender-based violence”, data were collected through face-to-face interview using a tablet (CAPI) and through a self-enumeration of respondents with a web-based application (CAWI);
- conducted a sample survey among enterprises on the topic „Continuing Vocational Training of the employees” (CVTS6), in compliance with the requirements of Regulation (EU) № 1153/2014 of the European Commission. Issues related to the impact of the pandemic on vocational training opportunities and constraints were included;
- compiled and provided to Eurostat data on ICT usage in enterprises for the reporting year 2021, using the new statistical unit „enterprise”, formed by several legal units, in order to provide data, in compliance with the requirements of European regulations in this field;
- created a new site from August 10, 2021;
- jointly with the National Revenue Agency prepared and published monthly data on sales of liquid fuels in the newly created heading “Tax Statistics” on the NSI website;
- conducted a recertificational external audit in order to meet the requirements of the Integrated Management System;
- created an information site for 2021 Census 2021 available on the site <https://census2021.bg/language/en/>.
- put into operation IS „Business Cycles”;
- developed new web applications for “Survey on gender-based violence”, “Energy Statistics: support to the Energy Union and further disaggregation of final energy consumption”, additional questionnaire for collecting and processing information to the statistical survey Household income, expenditure and consumption - “Infra-annual collection on living conditions“;

- developed two applications related to Census: “Temporarily present persons” for collecting data from the places of accommodation of those present at 0:00 o'clock on 07.09.2021 and application for the census of diplomats
- started micro data exchange. For the first time the NSI successfully sent and received validated encrypted data via TESTA (Trans European Services for Telematics between Administrations) network in test and production environment of Eurostat's MDE hub;
- carried out the first integration with inter-register data exchange of State E-Government Agency (RegiX);
- started building of new Information systems - “Statistical Business Register”, “NRPP”, “Demography”, “Consumer Prices”, “Statistical classifications”;
- integrated additional security mechanisms and systems in infrastructure related to information and network security;
- provided and maintained Sendinblue service for the needs of the NSI;
- developed and sent to Eurostat an additional table reporting measures taken in the context of COVID-19 for Bulgaria in order to facilitate the validation of reliable and accurate data on government financial statistics with a view to the significant and numerous state measures in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic in the EU.
- started work on Eurostat’s project for additional table of government expenditure financed by the EU's Recovery and Resilience Facility.
- developed and implemented a new method for temporary tax shifting, approved and validated by Eurostat.
- developed and implemented methodological improvements in GNI and its components for the implementation of official requests (reserves) of the European Commission.

## **2. IMPLEMENTATION OF HORIZONTAL PRIORITIES OF THE STRATEGY FOR DEVELOPMENT OF THE NATIONAL STATISTICAL SYSTEM, 2021 - 2027**

Main direction in the activity of the NSI in 2021 was the realization of horizontal and specific priorities within the framework of the new 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**

#### **Priority 2.1.1. Providing conditions and resources for the sustainable and modern development of the NSS**

In 2021, the preparation for the Third round of Peer reviews of the NSS under the ESS started. In Bulgaria, the Peer review will be held in March 2022. The NSI participated in the training of national coordinators and communication experts. A Working group, including the national coordinator for Bulgaria, the Secretary General of the NSI, directors and experts of all directorates of the institution was specially established. The WG filled in the NSI self-assessment questionnaire, as well as all supporting documentation. According to the methodology approved by the ESS, in addition to the NSI, three additional national statistical authorities have been selected - administrative structures of the Ministry of agriculture, the Ministry of environment and water and the National Social Security Institute (NSSI). They will also be reviewed within the Peer review. They have also submitted their individual self-assessment questionnaires. According to the common ESS Communication Strategy of the Third round of Peer Reviews, the NSI has prepared a special section on its website. National plan for communication activities was also developed.

### **Priority 2.1.2. Updating the legal framework**

The Bulgarian Government approved Commitment on confidence in statistics, signed by the Prime Minister. This document is of great significance, since it is considered by the EC as a guarantee of the independence of official statistics. It is related to the implementation of the Regulation on European statistics - Regulation (EC) № 223/2009 and to the European Statistics Code of Practice.

Pursuant to Priority 2.1.2, the NSI staff actively participated in the preparation of the following strategic documents:

- **Strategy for Development of the National Statistical System of the Republic of Bulgaria, 2021 - 2027:**
  - Preparation of documentation for a draft Decision of the Council of Ministers to approve the Strategy for Development of the National Statistical System of the Republic of Bulgaria for the period 2021 - 2027, including: draft Report of the Deputy Prime Minister for European Funds Management, Mr. Atanas Pekanov, to the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria and a draft Decision of the Council of Ministers for approval of the Strategy for Development of the National Statistical System of the Republic of Bulgaria for the period 2021 - 2027;
- **Legal provision and consultation of the working groups and participants in the Census 2021:**
  - Preparation of draft Decisions of the Council of Ministers and draft Decrees of the Council of Ministers for various activities pertaining to the Census 2021;
  - Preparation of drafts of civil contracts, advertising contracts, etc., preparation of orders concerning the provision of the entire activity of Census 2021;
  - Preparation of instructions-procedure, in order to familiarize NSI management, the directors of RSOs and the heads of SSD with the procedure for establishing an administrative offence under the 2021 Population and housing census in the Republic of Bulgaria Act;
  - Preparation of legal positions on issued Acts for administrative offences, in connection with those found under the 2021 Population and housing census in the Republic of Bulgaria Act;
- **Project “Implementation of CAIS “Single entry point” for submission of annual financial statements and statistics in machine-readable format and integration with the NRA, NSI, Registry Agency (Trade Register)”:**
  - Participation in the preparation of a business model, participation in working groups and preparation of a joint order between the NSI and the NRA on the procedure, method and deadlines for submission of the annual activity reports and the consolidated annual activity reports of obligated persons (respondents), pursuant to the abovementioned provisions and the approval of specimens of the relevant forms;
- **Management and control system of the mechanism for recovery and sustainability in the Republic of Bulgaria:**
  - Position on applications-checklists on the Management and control system of the mechanism for recovery and sustainability in the Republic of Bulgaria;
- **Bill amending and supplementing the Law on Statistics of Intra-Community Trade in Goods:**
  - Preparation and publication in the Portal for public consultations at the Council of



Ministers of the draft Law on Amendments to the Law on Statistics of Intra-Community Trade in Goods.

In 2021, the NSI, together with the NRA, prepared a draft Amendment to the Law on Statistics of Intra-Community Trade in Goods, pursuant to 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 rules, pursuant to Regulation (EU) № 2019 / 2152. In compliance with the changes introduced by the new European regulations, the NRA prepared a draft amendment to the Ordinance on the implementation of the Intrastat system, in which NSI experts also took part.

### **Priority 2.1.3. Development and implementation of new methods and technologies**

In 2021, the efforts of experts in the field of short-term business statistics were focused on the development; testing and successful implementation of the Information System "Business Cycles" built through high-tech IT solutions. The new system contributed to the reduction of the amount of time required to view and verify data, improving their quality and reducing the respondent burden. IS "Business Cycles" includes 23 monthly and quarterly business surveys, which provide information for short-term business indicators in compliance with EU legislation, as well as important indicators in the field of investment, production and sales of industrial products and others.

In 2021, a project for the development of the IS Consumer Prices was launched to add new functionalities and migration of the platform. In the field of housing price statistics, work has started on updating the software for processing data in the field of housing price indices, in order to include data from a new administrative source.

The information and communication infrastructure of the NSI is in the process of continuous development, following the process of providing new web-based services for external users and the optimization of existing services and statistical business processes. The provision of services in 24/7/365 mode requires a constant search for new solutions for backup, security and optimization of available resources. Services for system administration and around-the-clock monitoring of services and devices were provided. They aimed at achieving and maintaining low levels of information risks and ensuring the confidentiality, integrity and availability of NSI's transferred, processed and stored information.

The publicly available and local information resources of the NSI were scanned for technical vulnerabilities. The discrepancies found for all IT resources in the local networks were eliminated.

The collection of Security information and event management (SIEM) was carried out with new software solutions (Qradar and Guardium). The NSI implements reliable policies for backup of databases and components of information systems through specialized software for backup (Commvault). The information is stored in two different locations.

Axence nVision software was implemented to provide monitoring, protection, management of network systems and devices, organization assets, helpdesk and more. The NSI monitored the condition, operability and load of the physical and virtual elements of the information and communication infrastructure, the information systems, databases and public services.

Two Cisco Secure Email Virtual Gateways were implemented as first protection, providing anti-virus and anti-spam scanning of the entire incoming and outgoing e-mail stream for the NSI.

A BMS system was implemented.

The NSI performed integration with the active directory during the development of each

new information system. Network and information security requirements were met.

Sendinblue service was provided and maintained for the needs of the NSI.

#### **Priority 2.1.4. Use more administrative and new data sources**

The main focus of the work in the field of statistics on justice and punished crime in 2021 was placed on expanding the scope and improving the quality of data used from administrative sources (the Unified Information System Against Crime) for the production of statistics. At the suggestion of the NSI, new templates for statistical queries were developed for the core of the system. They were used in the work on ensuring the quality of data on punished crime.

The NSI uses administrative data sources. The NSI improved the exchange of data with other administrations (Employment Agency, Registry Agency - Bulstat Register, Trade Register, NRA, Customs Agency, NSSI) by using a secure communication channel.

From 2021, the National Statistical Institute has stopped collecting data from kindergartens and schools, switching entirely to the use of data from the administrative registers of the Ministry of Education and Science. In addition to improving the quality of the presented statistical information, a reduction in the burden on respondents - educational institutions was achieved.

In 2021, the implementation of the statistical activities of the Employment Agency as a body of statistics began. As a body of statistics during the year, **the Employment Agency:**

- Participated in the preparation of data for the ESSPROS survey of Eurostat on the function "Unemployment". Data on recipients, unemployed persons on periodic cash benefits for training, as well as benefits in kind related to increasing their fitness for employment were submitted to the NSI at the end of July 2021;
- Begun preparations for the transfer of micro data for recipients of periodic cash payments from the EA to the NSI under an Agreement between the two institutions;
- Prepared and provided to the NSI data on seasonal workers from third countries under Regulation № 862 / 2007 of the European Parliament and of the Council on Community statistics on migration and international protection;
- Prepared and provided at the contact point - MLSP, a set of 44 statistical reports for participants and funds paid for labor market policies in 2020. The data are part of the LMP Database of the European Commission according to Eurostat methodology and are in the process of validation by the Commission;
- Conducted two nationally representative surveys on the attitudes of employers to hire labor force with certain qualities;
- Continued the regular weekly exchange of register aggregate data on newly registered unemployed persons and unemployed persons started working by districts.

With the introduction of measures to counteract the negative consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Employment Agency became one of the main implementers of CMD 55/2020 and CMD 151 / 2020, which launched the so-called measure "60/40". To report the volumes, structure and scope of the compensated employers and the reserved positions, the EA records the data of the applicant and approved employers in a register. In addition to the 60/40 measure, the EA collects statistics on short-term employment support measures introduced by CMD 429/2020 to compensate employers in the most affected sectors of tourism, transport and the self-employed. Data were also summarized for the implementation of the anti-crisis measures financed within the OPHRD - the schemes "Keep me" and "Employment for you".

In 2021, the NSI continued interaction with the institutions for the use of administrative data for the needs of the production of statistics on environment and energy - Ministry of Environment and Water, Ministry of Energy, Ministry of Agriculture, State Agency "State Reserve and Wartime Stocks", Executive Environment Agency, Executive Forest Agency, Executive Agency for exploration and and maintenance of the Danube river, Geodesy, Cartography and Cadastre Agency, Public Procurement Agency, Sustainable Energy Development Agency, Customs Agency, National Revenue Agency, Directorate General Civil Aviation Administration, National Center for Public Health and Analysis, National Institute of Meteorology and Hydrology.

Communication, including meetings, was established, with administrations and organizations regarding the need for administrative data needed to meet the new requirements of European environmental and energy legislation. For example, the Sustainable Energy Development Agency was contacted and consulted in connection with the issued certificates of buildings with almost zero energy consumption. The Energy Distribution Companies were also contacted in connection with the future data reporting, according to the new requirements of Regulation 1099/2008 on energy statistics regarding the consumption of solar photovoltaic energy from own production and the consumption of energy by data centers.

In the field of housing price statistics, preparations were made for the transition to combined use of administrative data sources - the Property Register and the Cadastral-Administrative Information System.

The use of administrative data reduces the burden on respondents. Therefore, the statistical forms on environmental surveys were reviewed and updated in order to achieve greater clarity and facilitate their completion by respondents. The tools in the field of energy statistics were updated in line with the latest amendments to Regulation (EU) 1099/2008 on energy sector statistics.

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

### **Priority 2.2.1. Strengthening communication with stakeholders**

As part of the 2021 Population and housing census campaign, active communication was maintained with a wide range of stakeholders. Meetings were held with local authorities, universities and the non-governmental sector. The secretaries general of the municipalities were chairmen of the municipal census commissions. The NSI wrote letters to all higher educational institutions in order to promote both the recruitment of enumerators and controllers and information on the entire census process. Together with some of the non-governmental organizations, cooperation in promoting the Census in various groups of society was commented. The media were also involved as partners in the process. In the Central Census Commission representatives from the National Association of Municipalities, the Bulgarian Telegraph Agency, as well as a non-governmental organization selected through an open competition were involved.

**The European Statistics Competition for students was held for the fourth time.** The 2020/2021 school year was a huge challenge for teachers, students, parents and all those who are involved in the educational process in Bulgaria. The COVID-19 pandemic with its economic, social, medical and psychological dimensions led to major transformations in the course of training and tested the will and courage of educators and learners. However, despite all the difficulties, the Bulgarian mentors and their graduates did not give up participating in the Statistics Competition for students. 757 students from 98 schools and 38 cities in the country registered and were divided into 301 teams.

**In 2021, the NSI held for the second time the International Statistical Poster Competition.** The winners of the competition were announced on the first day of the 63rd World

Statistical Congress, held from 11 to 16 July in The Hague, the Netherlands. An accredited international jury awarded two Bulgarian teams with first and third place in the respective categories after a contested competition in which 16,600 participants from 31 countries took part.

#### **Priority 2.2.2. Inclusion and active participation of the public**

In pursuance of priority 2.2.2, the NSI together with Sofia Municipality and in partnership with the State Archives Agency organized an exhibition in the open-air gallery "Bridge of Lovers" at the National Palace of Culture. Historical and contemporary data from all censuses in the country since 1881 were presented on 60 canvases - 30 in Bulgarian and English. Due to the great interest shown by various representatives of the Bulgarian society, the exhibition was also presented in Plovdiv, Varna and Ruse.

During the reporting period, the NSI took measures to actively involve the public in the planning and evaluation of the 2021 Census. The communication campaign for the census was based on a nationally representative sociological survey conducted in 2019. It examined public attitudes towards the Census, the level of awareness of its nature and manner of conduct. The main messages were also based on a focus group study. At the end of 2021, after the end of the information campaign, a nationally representative sociological survey was also conducted to assess the effectiveness of the campaign. It showed that in less than two years, public awareness of the largest sociological survey in Bulgaria from 12% in 2019 has grown to 75% in 2021.

#### **Priority 2.2.3. Open quality management**

In the field of public health statistics in 2021, in accordance with European legislation, a report was prepared on the quality of data transmitted on stillbirths and deaths by cause.

In 2021, in the field of STBS, the NSI began calculation of quality indicators (Average revision and Average absolute revision) in trade and services.

Over the past year, metadata and quality reports on environmental and energy surveys were reviewed and updated. They were published on the NSI website. In order to improve the data quality, the time series were also reviewed and updated in connection with the updates of the methodology and new regulatory requirements regarding the environment.

In the field of consumer prices, the inventory of sources and methods of HICP production and the report on the sources and methods used to collect the information needed to calculate PPPs were updated and sent to Eurostat. In the field of foreign trade statistics, jointly with Eurostat, reports were prepared on the quality of the data provided - aggregate and detailed monthly data on exports and imports of goods, as well as annual data on business characteristics of enterprises and invoicing currency.

In the field of business register statistics, the NSI provided completed questionnaires to Eurostat on the quality, metadata and development of the RSU.

The results of the survey on the structure of vineyards in Bulgaria in 2020, along with a quality report, were processed and sent to Eurostat.

In accordance with the requirements of Implementing Regulation (EU) № 995/2012, 4 reports on the quality of R&D data for 2019 in the specified format were developed and submitted to Eurostat.

The metadata and the quality report in the field of information society statistics were introduced online through the ESS-MH application in the new SIMS technical format required by Eurostat.

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

#### **Priority 2.3.1. Modern and effective communication**

In 2021, the NSI continued and strengthened the good cooperation with national and regional media. During this period, 243 press releases with statistical information and 92 news topics from various national and international events were published on the NSI website and sent to the media, as Census 2021 occupied the main place with 47 publications. The NSI continued to send informational press releases to Bulgarian embassies abroad - a tradition that has lasted for more than 15 years.

Throughout the year, the focus of the NSI's communication activities was the promotion of the 2021 Census. The campaign followed the communication strategy created in 2019 to promote the survey. Due to the COVID-19, the complicated epidemiological situation and the postponement of the 2021 Census by 9 months, necessitated changes in the original planning. Thus, in 2021, 2 stages of the information campaign were conducted (instead of the planned one) - for the recruitment of enumerators in May-June 2021 and in the period of the actual census in September-October 2021.

Conditionally, the campaign can be divided into two components - a PR campaign or work with the media and an advertising campaign, which includes the distribution of video, audio and printed information products.

As a result of the direct work with the media and the disseminated information during the two stages of the campaign, 6846 journalistic materials were published. It should be noted that despite the difficulties during the electronic census, caused mainly by cyberattacks, and the shortage of enumerators due to the deteriorating epidemiological situation, there were no negative publications for Census 2021. This is mainly due to open and effective communication with media and of the trust built in the NSI over the years.

A strategy for coverage on social networks was also developed - mainly Facebook and Instagram, and the main channels there were the institutional profiles of the NSI. In the period of preparation and promotion of Census 2021, the number of followers on the NSI Facebook page almost tripled. In September 2020, they were 4,000, and by the end of October, they numbered over 10,000.

An advertising mix was carefully selected for the entire campaign - TV, radio, Internet advertising, social media advertising and outdoor advertising. In 2021, within the two stages of the information campaign on the Census, 1,093 TV commercials and 1,215 radio commercials on national and regional media were broadcasted, reaching more than 4 and a half million people, banners were uploaded in online media, reaching nearly 5 million impressions, Facebook posts were published, reaching over 650 thousand users, billboards were installed in Sofia, Plovdiv, Varna and Ruse. Thanks to the Sofia Municipality and the Metropolitan, the main metro stations in Sofia and hundreds of metro cars were branded.

Measurement of the overall effectiveness of the campaign showed a high increase in awareness of Bulgarian citizens about the process. The overall campaign and its detailed analysis will be very useful for the NSI for the future strategic planning of its communication activities.

In order to facilitate the respondents, the NSI Support Center provided assistance on technical and / or methodological issues related to various statistical surveys.

In 2021, the NSI continued to use new technologies in order to optimize the dissemination of information produced. Forty-four sets of statistics in an open machine-readable format were published on the national open data portal. Along with customer service and the website, the main channels for communicating with users were Facebook, Instagram and Youtube. Social networks were often used to inform the public and get feedback during the 2021 Census.

### **Priority 2.3.2. New, consumer-oriented statistical products and services**

**The National Statistical Institute launched its new website** in August. The main goal

in designing the site was to create a user-friendly and responsive source of information for all platforms and mobile devices.

The main sections on the first page and the friendly interface provided the possibility for easy access to the offered information. All time series for previous years were preserved. Up-to-date statistical information was published. As before, the site published innovations both in the activities of the institute and in statistical science and practice.

The new NSI website is available in two language versions - Bulgarian and English, which makes it useful for foreign citizens and partners abroad.

Another advantage of the new site is the possibility to be used it by people with disabilities.

In the field of environmental statistics, the time series are regularly reviewed and updated in connection with the updating of the methodology and the new regulatory requirements.

In order to meet the new requirements of Regulation № 691/2011 on the European environmental economic accounts and Regulation № 1099/2008 on energy statistics, as well as to provide data related to the European Green Deal, the Energy Union and the Circular Economy, the NSI started to work on three projects funded by the EC – „Improving data for circular economy - packaging waste and construction waste“, „Establishing access to geospatial data through linking geocoded and statistical data“, „Energy statistics: support to the Energy Union and further disaggregation of final energy consumption“. The NSI continued to work on the project „Mapping and Assessment for Integrated ecosystem Accounting (MAIA), Horizon 2020“.

In 2021, the IS Business Cycles started to operate. The NSI Support Center expanded its scope to help respondents on IS Business Cycles and Census 2021.

In 2021, new web applications were developed for „Survey on gender-based violence“, „Energy statistics: support to the Energy Union and further disaggregation of final energy consumption“, additional questionnaire “Infra-annual data collection on living conditions” for collecting and processing information to the "Household budget Survey".

In connection with the Census 2021, two applications were developed: "Temporarily present persons" for collecting data on the present persons at 0:00 o'clock on 07.09.2021 from the accommodation establishments and application for the enumeration of diplomats.

### **Priority 2.3.3. Easily accessible and understandable statistics**

The latest "Statistics for Everyone" section provides an online learning opportunity for anyone who wants to learn something new or expand his or her knowledge of statistics. At a convenient time and place, anyone interested can learn more about the world of statistics in an easy and enjoyable way.

In 2021, the NSI continued to enrich the collection of **digital publications of Eurostat**, adapted in Bulgarian. Along with the updating of the already published digital publications, the latest edition - "Demography of Europe" was presented to Bulgarian users.

The tradition of celebrating interesting dates and events through infographics and videos continued.

### **Priority 2.3.4. Conditions for active participation of the media**

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

press releases always at the same time. This policy was strictly followed in 2021, both with regard to the dissemination of statistical products and services and with regard to the promotion of the 2021 Census.

The media was a natural partner of the NSI during the information campaign. The Director General of BTA Kiril Valchev was a representative of the media in the Central Census Commission, and the agency itself consistently and objectively covered the process. Media partnership agreements were signed with the other two public media - BNT and BNR. Both national and regional media were equally involved in the campaign.

Although COVID-19 limited the possibility of face-to-face events, in 2021 the NSI team managed to conduct a training with journalists before the start of the 2021 Census. Hundreds of conversations and meetings with journalists were held during the campaign to clarify both the purpose of the survey and detailed information about the process, as well as the difficulties during the census.

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

### **Priority 2.4.1. Promoting partnerships at national level**

In 2021 the NSI's partnership with the education sector in Bulgaria continued. The regional structures of the Ministry of Education and Science were involved in promoting the initiatives for raising the statistical culture of the students. The European Statistics Competition for Students continued to be part of the National Calendar of Olympiads and Competitions approved by the Minister of Education and Science.

At the same time, cooperation with business, the media and academic community deepened. Teachers from Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" and UNWE, representatives of business, media and social networks were involved in evaluation of the work of students in statistical competitions at national level.

The joint work with the National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria contributed to the effective implementation of the 2021 Census activities and the improvement of the survey on disasters, accidents, incidents and crises in the country.

### **Priority 2.4.2. Extension of international cooperation**

In 2021, the NSI continued to work to strengthen its position as a reliable and desirable partner both within the European Statistical System and in a number of international organizations such as the UN, OECD and BSEC. Although most of the international events and meetings for the second year were held primarily online due to COVID-19, the NSI representatives actively participated in the expression of positions within the various meetings and working formats.

The main topics for the European Statistical System last year were COVID-19, the challenges posed by the pandemic to official statistics, and the monitoring of economic recovery indicators. The focus was also on the preparation and conduct of the third round of peer reviews in the ESS; progress in the population and housing census in the Member States; the possibilities for sustainable use of data held by private entities/individuals for statistical purposes. The NSI President Sergey Tsvetarski represented Bulgaria at all three regular meetings of the European Statistical System Committee, as well as at two meetings of the Directors General. The President participated on the spot at the last meeting of the CESC for the year and the meeting of the Directors General held in Warsaw immediately before it. The topic of the DGINS meeting in 2021 was "Earth Observations for Official Statistics". During the reporting period, 200 NSI experts participated in 130 meetings of Eurostat working groups and target groups. The Institute expressed its opinion on 34 written consultations on draft new regulations and amendments as well as on strategic documents in the field of statistics.

In 2021, the NSI participated in the work of the WG Statistics at the Council of the EU. From January to the end of June, Portugal chaired the Statistics WG, and in the second semester, Slovenia. At the beginning of the Portuguese Presidency, two draft legislative acts of the EP and the Council relating to agricultural statistics were launched - a regulation on Statistics on Agricultural Input and Output (SAIO) and a regulation amending the regulation on regional economic accounts for agriculture (EAA). The two dossiers were a top priority at the meetings of the WG Statistics during both Presidencies in 2021. Experts in the field of agricultural and forestry statistics, assisted by the Agrostistics Department of the Ministry of Agriculture, took an active part in these meetings. A common approach was reached during the Slovenian Presidency on the proposal for a regulation amending the regulation on regional economic accounts (EAA) and a triologue was launched with the European Parliament. A political agreement was reached and final adoption by the Council and the EP is pending. The compromise text on the draft regulation on Statistics on Agricultural Input and Output (SAIO) will be considered and adopted by the end of 2021, after which the French Presidency will continue negotiations with the EP. The Portuguese Presidency finally adopted a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a Single Market Agenda, the competitiveness of enterprises, including small and medium-sized enterprises, and European Statistics and repealing Regulations (EU) № 99/2013, (EU) № 1287/2013, (EU) № 254/2014, (EU) № 258/2014, (EU) № 652/2014 and (EU) 2017/826.

In 2021, the NSI won 11 projects in competitions of Eurostat and other directorates of the European Commission in the field of demography, business statistics and macroeconomics. The attracted funding from them is 1 019 976 euros or nearly 2 million levs. During the year, 6 projects were completed, and work on 12 other projects continued and will be completed in 2022 and 2023. The NSI worked both on projects funded by various EC programs and on projects supported by other donors, such as the EEA Financial Mechanism 2014-2021. The NSI is also a partner in the implementation of projects under the IPA 2017 and 2019. During the year, the Institute applied for projects with the European Commission, as well as for those financed through other donors, such as the World Bank. Some of these project proposals are still awaiting a response by the end of 2021.

In cooperation with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, the NSI actively involved in global consultations on the framework of waste statistics, the global set of statistics and indicators on climate change, the roadmap for sustainable development goals, etc. The number of global consultations in which our country participates is 20. The NSI management represented the country at the 52nd session of the UN Statistical Commission held online on February 24. NSI experts regularly participated in various seminars at the invitation of or organized by the UN, such as a virtual seminar "Present and Future of Confidential Microdata Access", 5-9 July 2021, online expert meeting of UNECE and EFTA on the modernization of statistical legislation, 18-19 November 2021, etc.

Bulgaria has been an associate member of the Committee on Statistics and Statistical Policy of the OECD since 2019, which gives it equal rights with the Member States both in the work of the committee and its subsidiary bodies. The NSI management participated in the 18th meeting of the Statistical Committee, the Statistical Committee Bureau, and the 69th plenary session of the Conference of European Statisticians. NSI experts participated in about 25 meetings of OECD working groups as participants in the virtual meetings of the WG on measuring GDP in the digital economy, the WG on national accounts and the WG on international trade in goods and services, in meetings on various topics of PARIS21, as well as in a number of forums related to the census in the situation of the COVID-19 pandemic, data management, etc. Throughout the year, the NSI continued to provide and will continue to provide information on all OECD reviews for Bulgaria. In addition, the NSI gave an opinion in six OECD consultations on issues important to the organization, such as the coherence of sustainable development policies.



In 2021, the NSI continued its membership in the International Statistical Institute.

For the first time this year, the NSI became a coordinator and, after a 23-year standstill, renewed the WG Exchange of Statistical Data and Economic Information at the Organization of Black Sea Economic Cooperation. In 2021, the NSI proposed and defended an ambitious action plan, which aims on one hand to expand cooperation between Member States in the field of statistics, and on the other hand to improve the institutional capacity of the BSEC. In November 2021, the NSI organized an online training for young statisticians on "Challenges to official statistics during the COVID-19 pandemic", with over 50 experts attending the event and lecturers from the statistical offices of the BSEC Member States as well as UN and OECD specialists. The NSI invited all representatives of the working group to share good practices for overcoming the consequences of COVID-19 and will issue a publication on the subject. Another key activity in the plan is the preparation of an analysis of the socio-economic situation in the countries of the Black Sea region and the degree of achievement of the sustainable development goals in the context of the pandemic. The analysis has the potential to become a basis for setting joint priorities and taking harmonized action by BSEC Member States. The main work on this priority is forthcoming in 2022, as last year the NSI implemented a project within the "International Cooperation for Development" Programme of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which will support the efforts of the institute in this direction.

During the reporting period, measures for raising the qualification of the experts responsible for international projects were implemented. Three experts participated in online courses under ESTP. Two experts improved their skills in project management, and one improved his knowledge of the European Statistical System and participation in ESS meetings. Traditionally, the team studied all calls for proposals received from Eurostat. NSI experts participated in information meetings and explored opportunities to apply to the Pan-African Statistical Program II, the Technical Assistance Instrument to the EC, and the Development Programme of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Participation in these trainings and meetings helped to improve the quality of the administration of European projects and the management of consortia.

#### **Priority 2.4.3. Improving the scope of agreements and partnerships**

In order to increase efficiency, achieve optimal organization and coordination in the interaction between institutions and more effective implementation of certain functions and tasks of the NSI, bodies of statistics and other state institutions continued to work together in accordance with the signed agreements.

The NSI continued to work together with the National Center for Territorial Development on the project "Development of socio-economic and demographic analysis of the regions in the Republic of Bulgaria" and the Institute for Market Economy.

In 2021, the NSI signed three new agreements for the exchange of information with the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Health and the National Revenue Agency. The agreement with the Ministry of Health guarantees high quality data on deaths due to COVID-19, as the NSI receives individual data used in the process of validation of statistical information. Pursuant to the agreement with the National Revenue Agency, a section "Tax Statistics" was created on the NSI website, in which monthly data on sales of liquid fuels were published.

In 2021, the NSI signed an agreement for data exchange with State Agency for Refugees at the Council of Ministers and updated the agreement with the Ministry of Interior.

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

The NSI has bilateral agreements on cooperation in the field of statistics with Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Palestine, Azerbaijan, Serbia, the Republic of North Macedonia, Croatia and Romania. The Bulgarian side cooperates with these countries on the basis of three-year action plans. During the year, two meetings were held to exchange experiences between Bulgarian and Palestinian experts on energy statistics and renewable energy sources and the metadata management system. At the end of 2021, the plan for cooperation with the Republic of Azerbaijan for the period 2022-2024 was specified.

Traditionally, before the pandemic, the NSI organized annual trainings for young statisticians from the countries of the Balkan region and the countries of the European Neighborhood Policy - East. They were highly appreciated by the NSI partners and were the basis for expanding the cooperation of the Republic of Bulgaria with the countries of these regions. In this regard, the NSI submitted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs proposals for project financing of these events within the "Bulgarian Cooperation for Development" Programme but unfortunately, these project proposals were not supported.

The NSI also participated with experts in an international consortium led by GOPA Worldwide Consultants for the implementation of the Multinational Programs for Cooperation in the Field of Statistics IPA 2017 and IPA 2019. Under IPA 2017, the NSI carried out support activities through methodological and technical assistance to the statistical offices of the Republic of North Macedonia, the Republic of Kosovo and the Republic of Albania in the field of business statistics, HICP, housing price indices, purchasing power parities and quality and metadata management.

The activities under IPA 2019 started this year, and in addition to a technical meeting, an online mission with the Republic of Kosovo in the field of PPP was conducted.

Under an agreement between the Statistical Committee of Armenia and the World Bank, NSI experts provided methodological assistance in implementing the SDMX standard.

The participation of the NSI representatives in the expert missions is an important factor for the further bilateral cooperation of the Republic of Bulgaria with these countries.

### **3. REPORT BY THEMATIC DOMAINS**

#### **3.1. Demographic and social statistics**

##### **Population and housing census in the Republic of Bulgaria in 2021**

In fulfillment of Regulation (EC) № 763/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council and the Law on population and housing census in the Republic of Bulgaria in 2021, (prom., SG issue 20/08.03.2019, amended, SG issue 109/22.12.2020) (Population and housing census in the Republic of Bulgaria Act 2021), from 7 September to 10 October 2021, the 18th census was conducted in the country.

In 2021, the following activities were carried out for the preparation, organization and conduction of the 2021 census:

- **Configuration and adaptation of software for the information and communication provision of the census activities.** The specialized software carried out all activities in human resources management, zoning, electronic census, data entry from the census and the accompanying sample surveys for Census 2021. The software is configured in accordance with the requirements of the methodology and technology of census in Bulgaria. Activities were carried out to connect the information from the preliminary survey and the application for an electronic census, in order to facilitate citizens in self-enumeration.
- **Zoning of the country into control regions and census sections.** Pursuant to Art. 23 of

Population and housing census in the Republic of Bulgaria Act 2021, the NSI performed zoning on the territory of the country of control regions and census sections and prepared the census lists for the census with an enumerator. The zoning was based on the digital information (geographical coordinates), collected during the preliminary survey about the objects of the census - buildings, entrances or other residential units in which persons may reside at the critical moment of the census. The zoning was carried out with the active assistance of the municipal census commissions. The purpose of the zoning was to divide the territory of the country into parts (control areas and census sections), defined according to pre-set criteria and subject to certain constraints. The boundaries of the enumeration sections determined the territorial scope of the enumerators.

- **Tools.** Pursuant to Art. 6, item 3 of the Population and housing census in the Republic of Bulgaria Act 2021, the NSI developed tools for conducting the census and organized its printing and distribution. Based on the feedback received from the pilot electronic census, changes were made to the main census card. The full package of census cards and instructions was approved by Minutes № 6/11.09.2020 of the CCC meeting. In connection with the proposals submitted to the NSI for a change in the census map for buildings, dwellings and the population regarding the issue “H12. Religion” and after coordination of the proposals with the Directorate of Religious Affairs at the Council of Ministers, a CCC absentee consultation was held to approve the changes. The changes were approved by Protocol № 7/23.12.2020. All census cards and instructions approved by the Central census commission are available on the 2021 Census website.
- **Enumerator and Supervisor Recruitment Campaign.** Following Art. 10, para. 7, item 3 of Population and housing census in the Republic of Bulgaria Act 2021 and the Census schedule from 15 September to 30 October, an enumerator and supervisor recruitment campaign was held. Due to the shift of the date and period of the census by Decision № 61/21.01.2021 of the Council of Ministers and considering the long period until the new date, there was a need for a campaign to confirm the participation in the census of the applicants, as well as the recruitment of new ones. The second campaign for the recruitment of enumerators and controllers was carried out between May 17 and May 25 - confirmation and from May 25 to June 10 - submission of new applications. The required number of enumerators and controllers was reached in most of the municipalities. There was a greater shortage of people in some areas of Sofia, Plovdiv and Varna, in Burgas, Stara Zagora, Pazardzhik and Pleven. During the campaign, the NSI leadership held a number of meetings with regional governors and mayors of municipalities to ensure effective participation and assistance of local authorities in the process.
- **Training.** In accordance with Article 6, item 5 of Population and housing census Act 2021 and the census schedule, the NSI conducted the following trainings:
  - In the period 14 - 18 June 2021, training of trainers was held at the Training Center of the NSI in Slivec;
  - The Statistical Surveys departments organized trainings of all employees engaged in the census process;
  - On 25 August 2021, online training was carried out for the staff involved in the support center in relation to specific moments that would trouble users to complete the electronic census card;
  - In the period from 25 August to 3 September 2021, one-day trainings of enumerators and controllers were conducted on a schedule approved by the directors of the RSO in halls provided by the municipal administrations, in strict compliance with the guidelines of the Ministry of Health for the prevention of the spread of COVID-19.

In addition to the basic training during the whole preparation period till the start of the census,

the NSI HO organized dozens of online sessions with all “Statistical surveys” Departments to discuss and give further clarifications regarding the Census questionnaires for building, dwelling and population № 2 and the schemes of the census sections, including issues related to the appointment of positions in the IS "Census", as well as other issues.

- **Logistics.** The enumerators and controllers were provided with all necessary auxiliary and protective materials - protective masks, disinfectants, pens, bags, archive boxes, and folders. The protective equipment fully met the requirements of the Ministry of Health. By August 15, 2021, and before the start of the trainings in the “Statistical surveys” Departments, the printed census cards, instructions for its filling and the officiant ID cards of the enumerators, controllers and attendants, as well as training materials were delivered. All enumerator and controller applicants were screened for a clean criminal record and restrictive circumstances. In the period from 16 August to 3 September 2021, the directors of the RSO, based on the protocols for the selection of enumerators and controllers received from the Municipal census commissions, signed civil contracts with the proposed and verified persons under the Obligations and Contracts Act. The municipal administrations provided the delivery of the census materials and the premises necessary for the census activities.
- **Electronic census.** The electronic census started at 00:00 on September 7th and lasted until 24:00 on September 30th. All Bulgarian and foreign citizens, who usually reside on the territory of the country, had the opportunity to fill in the electronic census card. [The electronic census page was available at https://e-census2021.bg](https://e-census2021.bg) (either through the NSI website - <https://nsi.bg>, or from the census 2021 information page <https://census2021.bg>). Between September 7 and 9, the information site through which the system was accessed was repeatedly attacked with huge malicious traffic. This made it extremely difficult to access the data entry application, which in turn led to a decrease in users willing to participate in the electronic census. As a result, only 34% of the population of the country as of 31.12.2020 was enumerated electronically.
- **Census by enumerators.** The census by enumerators was carried out between 18 September and 10 October by visiting the dwellings and households by the enumerators and filling in a paper census card. To ensure the organization of the census process, an Instruction for current control of the fieldwork was developed and approved by the Central Census Commission with Protocol № 8/30.07.2021. A number of difficulties caused by the spread of COVID-19, the period of the year related to population mobility, the numerous political elections in the country, giving rise to general instability and a crisis in institutional trust accompanied the census by enumerators.
- **Sampling surveys.** Pursuant to Art. 37, item 1 and 2 of Population and Housing Census Act 2021, the NSI conducted two sample surveys - Population Migration And Migration Survey and Population Fertility survey simultaneously with the Census.
- **Control surveys.** Pursuant to Art. 38 of Population and Housing Census Act 2021, the NSI conducted sample control surveys to verify the accuracy of the registered data and the completeness of the scope of the observation units. The main purpose of the control survey of the accuracy of the registered data is to assess the information obtained during the 2021 Census in terms of the accuracy of the entered data on population and housing. The main purpose of the control survey of the scope completeness of the observation units is to establish the errors made in the scope of the population and the housing fund as of 07.09.2021 and the probable sources of these errors.
- **Support center, support points and temporary census points.** A support center has been set up to assist those taking advantage of the electronic census. More than 400 employees from the Central Office and the RSOs of the NSI were responding to the citizens between September 7 and October 10 during the population and the housing fund census. Through the

period of the electronic census, the NSI opened support centers for assistance to citizens in completing the electronic census card. On the spot, the citizens were enumerated electronically on devices provided by the institute, and they received assistance from the experts of the SSD and the Central Office of the NSI in the process of filling the online card. During the census with an enumerator in accordance with Art. 7, para. 5, item 4 of Population and Housing Census Act 2021 NSI opened temporary census points for assistance of citizens, as well as enumerators and controllers on issues related to the census.

- **Communication campaign.** Together with all activities for the preparation, organization and conduct of the 2021 Census, a large-scale communication campaign was conducted.

## **Demographic statistics**

In the field of demographic statistics, in 2021 all statistical surveys included in the NSP were conducted according to schedule. 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 2020 were published and submitted to the EC in accordance with the deadlines set.

Work on the preparation of data pursuant to Art. 6 of Regulation № 862/2007 of the European Parliament and of the Council on “Statistics on permanent residence permits and permanent resident citizens from third countries”.

In the field of migration statistics and international protection, in 2021 the scope of the data provided to the European Commission (Eurostat) under Articles 6 and 7 of Regulation (EU) 2020/851 of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EC) № 862/2007, sourced from the Ministry of Interior, was extended. The NSI has started validating and providing Eurostat data under Article 4 for statistics on international protection, sourced by the State Agency for Refugees.

In 2021, in connection with the emergency epidemiological situation in the country caused by the spread of COVID-19 and the need for timely information on the total mortality in the country, the NSI continued, as in 2020, the weekly publication of mortality data on the NSI website and the weekly provision of data on deaths to the EC. In 2021, the NSI also started publishing quarterly press releases on the total mortality rate in the country.

In 2021 the NSI implemented the activities under the project “Statistics of European Cities”. The aim of the project is to provide reliable, complete and geographically and temporally comparable information on the urbanized territories of the European continent by collecting a large amount of data from various statistical surveys. Bulgaria has been involved in data provision since 2004.

## **Labour market**

In 2021, the implementation of the additional module to the Labour Force Survey - “Situation of migrants and their direct descendants on the labour market” began, as well as the preparation for an additional module “Professional Skills”. The methodological work on the implementation of Regulation (EU) 2019/1700 of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a common framework for European statistics on individuals and households has been completed by implementing a new toolkit for labour force survey. Preparations for the use of a new method of data collection using a computer and exploring the possibilities of using administrative data on the variable “gross wages” have begun.

The work on a project of the European Commission “Labour Force Survey - Additional Module 2020 - Accidents at work and other health problems related to work” has been completed.

In the field of statistical information provided by enterprises on wages and labour costs, the new Business Cycles information system was implemented. The four-year Monitoring of Labor Costs 2020 was carried out in accordance with Council Regulation № 530/1999 and Commission Regulation № 1737/2005. The work on the regular annual and short-term surveys of employment and labour costs and the regular receipt of information from the administrative register of insured persons by the National Social Security Institute, which helps to improve the quality and completeness of the statistics on employees and the average wage.

In 2021, the NSI experts in the field of labour market statistics participated in the following working groups:

- Eurostat working groups on labour market statistics and statistics on wages and labour costs;
- Working Group to develop a National Employment Action Plan in 2022.

### **Education and lifelong learning**

The regular research of higher education, PhD students and vocational training in the PEC (Professional Educational Center) was conducted according to the set deadlines. As of this year, data on pre-school and school education were prepared entirely using the administrative registers of the Ministry of Education and Science. In accordance with the requirements of national and European legislation under Commission Regulation (EU) № 912/2013 on the production and development of statistics in the field of education and lifelong learning, data were provided on joint questionnaires of Eurostat, OECD and UNESCO on financial and non-financial indicators in the field of education statistics.

In 2021, a sample survey was conducted in enterprises on “Monitoring of continuing vocational training of employees” (CVTS6) as required by Regulation (EU) No 1153/2014 of the European Commission. To facilitate the respondents and the act of processing and to improve the quality of statistical information, an online system for data entry directly by the respondents was used. Questions were also added to assess the impact of the pandemic and restrictive measures on the organization of continuing vocational training.

Preparations have begun for the household sample survey “Adult Education and Training Survey” (AES2022). The survey shall be carried out every six years in all Member States of the European Union on a unified methodology. It is the main source of information on the situation and trends in lifelong learning, characteristics of education and training, educational experience, educational outcomes, barriers to participation. In order to improve the quality of the data, move to a new method of data collection and comply with the legal provisions governing the survey at the European level, an agreement was signed with the European Commission (Eurostat).

### **Culture**

All regular surveys in the field of culture (surveys on museums, performing arts, broadcasting, publishing) were carried out according to the announced deadlines and methodology based on the recommendations of UNESCO and Eurostat.

Over the past year, NSI experts have once again participated actively in the work of a Working Group in Eurostat to develop a pan-European methodological framework for cultural statistics, including concepts and applicable definitions. Specific questionnaires related to the area of publishing activity were completed in order to identify statistical information for which statistics are already available in many countries and could potentially be more harmonized at the pan-European level.

### **Public health and healthy and safe working conditions**

In 2021, pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 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 regular statistical surveys providing information in the various fields of public health statistics.

In accordance with the requirements of Regulation (EU) No 328/2011, the individual data for 2019 on deaths and stillbirths for reasons at the level of the fourth sign of the International Classification of Diseases, X revision, were submitted and validated.

Data from the joint questionnaires of Eurostat, the OECD and the World Health Organization on financial and non-financial indicators in the field of health statistics were provided. In connection with the preparation of legislation implementing Regulation (EC) №1338 / 2008 with regard to statistics on non-financial indicators in the field of health statistics, methodological work and interinstitutional coordination of the indicators provided for by the Member States have been carried out.

During the year, Eurostat validated the data from the European Health Interview Survey conducted in implementation of Commission Regulation (EU) 2018/255. The final data from the study were published in a timely manner.

In connection with the dissemination of COVID-19, the demand for statistical information in the field of health statistics from government institutions, non-governmental organizations, research teams and citizens has increased this year. For this purpose, data and methodological explanations were prepared in time for all requests from users received by the NSI.

**National Health Data and eHealth Directorate** at the National Center for Public Health and Analysis at the Ministry of Health performed all 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.

### **Incomes and living conditions**

In 2021, the Household Budget Survey, which assesses household income, expenditure and consumption, was conducted according to the deadlines set in the NSP.

Last year, the survey “Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (SILC)” was carried out under the new Framework Regulation (EU) 2019/1700 of the European Parliament and of the Council for Household Research. In addition to the standard target variables, the survey included additional variables on government financial assistance from schemes related to the COVID-19 crisis in 2020. The variables of the 2021 Health module, aimed at collecting additional information on the financial burden related to the cost of medical and dental services, frequency of visits and consultations with a doctor and specialist, performing physical activities at work and outside of work, calculation of body mass index, were also included. A question was added to assess the direct or indirect impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health of respondents. Register 2 included also questions from module 2021 related to children's health, remote learning at school due to COVID-19 and questions from the ad-hoc module on the conditions of children in separated families.

The fieldwork was carried out between April and June 2021. Preliminary data with survey results were sent to Eurostat in December 2021, in accordance with the new information timeliness requirements.

In order to improve the scope and quality of income statistics in 2021, the use of NSSI 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 for persons receiving benefits and assistance under the Social Insurance Code (Register of benefits). To supplement the missing information on income and validate the data in the survey "Statistics on income and living conditions" from the NSSI, data were used on insured persons, from the Social Assistance

Agency - for persons receiving benefits, and from the NRA for persons submitted an annual tax return.

Work continued on the project "New approaches to data generation for hard-to-reach groups of the population at risk of violation of their rights", funded by the Financial Mechanism of the European Economic Area 2014 - 2021 under the program "Local development, poverty reduction and enhanced inclusion of vulnerable groups". The project is implemented in partnership with the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. The aim of the project is to develop innovative methods and approaches for data collection and adaptation of relevant indicators needed for the formulation and implementation of policies aimed at representatives of vulnerable groups.

In 2021, a large-scale online conference titled "First results and next steps" was organized. Representatives of the European Commission, international organizations, state and local authorities, the scientific community and non-governmental organizations took part. The report "Key Indicators for Social Inclusion and Fundamental Rights in Bulgaria" was presented at the conference - the first in a series of thematic reports prepared within the project. The report addresses eight thematic areas: education; employment; poverty and social exclusion; health; housing conditions; discrimination, harassment and violence; and participation, building cooperation and trust, which are applied at three levels of analysis - national, regional and disaggregated by groups. The study of the social and economic context in which the risks of poverty, social exclusion and violation of fundamental rights may manifest themselves allows the formulation of adequate policies at all levels of government. Work has begun on the next thematic reports, which will provide a more in-depth analysis of the situation of children, Roma, people with disabilities and the elderly in the country.

### **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 2021, the completion of statistical data submission for 2019, under the Basic Module of the System and the Module for pension beneficiaries, has ended. The main module 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 are to 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 NSI provided annual data on revenues and expenditures under schemes 01 to 06 (ESSPROS core module), 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 the Pension Beneficiaries Module.

In September, early estimates were prepared and sent to Eurostat for the social protection expenditures incurred in the country by ESSPROS functions relevant for 2020. The submission of early assessments under the Basic Module of the system is a pilot submission and is not the subject of implementation of a specific Regulation - the assessments are sent voluntarily by the countries willing to participate.

### **Crime and Justice**

In 2021, the NSI conducted regular statistical surveys on crimes, accused and convicted persons (including convicted juveniles) and the activities of local commissions for combating the anti-social behaviour of minors.

During the year the implementation of the activities under the project "Survey on Gender-Based Violence - full implementation" continued in the implementation of the Grant Agreement with



the European Commission. The main goal is to provide comparable statistics on the prevalence of gender-based violence in European Union countries. The survey is conducted in the Member States according to a uniform methodology and harmonized tools, developed and approved by Eurostat and in strict compliance with the requirements of the national laws of the countries. The focus of the survey is on the prevalence of violence among women aged 18 - 74, covering about 8,000 women across the country living in ordinary households. The implementation of the project will provide reliable, comparable and representative data on the spread of the phenomenon at the national and European levels.

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

the joint UN/Eurostat questionnaire, administrative 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 International Classification of Crimes for UN statistical purposes;

statistics under Article 11 of Directive 2014/42 / EU of the European Parliament and of the Council on the provision and confiscation of the proceeds of crime in the European Union,

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.

### **3.2. Macroeconomic statistics**

#### **Annual financial accounts and Quarterly accounts**

In 2021 the work on the methodological development and improvement of the data quality continued in order to increase the degree of harmonization with the EC regulations - annual data on GDP and its components by production, income method and end-use method; national financial accounts; data on employment and man-hours worked; regional accounts; quarterly and annual accounts by institutional sector.

For non-financial national accounts, a methodological revision was carried out in order to facilitate EU requirements and improve the quality of the time series of annual and quarterly data for the period 1995 - 2020.

In 2021, work continued on the development and improvement of national financial accounts. Pursuant to the Eurostat program for the provision of data in the field of national accounts in 2021, data for 2020 were developed and submitted. The entire time series of data for the period 1995-2019 was revised.

#### **Government Finance Statistics**

Efforts in the field of Government Finance Statistics were focused on further methodological development and improving the quality of data.

The work on reporting the deficit and debt notification tables of the institutional sector “General Government” twice a year continued - preliminary and final data. According to the ESA 2010, data for the period 1997 - 2020 were developed and 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 on the basis of EU Directive 85/2011, the work on providing information on an annual basis on non-performing loans to the 'General Government’ sector continued; 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 Program for providing data in the field of government finance statistics, data were developed and provided according to ESA 2010:

- Table 2. Main macroeconomic indicators for the institutional sector “General government” for 2020, as well as revised data for the period 1995 - 2019;
- Table 9. Taxes and social contribution by sectors of “General government” for 2020, as well as revised data for the period 1995 - 2019;
- Table 11. Expenditures of the institutional sector “General government” by functions - total and by sub-sectors at the 2nd level according to the COFOG classification for 2020, as well as revised data for the period 1995 - 2019;
- Table 25. Quarterly non-financial accounts of the institutional sector “General government” for 2020, as well as revised data for the period 1999 - 2019.

### **Monitoring Own Resources**

In 2021, in the field of own resources monitoring, GNI data by introduced EC reserves and routine revisions of inputs were changed and data for 2021 on the weighted average VAT rate were developed.

In 2021, in connection with the implementation of the Own Resources System, a Decision of the Council of Ministers № 229 of 20.03.2021 was adopted to determine the responsible institutions in the Republic of Bulgaria for the implementation of the EU own resources system. The participation of experts in the field of environmental statistics was by providing data on the amount of plastic packaging placed on the market at the national level. The data are necessary to fulfil the country's obligations to implement the European Union's own resources system.

### **Consumer Prices**

The main priority in the work 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 2021, consumer price indices were produced according to Eurostat's methodological recommendations on HICP production in the context of the COVID-19 crisis.

The work on improving the methodology, construction and production of consumer price indices in connection with the harmonization with the European and international standards continued. In 2021, the sample of outlets was updated, the selection of goods and services included in the consumer basket was improved, and the scope of some sub-indices was expanded. The system of statistical weights has been improved through the expanded use of information from additional sources.

Based on the regular quarterly statistical surveys of housing prices, the housing price indices in the Republic of Bulgaria are calculated. Work continued on incorporating methodological improvements, optimizing data collection and production processes, and introducing new data sources in the area of housing price indices and real estate indicators.

The NSI continued its participation in the Program for European PPP Comparisons, which is part of the current EC statistics program and coordinated by Eurostat/OECD, achieving the goals set in the European Work Plan for Calculating PPP in 2021.

In 2021, the NSI conducted the planned six price surveys, two of which were on goods and services on harmonized European consumer baskets for the groups: E21-1 “Food, beverages and tobacco” and E21-2 “Clothing, footwear and personal accessories”. 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 machines and equipment. Additional national statistical information was prepared and sent to Eurostat in a timely manner.

In this thematic area in 2021 the NSI experts actively participated in the work of the following working groups: Eurostat Working Party on Price Statistics;

- Eurostat Working Group on Price Statistics;
- Eurostat Working Group on Real Estate Statistics;
- Eurostat Working Group on Purchasing Power Parities.

In 2021, NSI experts participated in the following training and seminars:

- ESTP training course on “Using R in official statistics: model-based estimates”;
- ESTP training course on “Transition to register-based statistical systems”;
- ESTP training course on “Introduction to Big Data - 3 webinars”;
- ESTP training course on “ESA Application for the introduction of a webinar methodology”;
- Training course on “DC-1 Word Processing (ECDL) – basic”, organized by IPA;
- Training course on “DC-2 Word Processing (ECDL) for advanced”, organized by IPA;
- Training course on “DC-9 Collaborative work in the digital environment”, organized by IPA;
- Training course on “DC-10 Skills for working with presentation software”, organized by IPA;
- Video conference “Scanned data and web scraping”, organized by Eurostat;
- Video conference “Commercial Real Estate Statistics”, organized by Eurostat;
- Video conference “PPP Working Meeting”, organized by Eurostat.

### **3.3. Business Statistics**

#### **Annual Business Statistics**

All activities for conducting regular surveys included in the NSP in the field of SBS, statistics of foreign-controlled enterprises (FATS), foreign direct investment, acquisition costs and acquired tangible fixed assets, statistics of financial and non-financial enterprises and annual specific surveys on economic activities, as well as on the monthly and annual monitoring of the production and sales of industrial products were performed with high quality and on time.

The main priority in the field of business statistics was the improvement of the tools and methodology for the reporting year 2021 in compliance with 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 rules pursuant to Regulation (EU) № 2019/2152.

All tasks on data processing and provision for international organizations for the national statistical publications on concluded contracts, agreements and requests for the provision of statistical information in the indicated areas were performed with high quality and in time.

NSI experts participated in online meetings and written consultations with the Member States on issues related to data quality and new data requirements provided to Eurostat in the relevant fields.

In 2021, experts from the National statistical institute participated in the activities of the Monitoring committee of OP “Innovation and Competitiveness” 2014 - 2020 and OP “Initiative for Small and Medium Enterprises” 2014 - 2020 (MC of OPIC and OPISME 2014 - 2020), as well as in the thematic working group on the development of the Program for competitiveness and innovation in enterprises for the programming period 2021 - 2027.

In 2021, the NSI continued work on the project “Global value chains - International Sourcing Survey” in the implementation of a grant agreement with the European Commission, in accordance with the revised methodology and tools of the module, that is included as mandatory three-year monitoring in the EU Regulation № 2019/2152 of the European Parliament and of the

Council. The project collected data from enterprises on measuring the impact of global value chains in the Republic of Bulgaria; identification of business functions that are moved to another company in the country or abroad (domestic and international sourcing); assessment of lost or created jobs because of international sourcing. The project data are to be processed and submitted to Eurostat by the end of March 2022.

In 2021, in the field of national monitoring of Industrial products in kind according to the nomenclature of industrial products (PRODCOM), the systematic approach to improve the scope, accuracy and quality of primary statistical information by updating the terms of reference was kept.

Activities included expanding mandatory inbound control and requirements at the enterprise level; increasing the comparative analysis and control for completeness and consistency of the data with the results of other statistical surveys in the NSI; detailed comparison with data from previous periods; maximum use of administrative sources in the statistical process, guarantee of accuracy and quality of primary data.

The analysis of the obtained results showed an increase in the collection of quality, reliable, significant, up-to-date and internationally comparable statistical information in the field of PRODCOM statistics.

In 2021, work continued on the implementation of the new requirements for PRODCOM data in Regulation (EU) № 2019/2152 of the European Parliament and of the Council, related to the provision of comparable and consistent data on subcontracted products as a component of sales of EU level. In this regard, the national practice has been aligned with the general methodological guidelines set out in the PRODCOM module of the Regulation.

NSI experts took part in online meetings and discussions with the Member States on issues related to changes in the collection method, processing and reporting of toll manufacturing within the EU; changes in the information technology system for transmission and validation of input data files; the handling of confidentiality and the production and distribution of PRODCOM product units.

Timely, reliable and available online, free of charge statistical information on CPA product aggregates was provided to users, with accompanying metadata, enabling the correct interpretation of the results, while maintaining statistical secrecy.

In 2021, in the field of monthly PRODCOM monitoring, the focus was mainly on improving the activities related to the implementation of current tasks of monthly production and dissemination of information on production and domestic sales of basic industrial products. The main priority was the commissioning of a new online Business Cycles Information System. NSI experts actively participated in the development and testing of the system. Special attention was paid to the problems related to the quality of primary data and increasing the level of efficiency and accuracy in the implementation of information processes for providing information - input, correction and output.

### **Short-term Business Statistics**

All regular NSP surveys (sales in industry, construction, trade and services; activities of non-financial corporations; producer prices in industry and services; producer prices for major repairs and improvements of dwellings and residential buildings; costs for acquisition of fixed assets; permitted and started new construction of buildings) 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 that were published at a national level and provided to Eurostat.

In 2021, the calculation of quality indicators (Average Revision and Average Absolute Revision) in trade and services began.

For the first time, turnover indices on a group level were published for the section "Sale of cars and motorcycles, maintenance and repair" and the section "Wholesale trade, except motor vehicles and motorcycles" at current prices.

The transmission to Eurostat of calendar adjusted data on the Turnover Indices in Industry has started.

In 2021, the work on evaluation, improvement of the methodology, improvement of the quality of the STS data and maintenance of the comparability of the time series continued. The samples were updated to ensure better representation and to reflect changes in the structure of non-financial corporations.

For another year, 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.

Work continued on adapting the national statistical production system to the requirements of the new Framework Regulation on the Integration of Business Statistics (FRIBS) in the field of STS.

In 2021, NSI experts took part in the following meetings organized by Eurostat:

- Online meeting on metadata requirements for 2020, organized by Eurostat;
- Seminar on "Challenges for the official statistics during the COVID-19 pandemic";

In 2021, the participation of experts from STS and Transport statistics in a working group, part of the Time Series Analysis Center of Excellence (TSACE), continued.

## **Energy Statistics**

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

In 2021, experts in the field of energy statistics took part in conciliation procedures and consultations on:

- Draft Commission Regulation amending Regulation (EC) № 1099/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council on energy statistics, as regards updates to annual and short-term monthly energy statistics;
- National Plan for Reconstruction and Sustainability of the Republic of Bulgaria;
- Framework position on the Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Directive (EU) 2018/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council, Regulation (EU) 2018/1999 of the European Parliament and of the Council and Directive 98/70/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources and repealing Council Directive (EU) 2015/652;
- Draft Framework Position of the Republic of Bulgaria on the proposal for revision of Directive 2012/27 / EU on energy efficiency;
- Action Plan for European Green Deal Statistics;
- Draft Framework Position of the Republic of Bulgaria on the Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the Establishment of a Social Climate Fund;
- The National Environmental Strategy;
- The National Development Program "Bulgaria 2030";

- National report on the state and protection of the environment in the Republic of Bulgaria.

In 2021, a meeting was organized with the Energy Distribution Companies regarding the future reporting of data pursuant to the new requirements of Regulation № 1099/2008 on energy sector statistics on the consumption of solar photovoltaic energy from their production and energy consumption by data centers.

The toolkit in the field of energy statistics has been updated in line with the latest amendments to Regulation (EU) 1099/2008 on energy sector statistics.

In 2021, in connection with the future monitoring of the Energy Union and the European Green Deal and in compliance with the requirements of Regulation (EU) № 1099/2008 on energy sector statistics, work began on the project "Energy Statistics: Support of the Energy Union and further disaggregation of final energy consumption in its part on package № 1" "Disaggregation of final energy consumption statistics in the transport sector".

In this thematic area in 2021 the NSI experts joined the work of the following working groups:

- Eurostat's WG Energy Statistics,
- WG DIMESA of Eurostat,
- WG14 "Energy" at the Ministry of Energy.

Participated in training of:

- Eurostat - Working with IT applications for energy balances, overall energy balance and share of renewable energy and sectoral shares,
- Institute of Public Administration - Advanced Spreadsheets.

## Transport Statistics

In the field of transport statistics, the main priority in 2021 was to conduct all annual and short-term surveys included in the NSP. These were implemented with high quality and on time, in accordance with national and European legislation.

The collection, processing and transmission to Eurostat of rail transport data 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 on data collection for cargo and passengers. In 2021, in addition to the basic data sets, regional data on domestic and international rail services, which are collected every five years, were provided in accordance with current legislation.

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 research in the field of air transport and river and sea activities ports. The beneficial cooperation between the NSI and the two agencies has led to an increase in the quality of the data obtained through a more detailed verification of the data.

During the year the Executive Agency "Maritime Administration" continued the work on the regular preparation and provision of statistical information on the activities of river and sea ports. The collection and provision of statistics were carried out within the time limits and in accordance with the specific nomenclatures and reporting forms provided for in Regulation (EU) №974/2018 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 4 July 2018 on statistics on the carriage of goods by domestic and Directive 2009/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 6 May 2009 on statistical returns in respect of the 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) №1172 /98, Regulations (EC) №91/2003

and (EC) EO1365/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards of the establishment of NST 2007 as a uniform classification of goods transported by certain modes of transport.

The information submitted by the ports and port terminals covers 100% of the activity of the sea and river ports of the Republic of Bulgaria, related to cargo and passengers handling.

In 2021, the testing of the new SDMX formats for all surveys in the field of transport statistics continued, according to the instructions and deadlines of Eurostat. The new SDMX formats should be implemented in the next reporting year.

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, in accordance with the preliminary general condition 7 “Statistical Systems” of the Partnership Agreement. The NSI also took part in the WG for the preparation of OP “Transport Connectivity” 2021 - 2027.

### **Tourism Statistics**

In 2021 the activities of the NSI related to the conduction of regular statistical surveys in the field of tourism continued and the tasks of providing statistical information on the development of tourism in the country regarding the activities of accommodation, travel of Bulgarians abroad and visits of foreigners to Bulgaria, tourist trips and expenditures for tourism of the population and satellite accounts for tourism. The monthly and quarterly observations were carried out in accordance with the recommendations of the World Tourism Organization and in accordance with the requirements of Regulation (EU) № 692/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council on European Tourism Statistics, Commission Regulation (EU) № 1051/2011 implementing Regulation (EU) № 692/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council on European statistics on tourism as regards the structure of quality reports and data transmission and Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2019/1681 amending Regulation (EU) ) № 692/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council on European statistics on tourism.

In 2021, the NSI continued to conduct monthly monitoring in the field of tourism as an industry that is one of the most affected by the crisis. Accurate and timely information on the state and development of their business during the epidemiological situation in the country was collected through a survey of accommodation managers. The data obtained from the specially organized observations were presented in graphs and press releases.

In connection with the new Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2019/1681 amending Regulation (EU) № 692/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council on European Tourism Statistics, the Accommodation IS has been updated as regards the transmission of annual data. in Eurostat.

NSI experts took part in Eurostat online working groups - WG on Satellite Accounts in Tourism and WG on Tourism Statistics, in a Global Forum on tourism statistics, knowledge and policies, as well as in the online course of ESTP - “Satellite Accounts for Tourism”.

In 2021, the NSI continued its participation in voluntary reporting of data by months, in connection with Eurostat's initiative to collect additional data on overnight stays in accommodation by Bulgarians and foreigners by country of citizenship. The aim of the initiative is to monitor the impact of COVID-19 on tourism, as well as the resumption of tourist travel by sharing “mirror” information on tourist flows between European countries. Data were collected and provided to Eurostat in accordance with Annex II to Regulation (EU) 692/2011.

### **Business Register**

In 2021, business register statistics was guided by the understanding that high-quality business statistics depend on the high quality of the statistical units register. An important part of the work

in this direction was the launch of a project to develop a new information system - IS "Statistical Business Register", meeting the current methodological requirements of current regulations for business registers, developed with modern technology and solutions.

During the year, the NSI continued to perform the activities in the field of business registers, necessary for servicing the statistical activity.

In order to provide and maintain a framework for all statistical surveys in the NSI, the Business Register received daily data from the administrative sources Trade Register and Register of NPLE (non-profit legal entities) and Bulstat Register, and the data on the number of insured persons from the Register of Insured Persons, annually and monthly.

The statistical units and their characteristics were regularly updated, using information from both the 2020 annual statistical surveys and external administrative sources.

The register of statistical units continues 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 statistical observations.

The register of statistical units is used as the main source of information for the preparation of business demography of enterprises, which describes the life cycle of enterprises and presents data on the number of active enterprises, the number of new enterprises, the relative share of surviving enterprises, the number of non-surviving enterprises, as well as data on the change of their purpose at a certain moment.

Registration and bankruptcy data of legal units were sent to Eurostat on a quarterly basis.

Data from the survey of the family business in the Republic of Bulgaria were processed and published.

In 2021, a substantial part of the business register's activity was related to the exchange of data with Eurostat, in accordance with the requirement for harmonized data. In this regard, data from the enterprise group report from the annual report of enterprises for 2020 were processed and formed Enterprise Groups - basis and source of data for updating the Eurogroup register. The NSI provides Eurostat with an aggregate of Bulgarian legal units, members of enterprise groups at the European level, as well as identification of foreign legal units participating in multinational enterprise groups at the national level. According to Eurostat's schedule, the NSI sends data on units and connections describing multinational enterprise groups for the 2020 cycle.

The scope of RSU in relation to the different types of units - legal and statistical and due mandatory characteristics was studied.

In 2021, NSI experts participated in the following Eurostat working groups:

- "Business Demography" Working Group;
- "Business Registers and Statistical Units" Working Group.

The National Statistical Institute participates in Eurostat activities for profiling Multinational enterprise groups as a profiling and partner country.

In 2021, the NSI experts worked on the following EC projects:

- "Processing of regional annual data reflecting demographic events for enterprises";
- "Registers and Multinational Enterprises in Business Statistics".

### **Statistics on foreign trade in goods**

In 2021, the main priority areas in the field of foreign trade statistics were: expanded use of administrative sources of information; providing timely and reliable statistical information and



improving the quality of data; 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 the needs of users of foreign trade data; participation in the work of Eurostat on the discussion of strategic issues concerning the future development of statistics on international trade in goods.

NSI experts were working 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 to make more complete use of the data collected by the Customs Agency from customs declarations. NSI 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 2021, the NSI continued to work on improving the quality of primary data declared by traders. The NSI experts made both direct contacts with the Intrastat operators and contacts with the National Revenue Agency. As a result some inaccuracies in the 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 2022, as well as the types of data subject to declaration.

In order to facilitate the users of statistical information when publishing the new monthly data, the NSI continued to prepare and publish two press releases per month - respectively for trade with third countries and for trade within the EU. The maintenance of the means for storage and dissemination of data on foreign trade statistics with goods continued through the Foreign Trade Information System, which gives users direct access to more detailed data than those published in the press releases.

In response to the emerging needs of consumers in 2021, the NSI provided Eurostat with additional data on business characteristics of enterprises, prepared by wider and more efficient use of available data without increasing the burden on respondents. 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, MIE, Ministry of Agriculture, Eurostat, UN and IMF on the production and provision of monthly detailed data and their updates - were fulfilled in a timely manner.

In 2021 the NSI together with the NRA prepared a draft law amending the Law on Statistics of Intra-Community Trade in Goods pursuant to 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 establishing technical specifications and rules pursuant to Regulation (EU) № 2019/2152. In accordance with the changes introduced to the new European regulations, the NRA prepared a draft amendment to the Ordinance on the implementation of the Intrastat system, in which NSI experts also took part.

The NRA continued its efforts to improve the quality of data declared by Intrastat operators. The Intrastat Directorate controls the quality and reliability of the information collected on intra-Community trade in goods. In this regard, it continued its activity on comparisons of the declared data on the Intrastat system with the data available in other administrative sources: VAT Act and VIES. In order to improve the quality of the collected data, the NRA deepened and expanded the activities for comparing the Intrastat data with the data available in the Fiscal

Control Information System. Analyses and comparisons were made on a monthly basis on the main risk branches of goods with the data from the FC system.

The NRA continued its efforts to improve the quality of the data declared by Intrastat operators. Intrastat Directorate controls the quality and reliability of the information collected on intra-Community trade in goods. In this regard, it continued its activity on comparisons of the declared Intrastat data with the available data in other administrative sources: VATA and VIES. In order to improve the quality of the data collected, the NRA deepened and expanded the activities of comparison of Intrastat data with the data available in the Fiscal Control Information System. Analyses and comparisons were carried out on a monthly basis on the main risk sectors of goods with the data from the FC system.

The Intrastat Directorate maintains and updates the register of taxpayers under the Intrastat system on the basis of the declared VAT data. The employees of the Intrastat Directorate continued the work on improvement and development of the Intrastat Information System, which has a wide range of users: Intrastat operators and employees of the National Revenue Agency. In the field of data collection activities of the NRA for intra-Community trade in goods, over 120 thousand declarations were accepted and validated during the year (65 thousand declarations on the flow of arrivals and 50 thousand declarations on the flow of dispatches). The number of registered Intrastat operators in 2021 exceeds 10 thousand persons, of which 7 thousand in the flow of arrivals and 6 thousand in the flow of dispatches.

### **3.4. Statistics on agriculture, forestry and fisheries**

In the implementation of the “Strategy for the Development of EU Agricultural Statistics until 2020 and beyond”, a reform of the legislation was undertaken in order to simplify it and include data reporting on a voluntary basis.

In 2021, discussions on the development of new and updating of existing legislation in the field of statistics on agriculture, forestry and fisheries continued within the Director Group for Agricultural Statistics, the Director Group for Statistics and Environmental Accounts and the expert working groups of Eurostat. NSI experts took active part in the exchange of views between Eurostat and the Member States on the proposals for regulations in the field of agricultural statistics.

The activity of the Ministry of Agriculture under the NSP for 2021 is carried out by the Agrostatistics Department of the Directorate General Agriculture and Regional Policy, which is a body of statistics in accordance with paragraph 2 of Article 3 of the Law on Statistics.

In 2021, through the information system for Agrostatistics established in the Ministry of Agriculture, the control and processing of data from the census of agricultural holdings in the Republic of Bulgaria in 2020 continued in accordance with the requirements of Regulation (EU) 2018/1091 of the European Parliament and of the Council. Preliminary results of the census of agricultural holdings were published on the website of the Ministry of Agriculture. Validation of farm data and their transmission to Eurostat in the specified technical format is forthcoming.

In 2021, meetings of the regional commissions for the census of agricultural holdings were held to adopt their final reports, as well as of the Central Commission for the Census of Agricultural Holdings to report the results to the Ministry and the NSI.

According to the National Statistical Program, in 2021 the Agrostatistics Department conducted 20 statistical surveys in the field of statistics on crop production, animal husbandry, land use, the activity of processing enterprises and farm incomes.

In the field of crop statistics in 2021, the data from the conducted survey for the harvest of 2020 on the areas, average yields and production of field crops, vegetables, vineyards and fruit species were collected and published. Information was also collected on the use of seeds, size of the areas under not-fruit bearing perennials, the agro-technical measures applied, as well as the

production realization by directions and others. The survey on wheat and barley yields was conducted before the harvest of 2021, along with a survey on the activities of enterprises processing fruits and vegetables in 2020.

In 2021, a survey on land cover and land use in Bulgaria was conducted (BANSIK 2021). Data were obtained for agricultural areas, including major crops at the level of six statistical regions (NUTS 2).

In the field of livestock statistics, the results of the survey on the number of farm animals in Bulgaria as of November 1, 2020, have been published, within which information was collected on the number of cattle, pigs and small cattle, by species and categories, on production and its realization - milk and animals for slaughter. The data on beekeeping in Bulgaria in 2020 has been published. The results of the survey of the state of poultry farming in 2020 have been conducted and published. At the end of 2021, the data from the survey of farm animals as of 01.11.2021 in 2021 are collected.

In 2021, monthly and annual information was collected on the activities of slaughterhouses, dairies and hatcheries. As part of the survey on the activity of red and white meat slaughterhouses for 2020, information was collected on the production of meat from certain animal species and categories, according to the EU legislation. The survey on milk processing enterprise in 2020 provided information on the processed milk, the produced dairy products and their sale (in kind and value).

In the field of agricultural price statistics and economic accounts, the Agricultural Accounting Information System in 2021, collected data on farms from the selection plan for the reporting year 2020 and is currently collecting information on the reporting year 2021 for farms that do not keep accounts. Pursuant to Commission Regulation (EU) 2015/220, the subsidy form has been updated. According to the terms of the out-of-warranty maintenance contract, the Agricultural Information Accounting System was upgraded for data entry, control, validation and analysis of the results at the national and regional levels.

The results of the survey of the structure of vineyards in Bulgaria in 2020, together with a quality report, were processed and sent to Eurostat.

The activities under the concluded Grant Agreement by Eurostat for the activity "Quality of the Vineyard Register - 2019\_BG\_QVR" continue. Together with the Executive Agency on Vine and Wine (EAVW), the activities of the project updating the vineyard register continued. The overall objective of the project is to improve the quality of the vineyard register, which will lead to the following specific objectives: ensuring accessibility to the data in the register; improving the content of the vineyard register and its scope; improving the status of vineyard statistics; facilitating the availability of data in the register; improving the content of the vineyard register and its scope; improving the status of vineyard statistics; facilitating the availability of vineyard statistics. The collection of the data for the register and the reduction of the cost of doing so; an improvement in the quality of data management in the register. The project has prepared a technical assignment for launching a public procurement.

In 2021, the renovation of the website of the Ministry of Agriculture continued, periodically supplementing and updating the metadata and methodological notes on agricultural research conducted by the Agrostatics Department. Ministry of Agriculture by topic and by date. Continue the publication of public information in an open format of the Open Data Portal.

The results of the observations carried out by the Agrostatics Department were published regularly in the specialized newsletters on the website of the Ministry of Agriculture, in the annual editions of the NSI - Statistical Yearbook, Statistical Reference Book, in the electronic review of statistical information. A reference with data for the period from 2000 to 2020 and data from the Farm Accountancy Data Network for the period from 2005 to 2019.

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 2021, data were developed and sent to Eurostat:

- annual data on economic accounts for agriculture - second assessment of farm income for 2020, final data for 2020 and first assessment of farm income for 2021, in accordance with Regulation (EC) No 138/2004;
- annual data on regional economic accounts for 2019 (NUTS1 and NUTS2 level);
- annual data for 2020 and quarterly and annual data (forecast for 2021) on prices and price indices in agriculture;
- annual data for 2020 on the price of agricultural land and rents in agriculture at national and regional level NUTS1 and NUTS2;
- annual data for 2019 on the European Forest Accounts (EFA);

In 2020, annual data (preliminary and final for 2019) and quarterly data for 2020 (including flash estimates) were developed for the non-financial national accounts for economic activities "Agriculture, forestry and fisheries" at current and comparable prices.

According to the Release Calendar for dissemination of statistical Information, data and press releases on economic accounts in agriculture and prices and indices in agriculture and forestry were prepared and published on the NSI website and in the Infostat IS.

According to the deadlines in the Publishing Plan for 2021, tables with data for publication in the printed and electronic editions of the NSI were prepared.

In 2021, the NSI staff participated in the activities for improving the interaction within the NSS and with the other partner organizations. The experts participated in the work of the Central Commission for Census of Agricultural Holdings, in the thematic working groups for the development of the Strategic Plan for Rural Development and the Program for Maritime Affairs, Fisheries and Aquaculture for the programming period 2021 - 2027, as well as in the work of the monitoring committees of the two programs for the programming period 2014 - 2020.

In connection with the development and reporting of data on indicators for sustainable development Agenda 2030, in 2020 together with the Department of Agrostatics of the Ministry of Agriculture, were developed and sent to the FAO data on some of the sub-indicators on indicator 2.4.1 Share of agricultural area under productive and sustainable agriculture.

### **3.5. Multi-Domain Statistics**

#### **Business trends**

In 2021, the work on all statistical surveys in the field of business trends included in the NSP continued. They are carried out with the financial support of the European Commission under the "Common Harmonized Program of the European Union for Business Monitoring and Consumer Monitoring" under the project "Business Monitoring and Consumer Monitoring".

Through monthly business observations in industry, construction, retail trade and the services sector were provided information on the economic situation in the country. Business surveys show the opinions of managers about 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 observations are made. The indicators obtained from them can be used as components of composite ahead of schedule indicators for analysis and detection of the turning points in the economic cycle.

In 2021, a new 4-year framework agreement was signed with the European Commission (2021-2025) on the project "Business Surveillance and Consumer Surveillance" under the "Common Harmonized Program of the European Union for Business Surveillance and Consumer Surveillance".

In October, as required by the new contract, additional questions on investment plans, investment structure and investment incentives were included in the questionnaires for the industry and services sectors.

Consumer monitoring provided data on some trends in the development of public opinion on major economic processes and phenomena such as the general economic situation in the country, inflation, unemployment, savings, ideas for major expenditures on durable goods and purchase a home or vehicle.

In March, the monitoring of investment activity in industry was conducted. Data on the investments made and the investment plans of enterprises in the sector were obtained. Based on the results of the survey, the percentage change in investments in the current year compared to the previous year and the distribution of expected investments in the current year by main production groups were calculated.

The data users on business trends are the bodies of state institutions, the BNB, the European Commission, the European Central Bank and others.

### **Indicators for monitoring national and European policies**

In 2021, the work on ensuring the provision of statistical data necessary for reporting on the result indicators under the operational programs from the programming period 2014-2020 continued.

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

### **Environmental statistics and accounts**

All activities on performing regular surveys and data production in the field of environmental statistics have been completed.

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.

In 2021, experts on environmental statistics participated in a number of conciliation procedures and consultations at European and international level (for example, amending Regulation (EU) № 691/2011 on European environmental economic accounts, Delegated Regulation on amending Annexes I to V to Regulation (EU) № 691/2011 on the European Economic Accounts for the Environment, Action Plan for European Green Deal Statistics, Implementing Guidelines for the Set of Key Indicators and Statistics Related to the Amendment of Climate Change, Global Consultation on Statistics and Indicators Related to Climate Change, etc.) and at national level (for example, under the National Development Program "Bulgaria 2030", National Report on the State and Protection of the Environment in the Republic of Bulgaria, Some territorial plans for a fair transition to a zero-emission economy by 2050, etc.).

During the preparation of the national inventory in 2020, the implementation of the new methodology for calculating air emissions in accordance with the requirements of the Guidelines for the Inventory of Emissions of Harmful Substances (EMEP / CORINAIR 2019) continued. Based on the recommendations and findings of the international team of experts, taking into account the specifics of key categories of production at national level, recalculations of some emissions for certain key years were performed.

In order to make it easier for respondents in 2021 and in connection with the implementation of the European Green Deal and the circular economy model, the monitoring tools for the Activity of Waste Report and the Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Waste Report were changed.

The work of the NSI in the field of ecosystem accounts and their services is ongoing within the Horizon 2020 project "Mapping and assessment for integrated ecosystem accounting".

In 2021, in connection with the European Green Deal and the forthcoming amendments to Regulation 691/2011 on European Economic Accounts for the Environment, the NSI began work on the following projects: "Improving data on the circular economy - packaging waste and construction waste " and " Establishing access to geospatial data through linking geocoded and statistical data ".

In 2021 the participation of NSI's experts in the following working groups continued:

- WG "DIMESA" of Eurostat;
- WG for environmental accounts at Eurostat;
- WG on Monetary Accounts and Statistics at Eurostat;
- WG on Waste Statistics to Eurostat;
- WG on Water Statistics at Eurostat;
- Interdepartmental WG for preparation of a draft of the "National Program for Reduction of Food and Food Waste Losses 2019 - 2024";
- Interdepartmental WG for the production of the "National Report on the State and Protection of the Environment in 2020"
- Thematic WG for the development of OP "Environment" for the programming period 2021 - 2027.

An active part in trainings organized by the Institute of Public Administration, in the international conference "Use of software " R " in official statistics" and others was taken.

### **Housing statistics**

The "Short-term statistics on residential buildings" quarterly survey was conducted within the set deadlines. Data on newly commissioned residential buildings and dwellings, demolished residential buildings and dwellings were published on the dates announced in the Distribution Calendar.

The Housing Fund survey, which provided data on the housing fund in the country as of 31.12.2020, was conducted within the deadline. The data were published on the date announced in the Distribution Calendar.

### **Regional statistics and geographic information systems**

In 2021, the work continued on the preparation and dissemination of statistics by regional cross section. In order to expand users' access to regional statistical information, a thematic section entitled "Regional Statistics" has been prepared. 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 research methodologies and the requirements for statistical confidentiality. Data from the NUTS 0 - 3 territorial level and according to some indicators - at the level of municipality and settlement were created.

As part of the regional statistics produced by the NSI, the work on preparation and publication of a specialized statistical survey of crisis events for the needs of crisis management at the national, regional and municipal levels was continued. In 2021, a draft methodology was prepared to update the survey on crisis events. The collection and publication of data from the updated survey will commence in 2022. The survey aims to cover national and international needs related to disasters, accidents, incidents and crises in the country. The survey is in line

with the requirements and recommendations of the " Sendai Disaster Risk Reduction Framework 2015-2030 ".

### **Science, technology and innovation**

Statistical surveys on research and development and innovation included in the NPS for 2021 were conducted on time and with the required quality. Data on R&D and innovation indicators were processed and produced in accordance with Eurostat methodological guidelines and the requirements of Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) № 995/2012 on Community statistics in the field of science and technology.

The data produced from the regular statistical surveys for R&D were published on the NSI's website and in the INFOSTAT information system and sent to Eurostat within the set deadlines and in the required technical format (SDMX).

In 2021, the work on providing statistics on R&D and innovation on indicators for monitoring and evaluation of European and national policies, such as the Europe 2020 strategy and the National Development Program of the Republic of Bulgaria "Bulgaria 2020", as well as result indicators under OP "Innovation and Competitiveness 2014 - 2020" and "Science and Education for Smart Growth 2014 - 2020 continued ".

NSI's experts joined the work of the thematic working group for the development of the Program for Research, Innovation and Digitalization for Intelligent Transformation 2021 - 2027, and continued their participation in the monitoring committees of "Innovation and Competitiveness 2014 - 2020 OP " and "Science and Education for Smart Growth 2014-2020".

### **Information society**

In 2021, in the regular annual statistical surveys on the information society the main variables were updated and new indicators were included measuring the introduction of digital technologies in society and the economy.

Statistical data on the use of information and communication technologies and e-commerce in enterprises were collected and provided to Eurostat in accordance with the requirements of the new Regulation (EU) 2019/2052 of the European Parliament and the Council for European Business Statistics. Methodological improvements have been made regarding the methods for transmitting and optimizing the sample in order to generate for the first-time data on the new statistical "enterprise", formed by several legal units. A new module on "Artificial Intelligence" was introduced in the survey, as well as an additional module on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the organization of the work process.

In 2021, methodological work on the implementation of the new Regulation (EU) 2019/1700 of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a common framework for European statistics on individuals and households in the field of statistics on ICT use of households and individuals, and the relevant Implementing Regulation for the reference year 2021 was carried out.

NSI's experts also participated in working groups in the preparation of opinions related to the development of strategic and program documents, draft legislation and methodologies in the field of information society statistics. The employees took part in the following workshops:

- Regular meetings of the Eurostat Working Group on Information Society Statistics;
- OECD Working Group on Measuring and Analyzing the Digital Economy.

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

#### **Information and communication technologies**

The main priority in 2021 was to increase the capacity and level of reservation of information systems through the use of effective means for storage and recovery of information systems and statistical survey data.

The established information systems for identification, collection and dissemination of information in the NSI allow the accomplishment of the obligations of the officials in the administration, who receive in due time useful external information. The automation of the activities for monitoring the functioning of the technical infrastructure continued. Reliable and efficient operation of information systems and services provided was ensured.

In 2021, NSI staff was trained on the functionalities of the implemented Axence nVision software.

An implemented application management and control system (GLPI) has been actively used, ensuring timely information, knowledge base for emerging cases, their solutions and response time.

A new IS "Foreign Trade" was developed. In 2021, the exchange of micro data in the test and production environment commenced. The data are sent and received in encrypted form over a secure TESTA network. In 2021, the NSI successfully validated, sent and received data in the test and production environment of the Eurostat MDE hub, validating and distributing the data to the Member State concerned.

In 2021 the NSI successfully continued the use of the single entry point of Eurostat for the exchange of statistical data EDAMIS 4 (Electronic Dataflow Administration and Management Information System), which ensures secure exchange of confidential data.

In 2021, the Support Center expanded its scope with the assistance of respondents on the IS "Business Cycles" and Census 2021. To support the people who took advantage of the electronic census, a support center was established. Special telephone lines were opened for enquiries on the census card or for technical issues. Trained specialists answered the questions asked and the conversations were recorded. Employees from the Central Office and the RSO of the NSI took part in the administration and servicing of the support center. 461 agents were registered. When necessary, it was possible at any time to increase the lines and agents to the full capacity of the support center. For each registered call to the support center, a questionnaire was completed on the reason for the call. In order to improve the quality of service, each call was recorded. 142,894 incoming calls were received during the 2021 Census.

The NSI uses the "Infostat" information system for online services to citizens and companies. It is built as a single web-based application, providing customers with access in Bulgarian and English to various types of statistical information. The new system allows citizens, businesses and administrations to online define and execute requests for statistical information from surveys conducted by the NSI. The system maintains profiles of registered users, in which all user requests and their results are stored. The system provides free access to statistical data and metadata included in the List of Standard Statistical Indicators disseminated by the NSI on the topics "Business Statistics", "Demographic and Social Statistics", "Macroeconomic Statistics", "Multidisciplinary Statistics" and "Environmental Statistics". After mandatory registration with an electronic signature issued by an authorized legal entity in Bulgaria, the system also provides users with access to data at lower disaggregation levels. Infostat also provides the possibility to send a free text inquiry for the production of information on specific statistical requests. The results, depending on the type of report and the user's desire, are presented in various formats, including graphs and georeferenced information. The data are



provided, apart on site at the NSI, by e-mail or online upon registration of the user with an electronic signature (QES). The confidentiality of the data is checked for each non-standard statistical report. The payment of statistical information containing non-standard indicators or indicators at more detailed levels than those in the NSP is made by bank transfer, on site in the territorial structures of the NSI or through an electronic payment system (e-Pay). The system not only facilitates the access of external users to statistical data, but also optimizes the customer service process and makes it an efficient and effective procedure in accordance with European standards for the provision of statistical information.

In 2021, the NSI, as part of the state administration, published information on the Open Data Portal of the Republic of Bulgaria in an open machine-readable format, allowing reuse. The NSI introduced an e-service that allows automatic publication of statistical information from the INFOSTAT IS on the Open Data Portal in implementation of the Roadmap for the implementation of the General Strategy for e-Government of the Republic of Bulgaria. The NSI has also created tools for automated updating and supplementing of information.

In 2021, the NSI continued to enrich the data sets of the new national portal for open data publishing: <https://data.egov.bg/>. The resources will be available in JSON-stat format and will be updated automatically.

It is planned to upgrade "Monitorstat" IS, the main purpose of which is to develop a statistical framework and procedures for collecting information to monitor the implementation of national and European strategies in order to use them in management decisions and policy implementation, as well as optimizing the activity of the administration at national and regional level through mutual exchange and better use of the available information to improve the monitoring of the implementation of the policies.

In 2021, a migration to a newer version of the e-mail system took place. MS Exchange 2016 was implemented, which replaced MS Exchange 2010. A new schema was implemented - dropping the Exchange Front-End servers and using two Cisco Secure Email Virtual Gateways as the first protection barrier, providing antivirus and anti-spam scanning of the entire incoming and outgoing flow of emails to the NSI. There are currently 3 running Exchange servers in the NSI virtual environment. Two of the servers operate in active - passive mode and support the bases of the system, and the third is set to be located in the environment of the Reserve Center, where the bases from the other 2 servers are replicated. The size of individual mailboxes has been significantly increased (x5 / x10 - depending on the group to which the user belongs).

VMware workaround solutions for VCenter servers, Site Recovery Managers and Replication applications in the NSI environment were implemented.

### **Development of statistical information systems**

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 2021, the improvement of the system for dissemination of statistical information - IS "Infostat" continued. The specific enquiries processed through it in 2021 are 1080. The most used of the pre-defined applications are - "Main economic indicators of non-financial corporations", "Activity of accommodation by statistical zones, statistical regions, districts and municipalities" ("Business Statistics") and "Employees by employment" by economic activities, districts and municipalities" (Demographic and Social Statistics).

Since the beginning of August 2021, the new online Information System "Business Cycles" developed by the NSI became operational, which replaced the existing "KBS" IS. "Business Cycles" IS includes all monthly and quarterly business surveys, which provide information for the formation of short-term business indicators in accordance with EU law, as

well as important indicators in the field of investment, production and sales of industrial products and others.

In 2021, the development of the "Environmental Statistics" IS was completed, which will come into operation in the beginning of 2022.

In the specialized software for Census 2021 all human resources management, zoning, electronic census, data entry from the census and the accompanying sample surveys were performed. The software is configured in accordance with the requirements of the methodology and technology of the census in the Republic of Bulgaria. The software provides a unified method for access control, role maintenance, input and editing of information. Provides all standard features such as editing, deleting, adding new objects, a single interface, searching, exporting and importing data.

#### **In 2021 the construction of new information systems began:**

- **Development of the Consumer Prices information system in order to add new functionalities and migration of the platform** - the NSI has started the construction of a new Consumer Prices IP. The system is designed to automate the activities of the production of consumer price indices. The system covers the entire statistical production process - collection and input of primary data, processing, validation and logical control, application of methods for assessment of missing price observations and methods for quality assessment, data analysis and formation of source files and reports, designed for different users in the NSI, the country and abroad. The development of CPI is necessary due to the continuous increase in the volume of processed and stored data and the constant reduction of deadlines for providing information and will lead to more efficient operation of the system and increase its security, as well as speeding up the process of processing and providing data of the main users. The need to develop the CPI is conditioned by the forthcoming changes in the European regulations on consumer price statistics, which require the introduction of new classifications. The increasing use of the so-called "Big data" as a source of information on consumer price indices requires automation of their processing. The forthcoming accession of the Republic of Bulgaria to the Eurozone requires the construction and production of new indicators - rapid estimates of inflation in the country. The continuous requirement to improve the quality of the produced statistical information on consumer prices also requires the introduction of modern ways of collecting primary data. All this requires a change in existing functionalities and the addition of new functionalities to ensure the smooth production of existing and new indicators within the regulated deadlines.
- **IS "Demography"** - In 2021 the construction of a new IS "Demography" began. IS "Demography" stores data on population and demographic processes in the Republic of Bulgaria (data from population and housing censuses, data on demographic events and new data on demographic events). It is necessary to develop the Demography Information System by migrating the platform and adding new functionalities. The project is aimed at ensuring efficient operation, information security, improving the speed, reliability and timeliness of the existing system, as well as meeting the growing needs for information. This can be achieved by using modern IT solutions, upgrading existing ones and adding new functionalities, taking into account the current and upcoming changes in European legislation and the requirements of the European Commission.
- **IS "Statistical Business Register"** - Development of existing and development of new functionalities of IS SBR, in accordance with the requirements of FRIBS, in relation to the statistical units "Unit by type of activity" and "Enterprise", web services and links with other IS in NSI, Migration of the Platform The IS SBR will replace the Register of Statistical Units.

- **Development of NRNM** In 2021, the construction of a new NRNM began in order to add new functionalities and migration to the platform, which will be integrated with the system of inter-register data exchange of State e-Government Agency (RegiX). The NSI supports the NRNM, which reflects all changes in the territorial and administrative-territorial units. For the convenience of other administrations and respondents, the NSI has developed and published on its website an up-to-date version of the Unified Classifier of Administrative-Territorial and Territorial Units. The NSI publishes and updates the "Data set: Unified Classifier of Administrative-Territorial and Territorial Units" in an open format on the open data portal.
- **Statistical Classifications IS -** In 2021, the construction of a new IS "Statistical Classifications" began, which covers national, European and international classifications used in the production of statistical products and services, regardless of who is responsible for their development and maintenance. The project is aimed at building a modern IS "Statistical Classifications" with a new user interface aimed at ensuring efficient operation, information security, speed, reliability and timeliness of information on statistical classifications, nomenclatures and transitional tables to meet the growing needs of internal and external users. This can be achieved through modern IT solutions, adding new functionalities, taking into account the upcoming and upcoming changes in European legislation.

In 2021 the development and improvement of the developed web-based applications for the needs of various statistical surveys in the NSI continued: "Structure of salaries", "Medical and health establishments and nurseries", "Short-term statistics on residential buildings and housing stock", "Income and living conditions statistics", "Trade deflators", "Service deflators", "Housing price index", "Environmental goods and services", "Seed and planting prices survey", "Survey of Bulgarian and foreign citizens entering and leaving Bulgaria", "Accommodation", "Monitoring of tourist travel", "Monitoring of investment activity in industry", "Consumer monitoring", "PRODCOM samples", "Vocational training of employees", "Persons in enterprises", "Prices of veterinary medicinal products", "Prices of mineral fertilizers used in agriculture", "Prices of plant protection products", "Prices of agricultural producers", "Producer prices of organic agricultural products and live animals", "Prices of feed used in agriculture", "Producer prices in forestry". The work on the two developed web-based surveys, which report every month on the state of the business and the places of accommodation in the conditions of the COVID-19 epidemiological situation, continued. The development of web applications has facilitated and accelerated the work on data entry and control and shortened the deadlines for providing the resulting statistics. The applications provide both an easy and convenient way to enter data and ongoing control during data entry, as well as general control of all entered data. Convenient reports were developed in the applications for monitoring the status of the entered data, the number of respondents, etc. The applications are used both by the NSI, RSO and SSD employees and by the respondents.

In the past year, the work on development of analytical outputs and specific analyzes for various statistical surveys continued using the statistical package SPSS Statistics Server (20.0) and SAS, which are the main analytical platform in the NSI.

In 2021, the work on the actual data collection continued with the developed web scraping tools for the purposes of NSI research (prices).

New web applications have been developed for "Survey on Gender-Based Violence", "Energy Statistics: Support for the Energy Union and Further Disaggregation of Final Energy Consumption", Supplementary Questionnaire for Collecting and Processing Information to the Statistical Survey Household Budget Monitoring“, “Annual data collection on living conditions”.

In relation to the Census, two applications were developed: the "Temporarily present persons" application for collecting data from the places of accommodation of the present persons at 0:00 o'clock on 07.09.2021 and the application for the enumeration of diplomats.

### **ICT infrastructure**

After the successful implementation of the project "Bringing the NSI information assets in line with the requirements of Eurostat and migration to the CAO", the NSI built a "Information Security Management System in the NSI". The information assets of the NSI were brought in line with the requirements of the Integrated Management System in terms of providing server infrastructure, storage infrastructure, software for creating and managing backups and network components.

In 2021, the main priority was the development of the information and technological infrastructure to achieve reliable operation of information systems and ensure the continuity of services provided to respondents and users of statistical information.

The local network in the Central Office was completely redesigned and segmented and modern active equipment was installed in the Central Office, RSOs and SSDs.

In 2021 A project was implemented to increase the resources of disk arrays and increase the physical servers from the virtual platform. Activities were performed to upgrade NGINX reverse proxy servers and to reserve remote VPN access through the NSI backup center.

The NSI maintains and develops a modern data center that meets the high requirements for storage and protection of data and information assets. A Disaster Recovery Center was established in order to store archival copies at various locations and to ensure the continuity of the processes in the NSI for the collection, processing and dissemination of statistical information. A BMS system was implemented.

A solution for DDoS protection was implemented, offered by the provider under the VACOM contract for providing IP VPN communication connectivity and Internet access for the needs of the NSI.

The replacement of the proxy server in the NSI and DNS servers is in progress.

In 2021, the use of services related to the provision and maintenance of Sendinblue for the needs of the NSI began:

- Providing and maintaining the Sendinblue service for the needs of the NSI, for a period of 12 months - Enterprise License and Annual Emails Plan;
- Quantity Enterprise License;
- Plan Emails (in thousands).

Services related to the supply and implementation of traffic balancing tools installed in the virtual environment of the NSI were performed.

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

Successful migration of virtualization and management systems to newer software versions was performed.

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.

Protection mechanisms and systems in the NSI infrastructure related to ensuring information and network security were integrated.

- Firewall (including Intrusion Prevention System (IPS) and Intrusion Detection System (IDS))
- Reverse Proxy (Backed Proxy Server) - load balancing and management.
- System for automatic detection of events that may affect the network and / or information security of the electronic counting system. (SIEM) - does not process user data.
- System for monitoring the parameters of components of information systems - does not process data received from users.
- System for collection and analysis of log records related to information security and protection, monitoring and management of databases (including authentication, account management, access rights, changes in security rules and operation of information and communication systems) - does not process data coming from users.
- Tests on the functionality of the NSI systems, load tests, security tests, monitoring of infrastructure and systems and traffic, data backup.
- Vulnerability scans.

### **Methodology, statistical metadata, classifications and standards**

At the end of 2020, the work on the project on "ESSnet on Big Data - II" was successfully completed, and the NSI was an active partner in the following six work packages: retrieval and implementation of information from the Internet about vacancies; extraction and implementation of information from the Internet on the characteristics of enterprises (web scraping); processes and architecture; data on financial transactions; innovative tourism statistics and preparation for trusted smart statistics. The project has a high practical value, as the possibility of using "Big Data" as an additional source for the production of official statistics was tested. Various web scraping techniques and machine readable methods were applied to implement the project activities.

Significant results were achieved in this direction, as experimental statistics were published on the online characteristics of enterprises and the places offered for accommodation on tourist websites on the Eurostat experimental statistics website, as well as on the project's wiki platform.

Promising results were also achieved with regard to the production of experimental statistics on job vacancies by extracting information from the two largest online platforms for job search and supply in Bulgaria. In addition, the NSI team had the opportunity to analyze data on Bulgaria collected and processed by the European Center for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP).

In 2021, work continued on the production of experimental statistics on job vacancies by extracting information from the two largest online platforms for job search and supply in Bulgaria. In addition, the NSI team had the opportunity to analyze data on Bulgaria, collected and processed by the European Center for the Development of Vocational Training.

In 2021, an assessment of the historical data of the employed and unemployed since 2009 was made due to the change in the definitions of employed and unemployed in the Labor Force Survey.

One of the main tasks in 2021 was to keep the statistical classifications up to date and to provide methodological assistance to users. In 2021, the NSI took part in the discussions on the proposals for the revision of the Statistical Classification of Economic Activities in the European Community (NACE Rev. 2).

To make it easier for users to use the classifications, respondents' inquiries are

continuously prepared, which are a tool for classifying statistical units for the correct interpretation of the Classification of Economic Activities, assist statisticians in conducting statistical surveys and improve international comparability.

For the purposes of statistical processing and the continuation of the time series on the basis of the changes in the Combined Nomenclature 2022, transition code tables have been developed. For the purposes of the PRODCOM monitoring, the Nomenclature of Industrial Production - PRODPROM 202 1 and the List of Z Codes were updated, and for the purposes of foreign trade statistics and IS INTRASTAT to the NRA, the self-explanatory texts of the Combined Nomenclature 2022 were updated annually.

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.

In 2021, the activities on the current maintenance of the content of the IS "Statistical Classifications", the electronic dictionaries of statistical terms and on the standardization and harmonization of statistical terminology continued. A "List of Standard Statistical Indicators for 2021" was prepared.

During the reporting year, the IMF continued to provide data and metadata in accordance with the IMF's Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS Plus).

### **Dissemination of statistical information**

#### **Publishing activity of the NSI**

The NSI publishes rich in content and content statistical information in accordance with European standards. Press releases and periodicals are available to state institutions, business, academia and society as a whole with timely, objective, useful and quality statistical information on the current state of various economic, social, educational and cultural activities in the country. In connection with the pandemic of COVID- 19 worldwide, the NSI continued on its website the section under the same name, through which it provides monthly data related to the disease and its impact on a number of sectors of socio-economic life in Bulgaria.

During the year 19 publications were published - printed (with electronic version on CD) and electronic (only on CD) with a total circulation of 32,240, and most editions are bilingual - in Bulgarian and English. The publications include data at national and regional level from various statistical fields. The Statistical Yearbook 2020, the Statistical Directory 2021 and the Journal of Statistics cover statistical information in its entirety and are an invaluable guide for all users.

#### **NSI Library**

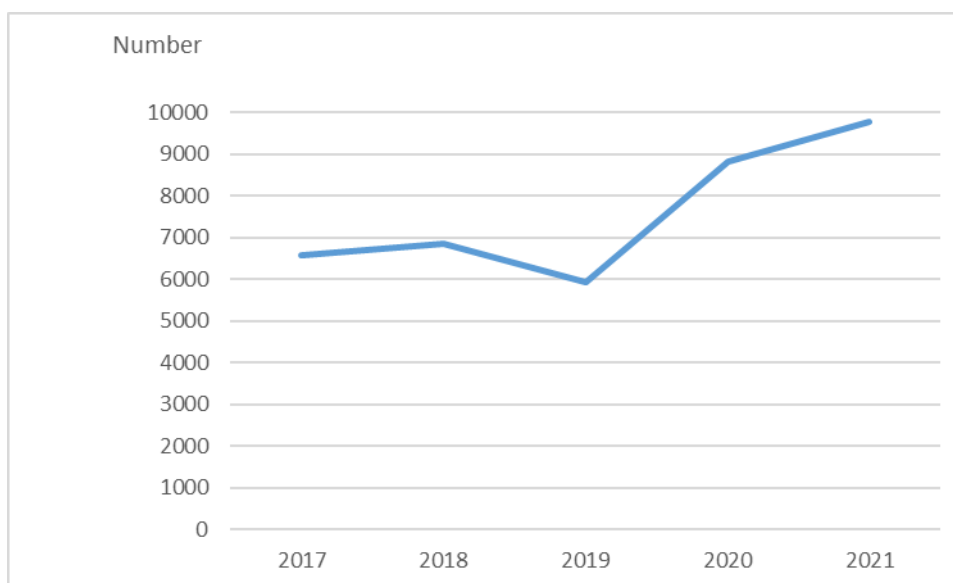
The NSI Digital Library continued to hold a leading position on national scale in the field of creation, management and online distribution of digital information resources. 27,596 visits were registered on the electronic portal of the library, and the users worked with 123,410 digital pages. Despite the difficulties imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, access to 624 library units was provided in the NSI reading room. 6,225 digital pages were created in the library. In 2021, the fund of the digital library was enriched with the collection "Census 1985".

#### **NSI website**

New NSI Intranet and Internet site were built. The NSI website is not only the main channel for free dissemination of official statistics, 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 on NSI statistical surveys and data use.

In 2021 <sup>An</sup> average of 9,789 are registered on the NSI website visits per day.

**FIG. 1. Visits to the NSI website on average per day**



1,110 were updated during the year time series tables, the corresponding tables with the latest data and metadata in 45 statistical sections in Bulgarian and English. 532 were published press releases and 135 news in Bulgarian and English, 46 competitions, 3 public procurements, 2 auctions.

638 press releases with regional statistics were published.

The file with the most downloads published on the NSI website is EKATTE - downloaded 2,410 times.

The time series that aroused the most interest and were downloaded the most times during the year are:

- Consumer Price Indices (CPI, 1995 = 100) in English - 1,278 downloads;
- GDP - Final consumption expenditure - national level - 1,004 downloads;
- Turnover indices in the sector “Trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles” at comparable prices, seasonally adjusted - 1 002 downloads.

Top 3 of the publications downloaded from the NSI website in digital format are:

- Classification of Economic Activities (NACE.BG-2008) - 1,121 downloads;
- Districts, districts, municipalities 2018 - 621 downloads.
- Statistical Yearbook 2019 - 526 downloads.

The press releases that aroused the greatest interest during the year were:

- Names in Bulgaria in 2017 (preliminary data) in English - 1,166 downloads.
- Prices of agricultural land and rent in agriculture in the Republic of Bulgaria in 2018 - 845 downloads;
- Census 2011 (final data) - 762 downloads.

During the year, the weekly publication of statistics related to the economic and social consequences of the spread of coronavirus under the heading "COVID-19" continued. The information is presented in tables, graphs, press releases and infographics.

To ensure publicity of the census activities, increase the awareness of the population and the availability of information, a specialized website of Census 2021 <https://census2021.bg/> was developed. The page was updated at each stage of the census, and information about the campaigns was published, as well as all necessary documents, maps and instructions. A link to access the electronic census card was also published on the website.

### **Customer service**

The NSI provided a support center to support respondents during the various statistical surveys.

In 2021, more than 5,400 one-off requests for statistical information were received by e-mail or at the NSI Reception. Statistical information was periodically provided to users from the country (117) and abroad (1), who expressed a desire to receive the data from a certain survey immediately after their official announcement (Table 1).

**Table 1. Requests for periodic provision of information**

<b>Requests from the country</b>	<b>117</b>
- with monthly data	77
- with quarterly data	36
- with annual data	4
<b>Requests from abroad for monthly data</b>	<b>1</b>

30 questionnaires were completed and sent to international organizations - of which 12 monthly, 6 quarterly and 12 annual.

In 2021, 10 requests were accommodated (7 from the country and 3 from abroad) for providing anonymized individual data for scientific and research purposes according to the Regulations for providing anonymized individual data for scientific and research purposes of the National Statistical Institute.

The Bulgarian Center for Support of Users of European Statistical Information, which is part of the European network of consumer centers, continued its work in 2021. By September 30, 15 inquiries had been received. Of these, 8 of the inquiries are standard and 7 non-standard, the answers to which were provided after consultation with the Central Consumer Support Unit at Eurostat.

During the reporting period, most inquiries were made by commercial companies - 7 inquiries, while individuals, students and EU institutions sent 2 applications each. 1 application each was registered by the media and by users who did not indicate to which group they belonged.

Inquiries by type are distributed as follows: for data availability - 10, 2 - for data verification, 1 for methodological assistance. Two applications do not fall in any of the existing categories.

In order to better support various stakeholders, along with the main e-mail for servicing inquiries in the NSI, 4 specialized e-mail addresses (mailboxes) have been created.

### **Consumer satisfaction survey**

In 2021, more than 200 users participated in the regular survey of consumer satisfaction with the offered statistical information products and services. The study focuses on the quality of service and on the assessment of the ways in which statistical information is disseminated. The report of the survey will be available on the NSI website on January 31, 2022 in the section "For consumers".

## **4. RESOURCE PROVISION**



## Staff

The National Statistical Institute consists of a Central Office and six territorial statistical offices. The territorial statistical offices perform the functions and tasks of the NSI on the production and dissemination of statistical information at the regional level. The territorial structures are the following:

- RSO – North-west,
- RSO - North,
- RSO – North-east,
- RSO – South-east,
- RSO - South,
- TSB – South-west.

The structural units in the Central Office of the NSI are divided into general and specialized administration according to the Administration Act.

The total number of staff in the structural units of the NSI in 2021 is 968 full-time positions, incl. NSI Central Office - 321 full-time positions, and territorial statistical bureaus - 647 full-time positions. According to the NSI Rules of Procedure, the Head Office is organized in seven directorates: Business Statistics, Demographic and Social Statistics, Macroeconomic Statistics, Multi-Domain Statistics and User Services Directorate, Information Systems and Infrastructure, General Administration and structures under the direct subordination of the President of the NSI: Directorate "General Methodology, Analysis and Coordination of Statistical Surveys", Sector "Security of information, Information and Communication Technologies and DM", "Inspectorate", Finance Controller, Internal Audit Unit and International Cooperation Department. Six of the directorates are in the specialized administration and one in the general administration.

For the last five years due to optimization of the structure of the regional statistical offices and the Central Office of the NSI and due to the introduction of new organizational approaches in the management of the processes of collection, processing and production of statistical information and personnel management there is no decrease in the NSI system. For the period 2017 - 2021 the number of staff remains the same.

### Conducting competitions for vacant positions

Recruitment policies are aimed at replacing retired employees with promising young people who have just graduated or are continuing their studies at Bulgarian universities. In 2021, a total of 58 competitions were held for the appointment of employees to vacancies. There were 33 competitions in the NSI's Central Office and 25 in the RSO.

### Employed by age and education at the NSI

The structure of the personnel by age and education in the NSI is presented in table. 1 and 2, total for NSI, incl. Central Office of NSI and RSO.

#### 1. Structure of the actually employed by age groups in the NSI

(Number)

Structures	Age category (years)					Total
	Up to 29	30-45	46-55	56-65	over 65	
HO	14	104	99	64	3	284
RSO	10	211	214	175	7	617

NSI	24	315	313	239	10	901
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## 2. Structure of those actually employed in the NSI by education

(Number)

Educational degrees (years)							
Structures	doctor	master	bachelor	Professional Bachelor	secondary education	primary education	Total
HO	9	238	25	3	9	0	284
RSO	1	415	89	6	106	0	617
NSI	10	653	114	9	115	0	901

The data show a high level of education of NSI employees, as the share of persons with higher education is over 87%. The distribution of NSI employees by age groups follows the trend typical for employed employees in the state administration as a whole. In the NSI, as well as in other state institutions, the majority of employees are in the age group of 30 to 55 years. The data from the Report on the state of the administration for 2020 are comparable.

Table. 3 shows the number of employees who are currently continuing their education to obtain a higher educational degree.

## 3. Training of NSI employees in Bulgarian universities

(Number)

Type of training	NSI	SO	RSO
Doctor	8	6	2
Master	8	4	4
Bachelor	2	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>7</b>

In 2021, activities to improve working conditions continued. Major, ongoing, emergency repairs and reconstructions were carried out to eliminate the consequences of heat network accidents, floods and torrential rain. The local air conditioning systems in the Central Office of the NSI were replaced.

In connection with the epidemiological situation of the staff, personal protective equipment was provided, incl. disinfectants, masks, UV lamps with different power, air purifiers with built-in UV lamps, etc.

In connection with the optimization of costs, mini-procedures for selection of a contractor for the supply of stationery and consumables were carried out.

Measurements of the working environment factors were organized and conducted at the NSI Head Office.

The contracts with the operating companies were renewed under more favorable for the NSI conditions.

A procedure was launched for renting part of the roof area at the building of the Head Office.

Real estate insurance was provided, incl. the NSI's servers and car fleet.

An agreement was signed with Information Services AD regarding the distribution of costs for the maintenance of the common parts of the managed buildings.

In order to optimize the expenditures for fuel and lubricants (diesel and petrol), a procedure was carried out and a stock exchange contract for company cars was carried out.

The contract for cable TV and Internet in the resort Borovets was renewed.

All requirements for maintaining strict fire safety in the building of the NSI's Head Office and in the country, according to the requirements of the normative documents, were met. All prescriptions in this regard were fulfilled or postponed within the legally established deadlines.

## **Budget**

The implementation of the NSI budget for 2021 is realized in accordance with the adopted Law on the State Budget of the Republic of Bulgaria for 2021, the Population and Housing Census Act and the current adjustments made (Appendix 1). As of 31.10.2021 the planned revenues have been fulfilled at 33% compared to the specified plan, and the expenditures at 48%, incl. current alimony (salaries, other remuneration and payments to staff and alimony) of 49%. The funds for the 2021 Census are also included in the revised plan.

## **5. INTERNAL AUDIT AND ADMINISTRATIVE CONTROL**

**The Internal Audit Unit** performs internal audit of all structures, programs, activities and processes in the NSI, including lower-level spending units in the NSI and / or spending units from the European Union.

In 2021, the IAU fulfilled the planned audit commitments for assurance and consultation, which improved the work of the NSI. In January 2021, after requested and presented information, an assessment and analysis was made of all structures in the Central Directorate of the NSI, including the territorial ones. Statistical bureaus - secondary budget managers to the President of the NSI. All obligatory appendices necessary for drawing up the Strategic Plan for the activity of the IAU, covering the period January 2021 - January 2023, were filled in. In accordance with the Strategic Plan, an Annual Plan for the activities of the IAU was prepared, as well as a plan for training of internal auditors for 2021. The plans were presented and approved by the President of the NSI in January 2021 and thus the deadline was met. No adjustments have been made to the annual plan for the activities of the IAU.

In February 2021, the HIAU established an organization and procedure for the preparation and presentation of risk management reports in 2020 and a risk register for risk management in 2021. All heads of the structures of the Central Office and the RSOs - the secondary spending units at the NSI submitted the documents within the set deadline. HIAU also presented a report on the risk management of the IAU in 2020, as well as a risk register for 2021 within the specified deadline.

There is progress in identifying the risks by directorates, individual units and RSOs, as well as control exercised by the line heads of the structures, which has contributed to improving risk management in the NSI system. The reports and risk registers prepared after approval by the President were published on the NSI website.

HIAU within the statutory deadline submitted to the President of the NSI an annual report on the activities of the Internal Audit Unit for 2020 with a questionnaire attached with summary information on the activity of the internal audit. The same documents were sent electronically to the Minister of Finance.

In March 2021, HIAU performed an inspection of the summary report and questionnaire on the state of financial management and control systems in the NSI in 2020 and gave an opinion on the compliance of the information submitted in the report and the questionnaire with the findings of the internal audits. In connection with a letter received from the Ministry of Finance to establish the order, organization and deadlines for filling in and sending information on the Financial Management and Control System (FMCS) for 2020 by order of the President, they were created and implemented after the information was sent to the Ministry of Finance by e-mail within the specified deadlines.

According to the Annual Activity Plan of the IAU for 2021, a total of three audit engagements were fulfilled, incl. two audit engagements to provide assurance and one to advise. The first audit commitment to provide assurance was an inspection of the process: "Review and evaluation (sample) of conducted and implemented public procurement procedures under the Public Procurement Act (PPA) in the NSI", for the audited period from 01.01.2019 to 31.12.2020. The audit was completed successfully, the subjects of public procurement were audited, sample audits of conducted and executed public procurements and the implementation of concluded public procurement contracts were created and 17 recommendations were adopted to eliminate errors and weaknesses and to avoid weaknesses and improve activities, all of which were recorded and approved in an action plan for the implementation of the given recommendations. Following the audit, some recommendations were implemented and recorded in the action plan as implemented recommendations. The second audit engagement for consulting was consulting on the subject: "Assistance to the NSI Management in updating and introducing new internal acts on the FMCS at the National Statistical Institute (NSI), in accordance with the requirements of the new methodological guidelines and guidelines approved by Order № ZMF-18 /06.03.2020 of the Minister of Finance. The audit was performed on the basis of Art. 48, para. 2, item 3 of the Law on Internal Audit in the Public Sector, planned according to a letter received from the Minister of Finance with instructions for priority objectives and areas for auditing. The audit was successfully completed, with the HIAU assisting in the preparation and updating of four internal rules and procedures in the NSI, approved by the NSI's President. They were sent to all managers and were published on the NSI website. The third audit commitment to provide assurance was on: Verification and evaluation of the procedures for preparation, implementation and reporting of the budget (including program budget) in the NSI, for the audited period from 01.01.2020 to 30.06.2021. The audit was completed successfully, 6 budget-related points were considered and 6 recommendations for elimination of weaknesses and prevention of errors were formulated, which will be recorded in a plan for implementation of the given recommendations. A fourth audit engagement is forthcoming to monitor the implementation of the recommendations by 31.12.2021.

In accordance with the international standards for professional practice in internal audit and the approved training plan for 2021 of the IAU, four trainings were conducted on the following topics: "Awarding electronic public procurement in CAIS EPP"; "Administrative Offences in Public Procurement"; "Audit Commitment on Ethical Climate and Organizational Culture", as well as "Internal Auditor and IT Audit in Public Administration", organized and conducted by the Public Finance School of the Ministry of Finance.

The activity of the NSI's **Inspectorate** in 2021 was related to the timely and high-quality implementation of the tasks set in the NSP.

There was a constant control over the application and compliance with the requirements of the legislation in the performance of the functions by the specialized units and the general administration. Systematic administrative control was performed over the overall activity in view of the proper functioning of the administrative structures in the Central Office and RSOs of the NSI, as well as over the implementation of the activities related to the implementation of Census 2021 in the conditions of an emergency epidemiological situation in the country.

In the exercise of its powers, the achievement of the following main objectives was of paramount importance:

- objective and independent assessment of the effectiveness of the NSI for the implementation of the state policy in the field of statistical activity, as well as the activities related to conducting the 2021 Census in the conditions of complicated epidemiological situation in the country;
- optimal functioning of the structures of the specialized and general administration in improving the anti-corruption environment;
- imposition of preventive measures for observance of the laws, by-laws and internal acts, rules and procedures in order to prevent violations in the functioning of the administrative structures.

To achieve the objectives, special attention was paid to the factors on which the optimization of the work of inspectors depends. Of paramount importance was the process of planning and organizing the activities of the NSI Inspectorate in the constantly changing environment, especially taking into account the growing epidemiological risks, as well as the introduction of remote operation.

Serious attention was paid to the reports received by the NSI Inspectorate, containing allegations of violations of the law, civil service or leadership style, as well as related to violations in the conduct of the 2021 Census. Significant efforts have been made during the carrying out of checks to clarify in detail all the facts and circumstances of the case. Opinions and reports with the results of the performed inspections were prepared in a timely manner and were submitted to the President of the NSI. Responses were prepared and sent to the senders of the signals within the statutory deadline.

In 2021, the NSI Inspectorate paid serious attention to the implementation of the provisions of the Anti-Corruption Act and the confiscation of illegally acquired property. Within the legally specified deadlines, the declarations under Art. 35, para. 1 of the Anti-Corruption and Confiscation of Illegally Acquired Property of NSI's Employees Act. Periodically, the declared facts in the declarations of incompatibility were checked on the newly appointed employees in the Central Office and RSOs of the NSI to establish incompatibility in accordance with the requirements of the relevant regulations.

In 2021, the Inspectorate carried out a total of 50 administrative inspections in the NSI's units, of which 1 planned and 37 unscheduled, including ad-hoc on submitted signals and 12 monthly inspections for internal administrative control.

Significant efforts were made to carry out daily ongoing monitoring, which included compliance with working hours, relevant anti-epidemiological measures and others.

During the year, a total of 34 signals and proposals were received concerning issues related to the activities of the general and specialized administration, as well as signals related to the 2021 Census. Inspectors from the NSI's Inspectorate, carried out inspections to clarify irregularities and violations.

Monthly reports were prepared by the NSI Inspectorate to the President of the NSI on the results of the administrative control carried out on the implementation by the employees of the resolutions of the NSI management, the concluded and executed contracts, the issued and executed / unexecuted orders of the NSI's management, the international missions carried out and submission of reports for them. Particular attention was paid to monitoring the implementation of the decisions of the Conference of Presidents. The implementation of the set tasks by the NSI employees was monitored and controlled. In 2021, a monthly control was carried out for the timely implementation of statistical surveys and publications.

For the period from the beginning of the year to the beginning of December, a total of 1,474 dossiers with documents were recorded and checked in the register of the **financial controller** and a total of 1,474 checklists for commitment and expenditure were issued.

The ruling of the Financial Controller on the proposals for commitment or expenditure was implemented within the deadlines set by the President of the NSI, described in the Internal Rules for preliminary control of lawfulness in the NSI.

During the past period, the financial controller often needed to request additional documents or information, as well as a site visit in order to optimize the control and give an accurate and efficient opinion in the checklist he filled in.

In the first half of the year the financial controller participated in the preparation and electronic transmission to the Ministry of Finance of the summarized questionnaire and the report on the status of the FMCS in the NSI in 2020.

In implementation of the annual curriculum for 2021 in May, the financial controller participates in distance learning on "Implementation of Public Procurement Legislation", conducted by the Public Finance School at the Ministry of Finance. In November, two distance trainings were held on "Administrative Offences in Public Procurement" and "Effective ex ante control in public sector organizations". For excellent results of the final tests and successful completion of the trainings, the financial controller received certificates stored in the file of the civil servant.

In order to exercise optimal control over the implementation of contracts on time and in order to protect the interests of the NSI at the beginning of each month the financial controller provides information on contracts expiring over the next six months to the head of the Inspectorate, Head of Legal Activities Department, Head of the Property Management and Maintenance Department, Head of the Information and Communication Infrastructure Department and the Head of the Database Management Department. The employees of the Financial - Accounting Activities Department were given permanent access to all information on all contracts (commitments and payments made so far).

The analysis of the results of the performed preliminary control led to the following conclusions:

- During the preliminary control of the files, no illegal actions and acts were found, as well as no presence of gross and significant violations related to the provision and completion of the necessary documents;
- All submitted files were processed in a timely manner and the work of the institute was not obstructed. In many cases, a checklist was issued to optimize ex ante control for the same type of liabilities and costs, although all documents provided for these groups of costs and liabilities were checked;
- More serious remarks on commitment and / or expenditure were made only in a few individual cases, which is a good characteristic of the maturity in the processes of self-control and responsible behavior of employees in the structural units of the NSI's Central Office.

In 2021, the priority of the activity of **the Data Protection Officer** was the implementation of the personal data policy at the National Statistical Institute, approved by Order № RD-05-171 / 08.03.2019 of the President of the NSI, as well as the successful implementation of Census 2021 in the specific conditions of the epidemiological situation.

There was constant supervision for strict compliance with the requirements of the legislation of the Republic of Bulgaria and the law of the European Union in the field of personal data protection and protection of the rights of data subjects, as well as the principle of statistical

secrecy regulated in Regulation (EC) № 23/2009 on European Statistics and the Law on Statistics.

During the 2021 Census, information was provided in a timely manner on daily oral and written inquiries from citizens about their rights under the General Data Protection Regulation, the Personal Data Protection Act and the 2021 Population and Housing Census Act in the Republic of Bulgaria.

In connection with the forthcoming Peer Review in 2022 within the European Statistical System, all NSI documents on personal data protection of various categories of data subjects have been translated into English. References were prepared in English on the correspondence of the NSI with the Commission for Personal Data Protection and Mobile Operators regarding the methods of collecting data from households and individuals using up-to-date communication data in the conditions of COVID-19.

## **6. UNFULFILLED ACTIVITIES**

Despite the challenges associated with 2021 and the continuing epidemiological situation, NSI's staff did not report unfulfilled statistical surveys and activities.

## Appendix 1. Information on the NSI budget for 2011

Indicators (in BGN)	Budget Act 2021	Updated plan for the year as of 31.12.2021	Report as of 31.12.2021	Implementation of plan / report (%) as of 31.12.2021
1	2	3	4	5
<b>I. REVENUES - EVERYTHING</b>	<b>950 000</b>	<b>950 000</b>	<b>352 066</b>	<b>37</b>
Own income	950 000	950 000	439 146	46
Non-tax revenues	950 000	950 000	439 146	46
Income and property income	950 000	950 000	439 146	46
- Net income from sales of services, goods and products	850 000	850 000	379 727	45
- Income from property rents	100 000	100 000	59 419	59
State taxes				
Fines, sanctions and penalty interest				
Other incomes			853	
Proceeds from sale of non - financial assets			551	
VAT paid			-88 484	
<b>II. COSTS - EVERYTHING</b>	<b>28 486 200</b>	<b>52 189 958</b>	<b>48 956 371</b>	<b>94</b>
Total costs	28 486 200	<b>52 189 958</b>	<b>48 956 371</b>	94
Current expenses	25 002 200	43 345 775	40 805 372	95
Staff	21 360 700	41 261 100	18 908 670	94
Salaries and remunerations for the personnel employed under employment or civil contracts	15 130 000	16 050 280	14 697 081	92
Salaries and wages of staff employed under civil contracts	1 850 000	2 770 280	1 795 312	65
Salaries and remunerations of the personnel employed under employment contracts	13 280 000	13 280 000	12 901 769	97
Other remuneration and payments to staff	1 500 000	20 353 161	19 961 991	98
Compulsory social security contributions from employers	4 730 700	6 942 334	6 146 300	88
Employers' social security contributions (SSI)	2 852 000	4 214 190	3 641 450	52
Health insurance contributions from employers	1 178 000	1 704 608	1 616 917	95
Contributions for additional compulsory insurance by employers	700 700	1 023 536	887 933	86
Maintenance	3 478 500	6 235 106	5 907 843	95
Paid taxes, fees and administrative sanctions	115 000	125 914	125 914	100
Expenses for membership fees and participation in non-profit organizations and activities	48 000	48 000	43 274	90
Capital expenditures	3 484 000	3 035 163	2 073 968	68



Overhaul of tangible fixed assets	159 000	0	0	
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### Appendix 1. Information on the NSI budget for 2021

(Continuation and end)				
Acquisition of tangible fixed assets	660 000	147 000	146 722	100
Acquisition of intangible fixed assets	2 665 000	2 288 163	1 927 246	84
<b>NATURAL INDICATORS</b>				
Staffing - total	968	968	968	
Average annual full-time positions - total	968	968	904	
Full-time positions	968	968	968	
<b>III. TRANSFERS</b>	<b>27 536 200</b>	<b>51 239 958</b>	<b>48 519 809</b>	<b>95</b>
<b>III. A. TRANSFERS (SUBSIDIES, CONTRIBUTIONS) BETWEEN CENTRAL / REPUBLICAN BUDGET AND OTHER BUDGETS</b>	<b>28 036 200</b>	<b>51 538 958</b>	<b>48 817 954</b>	<b>95</b>
Transfers received (subsidies / contributions) from the CB (net)	28 036 200	53 403 084	50 682 081	95
- Transfers received (subsidies) from the CB (+)				
- Received transfers (+)		<b>-1 864 126</b>	<b>-1 864 127</b>	<b>100</b>
- Transfers provided (-)				
- Transfers from the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy under programs for employment (+/-)		-1 908 234	- 1 908 234	100
<b>III. C. TRANSFERS BETWEEN BUDGETS AND ACCOUNTS FOR EU FUNDS</b>		44 108	44 107	100
<b>III. . TRANSFERS FOR INSURANCE CONTRIBUTIONS AND TAXES</b>	<b>-500 000</b>	<b>-299 000</b>	<b>-298 145</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>IV. BUDGET BALANCE (+/-) (I - II + III)</b>			0	
			<b>-84 496</b>	
<b>V. FINANCING</b>				

Appendix 2. Organizational chart of the NSI (as of October 22, 2021)

