

PEER REVIEW REPORT

ON COOPERATION/LEVEL OF INTEGRATION WITHIN THE
EUROPEAN STATISTICAL SYSTEM

NORWAY

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Statistics Norway (SSB) demonstrates a high level of integration and cooperation within the European Statistical System (ESS). SSB has a dedicated unit responsible for international relations that coordinates the activities of different international frameworks. SSB sees its contribution to the ESS as essential to improve its efficiency and to ensure the application of EU regulations and recommendations in the country.

SSB is an active actor in the ESS, participating in many working groups and projects at European level. If applicable, European solutions are implemented. SSB's Business Process Model (BPM) is close to the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Generic Statistical Business Process Model (GSBPM). SSB uses data of other NSIs if feasible. Statistical Data and Metadata exchange (SDMX) was implemented for the transmission of census data and is now used regularly. The website of SSB is largely open to international users as most of its content is available in English.

2. INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

The Peer Review of Norway was conducted by Ms Ulrike Rockmann (chair), Mr Rimantas Juozas Vaicenavičius and Mr József Kárpáti, with a peer review visit to Oslo on 8 - 12 December 2014.

The main peer review report focuses on CoP compliance and the coordination of European statistics within the Norwegian statistical system. This report focuses on cooperation and the level of integration achieved by the Norwegian statistical system within the ESS.

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

3. MAIN FINDINGS

3.1 OVERALL SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS

3.1.1 FINDINGS IN THE STRATEGY

Statistics Norway (SSB) is active in different international frameworks. Protocol 30 of the European Economic Area (EEA) Agreement safeguards Norway's participation in all groups and committees managed by Eurostat including the European Statistical System Committee (ESSC). Act No. 54 of 16 June 1989, concerning official statistics and Statistics Norway stipulates that the international statistical co-operation in the ESS is in the primary responsibility of SSB. Additionally, SSB represents Norway in UN, IMF and OECD meetings on statistics matters.

SSB's strategy 2014-2017 focuses considerably on an active role in international co-operation as it is seen helpful for the international comparability and the improvement of the quality of national statistics. The underlying reason is the relevance of ESS requirements for the European Economic Area.

SSB participates actively in co-ordination issues and in European statistical system network (ESSnet) projects, as well as in multi beneficiary and single beneficiary grant agreements within several statistical areas. Common tools are adopted and implemented in several areas, e.g. transport, tourism as well as in Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) statistics. ESSnet projects are for example Representing Census data in a European population grid (GEOSTAT 1A, 1B), Common Reference Architecture (CORA), Network of Analysis of EU-SILC (EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions), Linking micro-data from different sources (ESSlimit) and the follow up project Linking of micro-data to analyse (ESSlait). Within the framework of the Modernisation of European Enterprise and Trade Statistics strategy (MEETS) SSB was responsible for Work Package 4: Linking of inward and outward foreign affiliates statistics (FATS) with the business register. Through the European Statistical Training Programme (ESTP) SSB organises about two to three training courses per year on various topics, e.g. several courses on Geographical Information Systems (GIS), dissemination, business registers, administrative registers, waste statistics and mixed mode data (new in 2014).

SSB substantially contributes to the ESS by providing experts and their financing. The EEA Agreement and the Memorandum of Understanding on technical co-operation between the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and Eurostat allow that six seconded national experts work in Eurostat (status of April 2014).

3.1.2 FINDINGS IN THE DESIGN

An EFTA EEA country can never formally request for a derogation from ESS statistical regulations. There are two formal procedures for derogations or adaptations.

One procedure is an adaptation text in the Joint Committee Decision incorporating the relevant act into the EEA Agreement. This is relevant if part of the legal act falls outside the scope of the EEA Agreement or if concrete, specific national circumstances can justify an adaptation. SSB has written agreements with the ministry responsible for statistical legislation (Ministry of Finance) whose responsibility it is to ensure the incorporation of new statistical legal acts into the EEA Agreement. The Peer Review team was told that in recent years there were three such cases (1. Regulation No 1260/2013 on European demographic statistics, 2. Regulation (EC) No 184/2005

on Community statistics concerning balance of payments, international trade in services and foreign direct investment, 3. Regulation (EU) No 549/2013 on European system of national and regional accounts in the European Union).

The second procedure is the granting of derogation by the European Free Trade Association Surveillance Authority. An EEA country may apply for derogation if a legal act, already incorporated into the EEA Agreement, contains a provision that gives competence to the Commission to grant derogations to EU member states, e.g. Regulation No 452/2008 Art 6 (3). The Commission is entitled to comment on applications by EEA states. Norway has been granted a derogation until 30 June 2016 from certain characteristics set out in Commission Regulation (EU) No 394/2011 regarding statistics on accidents at work.

Decisions on granting derogations from statistical duties within the framework of European System of Accounts (ESA) are published in the EEA section of the Official Journal and in the EEA Supplement. However, certain fields of statistical legislation, such as Intrastat, parts of agricultural statistics and some statistics relevant for the economic and monetary union, are not considered as relevant for the EEA.

3.1.3 FINDINGS IN PROCESS CHAIN MANAGEMENT

The Peer Review team was told that SSB's business process model (BPM) is close to the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Generic Statistical Business Process Model (GSBPM). The BPM is structured in a three-digit level with detailed description of input, output, guidelines, activities and resources needed. The process model is accessible for the staff on the intranet with hyperlinks within the model as well as to related ESS documents and guidelines. In the case of designing or redesigning a new statistics the approved model should be used. The model stipulates the examination of the solutions implemented in other countries. Besides that, the model is also used for organising the documentation.

3.1.4 FINDINGS IN PROCESS CHAIN IMPLEMENTATION

Regarding the process chain implementation, SSB is conducting relevant activities. Ultimate institutional controlling unit of a foreign affiliate is a variable in the Norwegian business register, which is used in the sampling business frame. The Norwegian business register and sampling frame are updated with the information from the EuroGroups Register (EGR) for enterprise groups. Foreign affiliates statistics (FATS) in SSB is an active user and provider of information from and to the EGR.

The classifications used in SSB are structured according to the Generic Statistical Information Model (GSIM version 1.1). Most of the concepts from Euro SDMX metadata structure (ESMS) are used as reported on the SSB website pages called "About the statistics".

SSB uses a single entry point for transmitting data and metadata. The Electronic Data files Administration and Management Information System (EDAMIS) transferred all data to Eurostat in the past. The Statistical Data and Metadata eXchange (SDMX) was launched at the end of March 2014 with the census hub. Since November 2014 it is fully implemented and integrated into the statistical database of SSB only for a couple of statistical domains.

The National Reference Metadata Editor is in use for the statistics reported under the regulation for Short-term business statistics (STS). In 2014 it was upgraded to European Statistical System Metadata Handler (ESS-MH).

SSB uses data of other NSIs if feasible. SSB collaborates since some years with Sweden on a

regular basis, sharing micro-data on cross border workers to enrich the data with information only available in the home country. For a couple of years also Denmark and Finland took part in this activity.

The SSB website contains links to the ESS websites and to the websites of other ESS authorities but there is no web page with European indicators available. All statistical releases and their metadata are published simultaneously in Norwegian and English. Publications in PDF format are published either in Norwegian or English, but all documents have at least a web summary in English.

As it is made clear in the main peer review report, SSB has many strengths and best practices. The Peer Review team was assured that several best practices are already shared with the ESS community through trainings offered and the participation in relevant ESS committees.

4. OTHER ISSUES

Besides the co-operation in the ESS, SSB participates in the Nordic co-operation network – the institutional co-operation between the national statistical institutes of Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Finland and Denmark. The Peer Review team got the impression that the Nordic statistical co-operation is based first and foremost on common interests and the willingness to share good practices. Several dedicated meetings take place every year both at subject level and at management level.

Besides that, SSB is engaged in the area of international statistical consulting as general project managers and as members in international consortia. Mainly countries in Africa and Asia are assisted on a regular basis.

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

Statistics Norway has no diverging views from the Peer Reviewers' findings.