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**Report on the
Peer Review of the
Czech Statistical Office
on the implementation of
the European Statistics Code of
Practice
29 – 31 March 2006**

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Peer Review in the Czech Republic on the implementation of the European Statistics Code of Practice

1. Executive Summary

This first Peer Review (pilot) took place in the Czech Statistical Office (CzSO) in Prague on 29 – 31 March, 2006. The aims of the Peer Review were to follow-up of the implementation of the European Statistics Code of Practice using as a starting point the CzSO Self Assessment Questionnaire and at the same time to test the peer review methodology prior to launching it on an European Statistical System-wide scale.

The members of the reviewing team were Ms. Martina Hahn, Unit 0-2: Statistical governance, quality and evaluation, Eurostat, Mr. Richard Laux, Director, Statistics Policy Division, ONS and Mr. Staffan Wahlström, (chair), Senior advisor, Executive office, Statistics Sweden.

During the Czech Peer Review the review team met the management of the CzSO and senior and junior Staff of the CzSO including representatives of the Regional Offices. The team also met representatives of other producers of official statistics in the Czech Republic as well as representatives of users and respondents. See annex 2 for a list of participants and the institutions they represented.

Main findings and good practices

The Czech State Statistical Service Act guarantees the professional/political independence of the Czech statistical authorities. The President of the CzSO is guaranteed independence in matters of production and dissemination. The President can and does participate in meetings of the Cabinet. Our impression is that the co-ordinating role of the CzSO in the State Statistical Services - independent from political influences as expressed in law - is a reality in the Czech Republic. But this co-ordination role can still be further developed.

The CzSO is a well-developed statistical office. To a large extent the CzSO complies with the principles of the European Statistics Code of Practice which have been addressed during the Czech Peer Review. The compliance will improve further in the future because of several on-going development activities. As an important example, the project of Redesign of the statistical survey system in the Czech Republic is a strategic development project aiming to improve the quality of the Czech statistics in all dimensions. The members of the working groups and the project-leaders of this project are “young statisticians” of the CzSO. Through this project they are given a strategic role to form their own future statistical work environment.

The review team made a number of observations during the Czech Peer Review. They were presented to the President of the CzSO, Mr. Jan Fischer, in a final meeting. Our observations and the improvements actions discussed and agreed with Mr. Fischer are

presented in chapter 3 of this report. The improvement actions are also summarized in annex 3.

2. Introduction

Context

1. With the adoption of the European Statistics Code of Practice, the Statistical Programme Committee (SPC) committed itself to adherence to its principles. At its meeting on 25 May 2005 SPC endorsed a stepwise monitoring procedure for the implementation of the Code over three years during which countries' self-assessments should be combined with elements of peer review, benchmarking and monitoring on the basis of the explanatory indicators added to each principle of the Code.
2. A first round of self-assessments was finalised during December 2005 / January 2006 on the basis of a common Code of Practice Questionnaire. Using this information Eurostat is currently drafting an aggregated report on the implementation status of the Code in the National Statistical Institutes (NSI) and Eurostat, for submission to the Economic and Financial Committee in May 2006.
3. As a next step towards implementation of the Code, the European Statistical System is organising peer reviews to complement the self-assessments starting with 2006. They are considered a vital element for the implementation of the Code of Practice given their capacity to encourage the sharing of best practice and to contribute to transparency in what is, essentially, a self-regulatory approach. This approach is designed to enhance accountability and help to build trust in the integrity of the European Statistical System, its processes and outputs.
4. Peer reviews are carried out on the basis of the National Statistical Institutes and Eurostat self-assessments using the Code of Practice Questionnaires as a starting point. However, they are expected to go beyond this initial exercise adding value by raising issues from a peer's perspective, going more into detail where needed and assessing the situation in a country as a whole. Areas for improvement and related actions identified in the self-assessments will be confirmed with NSIs, with peers contributing to their prioritisation where needed. The peer reviews contribute to a more complete picture of adherence to the Code at European Statistical System level identifying any common difficulties or gaps with regard to compliance with the code and to raise them at the level of the SPC.
5. At the same time, countries – assisted by the peers - benefit from more detailed overviews of the results of the first European Statistical System self-assessments positioning themselves in the European Statistical System with regard to the degrees and modes of adherence to the Code's principles. The peer review could thus stimulate a knowledge transfer from which all parties involved could profit by identifying benchmarks and sharing best practices.
6. As a result the peer reviews yield a report at country level focussing on the principles reviewed. In addition it includes a refined set of improvement actions covering all principles of the Code which are being used to feed the monitoring

process of the implementation of the Code in the European Statistical System. However, it is worth noting some of the limitations of the peer review process. For example, peer reviewers are dependent upon the resources made available to them (though experienced reviewers can be expected to identify where appropriate information is not forthcoming). In addition these reviews are conducted on a strategic, organisation-wide basis. Accordingly it is not straightforward to ascertain that certain practices or behaviours or systems operate in all statistical domains.

7. The rounds of peer reviews have been designed to focus on the institutional environment and dissemination part of the Code comprising the following principles: (1) Professional independence, (2) Mandate for data collection, (3) Adequacy of resources, (4) Quality commitment, (5) Statistical confidentiality, (6) Impartiality and Objectivity and (15) Accessibility and Clarity.
8. The peer reviews take as their starting point the self-assessments against the Code of Practice - with its 15 principles detailed each by up to 7 indicators. In addition a checklist of open questions targeted to the various interview partners has been provided to the peers in order to stimulate discussion and to invite sometimes personal reflections, going beyond the statements in the self-assessments. This will offer the peers an in depth understanding of the background and the situation.

Peer review of the Czech Statistical System

9. The Czech Statistical Office (CzSO) volunteered to participate in one of the two pilot peer reviews. The peer review has been carried out from 29-31 March 2006.
10. In addition to the principles listed at paragraph 7 above, at the request of the Czech Statistical Office, principles 13 (Timeliness and Punctuality) and 14 (Coherence and Comparability) have been covered explicitly. However the nature of the peer review process was such that additional information related to other principles became apparent; where this was important the review team has included it in the list of improvement actions.
11. Whilst the focus of the review visit was the CzSO rather than the Czech Statistical System as a whole, the review team inevitably reached views on some aspects of statistical production and dissemination activities in Ministries. Where we considered these important we have noted them in our findings. However, the assessment of compliance of the environment and practices with the Code of Practice is limited to the CzSO only.
12. The peer reviewers benefited from the availability of existing information about the Czech Statistical System. For example:
 - A Global Assessment Report prepared in 1999 and updated in 2002 highlighted a number of issues in particular related to institutional arrangements
 - As part of a wide ranging of Total Quality Management programme, CzSO undertake an annual user satisfaction survey, and produce an informative report. The survey is used inter alia to find out about the characteristics of

users, their preferences and their requirements. Further information about this survey, and about other aspects of TQM, are available at www.czso.cz

13. This peer review was the first undertaken to monitor compliance with the European Statistics Code of Practice. Thus, one objective of this review related to testing a particular methodology and helping make recommendations to guide future reviews.
14. Programme of the visit: See annex 1.

3. Findings principle by principle

The principles 1-6 and 13-15 were highlighted during the Czech Peer Review. Below some improvement actions concerning the principles 7 – 12 are shortly related as well. For a summary of the improvement actions concerning all principles see annex 3.

Principal 1 Professional Independence

The professional independence of statistical authorities from other policy, regulatory departments and bodies, as well as from private sector operators, ensures the credibility of European Statistics.

Overall assessment: The CzSO itself has a strong professional independence that is arranged in an exemplary manner. To assess in how far this extends to other national producers of official statistics was not within the scope of this peer review.

1.1 The professional independence of the statistical authority from political and other external interference in producing and disseminating official statistics is specified in law.

Fully met.

See Act No 89/1995 Coll. (section 5) which guarantees the professional/political independence of the Czech Statistical Office.

It should be noted, however that some official statistical activities fall outside the Programme of Statistical Surveys which does not cover household surveys and some other specific survey activities.

1.2 The head of the statistical authority has sufficiently high hierarchical standing to ensure senior level access to policy authorities and administrative public bodies. He/she should be of the highest professional calibre.

Fully met.

The President of CzSO regularly attends Ministerial meetings at which statistical topics are discussed. The President himself is of the highest academic and managerial calibre.

1.3 The head of the statistical authority, and where appropriate the heads of its statistical bodies have responsibility for ensuring that European Statistics are produced and disseminated in an independent manner.

Fully met.

Notwithstanding the caveat at (1.1) above, the majority of European Statistics are produced by CzSO, which is “independent in producing statistical information” (Act No 89/1995 Coll., section 5(b)).

1.4 The head of the statistical authority, and where appropriate the heads of its statistical bodies have the sole responsibility for deciding on statistical methods, standards and procedures, and on the content and timing of statistical releases.

Fully met.

Notwithstanding the caveat at (1.1) above, the majority of European Statistics are produced by CzSO, which is “independent in producing statistical information” (Act NO 89/1995 Coll., section 5(b)).

1.5 The statistical work programmes are published and periodic reports describe progress made.

Fully met.

The statistical work plan is published in hard copy and on the website and regular updates are provided.

1.6 Statistical releases are clearly distinguished and issued separately from political/policy statements.

Fully met.

The indicator is fully met in the case of CzSO.

However during the review visit there were suggestions that in some ministries there is scope for greater separation of statistical from policy comment.

1.7 The statistical authority, when appropriate, comments publicly on statistical issues, including criticisms and misuses of official statistics.

Fully met.

CzSO provided a description – a ‘case history’ – of their public reaction to criticism by the Opposition of recently published GDP growth rates. The criticism failed to stick and the episode was interpreted (by a user) as evidence of the robustness of the CzSO.

Improvement actions

- In the proposed Civil Service Act (or elsewhere), to introduce a requirement to advertise the post of the President of CzSO openly in future. Also, to agree and legislate for a fixed standard term of appointment
- Take steps to improve users’ input to statistical programming, including perhaps the appointment of an independent Chair of the Czech Statistical Council
- Time frame: next amendments of the related legislation

Principal 2 Mandate for data collection

Statistical authorities must have a clear legal mandate to collect information for European statistical purposes. Administrations, enterprises and households, and the public at large may be compelled by law to allow access to or to deliver data for European statistical purposes at the request of statistical authorities.

Overall assessment: The CzSO has been given a broad mandate for data collection. Legislative action is underway to enable full access to administrative data.

2.1 The mandate to collect information for the production and dissemination of official statistics is specified in law.

Fully met.

Act No 89/1995 Coll. provides this mandate in unambiguous terms – see references to the Programme of Statistical Surveys (section 4(1)(b), and section 10, for example).

2.2 The statistical authority is allowed by national legislation to use administrative records for statistical purposes.

Largely met.

CzSO has access to much administrative data for statistical purposes already. However, in some important areas (chiefly tax records) the enabling provisions of Act No 89/1995 Coll. and the new amendment to this Act (not yet in force) (section 9) contradict legislation underpinning the activities of other bodies (such as the Finance Ministry).

2.3 On the basis of a legal act, the statistical authority can compel response to statistical surveys.

Fully met.

Act No 89/1995 Coll. clarifies that “Reporting Units” (legal persons, natural persons) for surveys within the Programme of Statistical Surveys are subject to “Reporting Duty” (to provide the required data completely, correctly, truly ...) – section 2 (i), (j). Section 15 spells out the “Conditions of Performing Reporting Duty”.

Improvement actions

- Amendment of Statistical Service Act to access for statistical purposes to (all) administrative data held by government agencies – This amendment has been passed in the meantime by the Parliament and - came into force as of 1 June 2006.
- CzSO list of priority actions and envisaged time frame to facilitate access to administrative data. Formal agreements will be concluded with respective authorities – 2006-2007.

Principal 3 Adequacy of Resources

The resources available to statistical authorities must be sufficient to meet European statistics requirements

Overall assessment: The resource situation of the CzSO is in general considered to be adequate with the need to increase financial resources during a defined investment period and to reflect upon boosting budgeting flexibility.

3.1 Staff, financial, and computing resources, adequate both in magnitude and in quality, are available to meet current European needs

Fully met.

The CzSO employs (as of March 2006) 1835 persons, excluding external interviewers, of which 735 are in the central office in Prague and 1100 in the 14 Regional Offices. 38,1% are university graduates. In addition, 4075 interviewers are employed on a temporarily basis during 2006.

Financial resources have been stable during the last 5 years but progress in some strategic horizontal reform projects depend on the availability of additional financial resources during an initial investment period. At the same time, the restriction of the current budgeting cycle to one year puts constraints on the office in pursuing longer-term strategies.

CzSO is working within a government-imposed target of 2% p.a. staff reductions (ie about 40 posts per annum). Management consider that this is achievable by re-engineering existing systems. While §18 of the [State Statistical Service Act](#) explicitly provides for information products and services being charged for by the CzSO, current budgetary rules do not allow the office to keep the income.

Accordingly, the review team suggest the CzSO to develop a strategy to retain a proportion of income from sales of goods and services.

Expenditures for IT amount to 9,1 % in 2005 with 152 persons), i.e. approx. 8 % of total staff, dealing with IT matters in the CzSO.

3.2 Scope, detail and cost of European statistics are commensurate with needs

For European level reply.

The priority status of work underway at European Statistical System level related to the definition of negative priorities is stressed by the CzSO as from a national perspective - confirmed by in particular representatives of respondents - several statistical requirements are considered excessive and of limited relevance.

3.3 Procedures exist to assess and justify demands for new European statistics against their costs

For European level reply.

3.4 Procedures exist to assess the continuing need for all European statistics, to see if any can be discontinued or curtailed to free up resources

For European level reply.

Improvement actions

- Consider funding the State statistical programme on a multi-annual basis, to enable efficiencies and to support medium term planning.
To be discussed with the Ministry of Finance and other authorities – time frame: 2007-2009

Principal 4

Quality Commitment

All ESS members commit themselves to work and co-operate according to the principles fixed in the Quality Declaration of the European Statistical System.

Overall assessment: A Total Quality Management approach is well underway in the CzSO. Challenges relate to extending the approach to cover all domains and in particular to work on monitoring of quality.

4.1 Product quality is regularly monitored according to the ESS quality components.

Largely met.

TQM methodological audits are conducted from 2004 on a rotating basis. The groups of auditors are dominated by external experts. All statistical segments are supposed to be audited over a time-period of five years.

A pilot project “quality in statistics” has been conducted as a part of the Phare Multi-Beneficiary Statistics programme. There is not yet a regular self-assessment quality survey by statistical segment implemented. Such a survey could be conducted every year. The survey could be used internally for quality monitoring. It could also be used externally to improve transparency to users on quality matters.

4.2 Processes are in place to monitor the quality of the collection, processing and dissemination of statistics.

Partly met. Work has started.

One of the strategic goals of the CzSO is innovating the statistical system, enhancing efficiency of processes and labour productivity. The CzSO has started the strategic project Redesign of the statistical survey system in the Czech Republic. The main reasons for this project are

- a) high level of respondent burden
- b) complicated questionnaires
- c) lower consistency between statistical surveys than expected
- d) high non-response in specific branches
- e) limited capacity and increasing demand

The reform principles of the project are focused on the respondents, the users as well as the statistical system. The project is steered by the top-management of the CzSO. The members of the working groups and the project-leaders of the project are “young statisticians” of the CzSO. Through this project they are given a strategic role to form their own future statistical work environment.

The description of processes have started during 2005. “The process of production and provision of statistical information” was chosen as the first for the description. Specifically, business statistics processing has been analysed. An external consultant has participated in this activity. The need to find a common terminology for describing processes within the framework of a statistical meta-information system has been identified.

4.3 Processes are in place to deal with quality considerations, including tradeoffs within quality, and to guide planning for existing and emerging surveys.

Largely met.

The CzSO has a Total Quality Management (TQM) committee which works on a regular basis to promote quality in different work-areas of the CzSO. A TQM user satisfaction survey and regular meetings with the representatives of main user groups are in place on a regular basis.

Working Team Quality - as a part of the project Statistical Meta- information System (SMS) - has started its activity in March 2006. The goal is to test questionnaires to monitor statistical surveys (not a statistical product at this stage) – design, collection, processing and quality of its outputs. The task of the Team is to supplement the content of the questionnaire (co-operation with subject-matter experts) and test it by filling in data from real surveys. One goal is to implement forms in Oracle to fill in the questionnaires automatically as much as possible.

4.4 Quality guidelines are documented and staff are well trained. These guidelines are spelled out in writing and made known to the public.

Partly met.

Some quality guidelines are available in writing. Such quality guidelines will be further developed. The quality guidelines are not yet made known to the public.

Training of staff in quality matters has started and will be further developed.

4.5 There is a regular and thorough review of the key statistical outputs using external experts where appropriate.

Fully met.

TQM methodological audits are conducted from 2004 on a rotating basis. The groups of auditors are dominated by external experts. All planned statistical segments are supposed to be audited over a time-period of five years.

Improvement actions

- Training on quality in statistics including invitation of other national data producers to participate.
Time frame: Fully implemented from 2007
- The rolling quality audits will continue on a rotating basis according to five years plan:
Time frame: ongoing
- Consider the use of annual self-assessment questionnaire by survey managers to provide indications of quality problems.
Time frame: To be implemented together with the redesign of the statistical survey system - from 2009
- Information on data quality to be made available to users
Time frame: To be implemented together with the redesign of the statistical survey system – from 2009

Principal 5 Statistical Confidentiality

The privacy of data providers (households, enterprises, administrations and other respondents), the confidentiality of the information they provide and its use only for statistical purposes must be absolutely guaranteed.

Overall assessment: The CzSO has provisions in place suited to strictly guarantee the protection of data confidentiality.

5.1 Statistical confidentiality is guaranteed in law.

Fully met.

See Act No 89/1995 Coll. sections 16 and 17 (“Secrecy and Confidential Statistical Data Protection, Provision of Confidential Statistical Data”) which set out the framework for protecting the confidentiality of data obtained for statistical purposes.

5.2 Statistical authority staff sign legal confidentiality commitments on appointment.

Fully met.

Staff are required to swear and to sign such an undertaking in order to be able to work on statistical production. The wording of the pledge is given in section 16(2) of Act No89/1995 Coll.

5.3 Substantial penalties are prescribed for any willful breaches of statistical confidentiality.

Fully met.

Act No 89/1995 Coll. – section 25 - details such a penalty – the imposition of a potentially substantial fine.

5.4 Instructions and guidelines are provided on the protection of statistical confidentiality in the production and dissemination processes. These guidelines are spelled out in writing and made known to the public.

Largely met.

Information about confidentiality protection is available to statistical producers and to those in the scientific community working with official data and statistics. However such information is not routinely disseminated to the public.

5.5 Physical and technological provisions are in place to protect the security and integrity of statistical databases.

Fully met.

CzSO's technological security is consistent with international standards.

5.6 Strict protocols apply to external users accessing statistical microdata for research purposes.

Fully met.

External academic/research users can gain access to anonymised (business/enterprise) microdata for scientific research providing that recipients sign a confidentiality undertaking (Act No 89/1995 Coll. -s17 (1) (b). Personal microdata are not made available, because of the Czech Data Protection legislation.

Improvement actions

- Co-operation with Eurostat\ESS in moving towards best practice in the area of microdata access for research purposes (Eurostat workshop October 2006)
- Establish dialogue with users to increase interest in microdata and to discuss how their needs for confidential microdata might be met within a framework of disclosure risk management.

Time frame: To be implemented from 2009

Principal 6

Impartiality and Objectivity

Statistical Authorities must produce and disseminate European statistics respecting scientific independence and in an objective, professional and transparent manner in which all users are treated equitably.

Overall Assessment: The CzSO is considered to have a high level of compliance with this principle.

6.1 Statistics are compiled on an objective basis determined by statistical considerations

6.2 Choices of sources and statistical techniques are informed by statistical considerations

6.7 Statistical releases made in press conferences are objective and non-partisan

Fully met.

Following section 4 and in particular section 5 of the [State Statistical Service Act](#) and in line with central provision of the [CzSO Code of Ethics](#), the CzSO's practices seem to fully ensure the production and dissemination of statistics on an informed objective basis confirmed by the opinion of users.

In view of extending the implementation of the Code of Practice to other national data producers, and to producers of official statistics outside the remit of the State Statistical System, actions aiming towards better integrated practices in the State Statistical Service as a whole can be recommended to foster public confidence in the objectivity of official statistics. This holds in particular for the Ministries forming part of the State Statistical Service

Information on the European Statistics Code of Practice to be published on the CzSO website would nicely complement the information provided on the CzSO Code of Ethics, Dissemination Policy and related documents, like on "MISSION, VISION, STRATEGIC GOALS AND SUB-GOALS".

6.3 Errors in published statistics are corrected at the earliest possible date and publicised

Largely met.

While as a rule, errors are corrected by the CzSO and a policy is in place to announce publicly the correction of serious errors, central information is yet lacking on their occurrences potentially impeding on the reaction time. Greater openness about the scale of errors in key series that would generate revisions would complement the existing policy.

6.4 Information on the methods and procedures used by the statistical authority are publicly available

Largely met.

The CzSO adheres to the [Special Data Dissemination Standards by the IMF](#), thus provides comprehensive metadata for some key statistical output in the area of economic and financial statistics. Data published on its [website](#) is accompanied by a basic description of the subject and more detailed methodological information for selected areas. Classifications and e.g. changes in methodology are explained comprehensively e.g. in a press release. In addition, methodological information is included as well in some publications.

Information will need to be extended to cover more statistical areas following a more systematic approach in terms of the content covered, comprising in addition information on data quality.

6.5 Statistical release dates and times are pre-announced

Fully met.

In line with section 18(3) of the State Statistical Service Act and as stated in its Dissemination Policy, the CzSO employs a comprehensive [release calendar](#) announcing dates for news releases on the website for the whole year in September/October t-1. In addition, the [CzSO annual publication catalogue](#) – comprising as well the publication programme of the Regional Offices - announces the publication dates for all publications.

This practice is followed by some other national data providers for key statistical output. Though recommended by some users, the CzSO considered it would be unduly resource intensive to integrate these release calendars in a State Statistical Service – wide approach.

6.6 All users have equal access to statistical releases at the same time and any privileged pre-release access to any outside user is limited, controlled and publicised. In the event that leaks occur, pre-release arrangements should be revised so as to ensure impartiality.

Fully met, once information on pre-release access is publicised.

Pre-release access of press agencies only and limited to 15 minutes in advance. Procedures are well controlled and respect of the embargo is subject to regular checks by the CzSO with no breaches so far. To publicise information on the pre-release access (e.g. on the corresponding [SDDS pages of the IMF](#)) could further improve transparency of the dissemination procedures.

Improvement actions

- Invest in a procedure to record errors in published data (workflow system)
Time frame: To be set up by the end of 2006
- Increase the range of statistics for which comprehensive metadata – including on data quality – is published on the website (advanced statistical metadata system project)
Time frame: To be implemented together with the implementation of the SMS project from 2009

Principal 7

Sound Methodology

Sound methodology must underpin quality statistics.

Improvement actions

- Project Statistical Meta-information System (SMS) which will integrate various requirements on the statistical information system (objectives, processes and procedures, quality aspects, producers and users aspects, data storing, outputs etc). This project is interlinked with the project Redesign of the Statistical Survey System
Time frame: To be implemented from 2009

Principal 8

Appropriate Statistical Procedures

Appropriate statistical procedures, implemented from data collection to data validation, must underpin quality statistics.

Improvement actions

- Project of the Redesign of the statistical survey system to increase the use of administrative sources, to implement and enforce increased use of statistical estimation techniques and common approaches throughout the statistical system
Time frame: To be implemented from 2009 together with the implementation of the Statistical Meta-Information System Project (SMS) (see Principal 7)
- Pre-testing of questionnaires
Time frame: To be set up by the end of 2006

Principal 9

Non-Excessive Burden on Respondents

The reporting burden should be proportionate to the needs of the users and should not be excessive for respondents. The statistical authority monitors the response burden and sets targets for its reduction over time.

Improvement actions

- Redesign of the statistical survey system with a view of reducing response burden, establishing a permanent dialogue with respondents and increasing the response rates and enforceability
Time frame: To be implemented from 2009
- Introduce the discipline of measuring the costs to business of complying with statistical surveys, and set targets to reduce this. Develop a methodology to limit the impact of official surveys on small businesses
Time frame: To be set up by 2010

Principal 10

Cost Effectiveness

Resources must be effectively used.

Improvement actions

- Redesign of the statistical survey system with a view of spreading common approaches throughout the statistical system applying latest technology and to increase serviceability of administrative sources
Time frame: To be implemented from 2009
- Consider funding the State statistical programme on a multi-annual basis, to enable efficiencies and to support medium term planning.
Time frame depends on the approach of the Ministry of Finance
- Optimise division of responsibilities between CzSO and Regional Offices to ensure that work is conducted efficiently
Time frame: To be accomplished by 2009 First changes will be effective as from 1.9.2006

Principal 11

Relevance

European Statistics must meet the needs of users

Improvement actions

- To provide a response to the user community annually on changes and developments made as a result of user feedback.
Time frame: 2007

Principal 12

Accuracy and Reliability

European Statistics must accurately and reliably portray reality.

Improvement actions

- The rolling quality audits will continue on a rotating basis according to five years plan
Time frame: ongoing
- Experimental flash estimates for quarterly GDP.
Time frame: To be implemented from 2008

Principal 13

Timeliness and Punctuality

European Statistics must be disseminated in a timely and punctual manner.

Overall assessment: The CzSO is considered to fully comply with this principle subject to introducing a policy for dealing with divergences from the dissemination time schedule.

13.1 Timeliness meets the highest European and international dissemination standards.

Fully met

Statistical information is provided according to the annual [release calendar](#) and according to the [CzSO annual publication catalogue](#) . Timeliness and punctuality meet high European standards.

13.2 A standard daily time is set for the release of European Statistics.

Fully met

The daily standard time for release of new statistical information is 9.00 a.m. of local time.

13.3 Periodicity of European Statistics takes into account user requirement as much as possible.

For European level reply.

13.4 Any divergence from the dissemination time schedule is publicised in advance, explained and a new release date set.

Not met

Lack of punctuality is very exceptional. There are no rules in place if it happens.

13.5 Preliminary results of acceptable aggregate quality can be disseminated when considered useful.

Fully met

Some preliminary results are regularly published e.g. concerning GDP. In that case they are marked as preliminary results. There are plans to develop an experimental flash estimate for quarterly GDP.

Improvement actions

- An annual punctuality report will be produced
Time frame: 2007
- Experimental flash estimates for quarterly GDP
Time frame: To be implemented 2008

Principal 14

Coherence and Comparability

European Statistics should be consistent internally, over time and comparable between regions and countries; it should be possible to combine and make joint use of related data from different sources.

Overall assessment: Based on internally consistent data produced in compliance with European standards, the CzSO will work towards improving coherence of its statistics in the framework of the strategic project "Redesign of the statistical survey system".

14.1 Statistics are internally coherent and consistent (e.g. arithmetic and accounting identities observed).

Fully met

Internal coherence and consistency are regularly in place. The steering committee and the working group for coherence and comparability of statistical indicators are established and have regular meetings. There is also the strategic project of Redesign of the statistical survey system. These activities promote internal coherence and comparability.

14.2 Statistics are coherent or reconcilable over a reasonable period of time.

Not met. Work has started.

Breaks in time series are documented only to a less extent.

The steering committee and the working group for coherence and comparability of statistical indicators are established and have regular meetings. There is also the strategic project of Redesign of the statistical survey system. These activities will promote coherence and comparability over time. Statistical areas in focus are construction statistics, industry statistics, price indices and deflators, household statistics, retail trade statistics and the consistency between quarterly and annual statistics.

14.3 Statistics are compiled on the basis of common standards with respect to scope, definitions, units and classifications in the different surveys and sources.

Fully met.

The CzSO applies European standards concerning definition of units and statistical classifications.

14.4 Statistics from different surveys and sources are compared and reconciled.

Partly met.

Czech statistics are regularly compared with international flow statistics to find inconsistencies e.g. concerning trade statistics. Methods are in place to reconcile large differences. The steering committee and the working group for coherence and comparability of statistical indicators are established and have regular meetings. There is also the strategic project of Redesign of the statistical survey system. These activities will promote comparison and reconciliation between different surveys and sources. Statistical areas in focus are construction statistics, industry statistics, price indices and deflators, household statistics, retail trade statistics and the consistency between quarterly and annual statistics.

14.5 Cross-national comparability of the data is ensured through periodical exchanges between the European Statistical System and other statistical systems; methodological studies are carried out in close co-operation between Member States and Eurostat.

For European level reply.

Improvement actions

- The Committee for Coherence and Comparability of Statistical Indicators to extend its work to look at issues such as the relationship between provisional and final estimates.
Time frame: To be implemented together with the implementation of the SMS project from 2009

Principal 15 Accessibility and Clarity

European statistics should be presented in a clear and understandable form, disseminated in a suitable and convenient manner, available and accessible on an impartial basis with supporting metadata and guidance.

Overall assessment: The CzSO presents its statistics in a clear form and allows for user-friendly access. Improvements in the area of metadata will contribute to full compliance with this principle.

15.1 Statistics are presented in a form that facilitates proper interpretation and meaningful comparisons

15.2 Statistics are disseminated using modern information and communication technology

Fully met.

On its [website](#) in Czech and English language, meeting international standards with regard to accessibility, including full Y-compliance, the CzSO publishes an

impressive range of statistics for free on the internet. Furthermore, good practice includes a corner with specific information targeted to selected user groups (analysts, journalist, entrepreneurs, students) and an annual user-satisfaction survey. Results of the latest survey carried out during December 2005 for which 359 replies were received, broadly confirm the user-friendliness of data accessibility and presentation.

User-friendliness is further improved as more information will be included in the CzSO web-based database which was opened in January 2006. A comprehensive [publication catalogue](#) provides as well for electronic and print copies of the statistical products in line with the CzSO pricing policy regulated in section 18(1) of the [State Statistical Service Act](#).

Some kind of explicit feedback to users summarising changes implemented following users' suggestions is encouraged with a view to maintaining users' interest in a dialogue with the CzSO for the future.

15.3 Custom-design analyses are provided when feasible and made public

Fully met

In line with section 18(1) (c) of the [State Statistical Service Act](#), the CzSO prepares and publishes custom-design analysis as far as possible. However, meeting more user requests for custom-design analysis, thus addressing one of the findings of the latest user satisfaction survey carried out by the CzSO, could be envisaged on the basis of provisions introducing more budget flexibility in enabling the CzSO to retain the income from those services (see as well principle 3).

The CzSO is very helpful in access to microdata intermediated by Eurostat (LFS, EU-SILC etc).

15.4 Access to microdata can be allowed for research purposes. This access is subject to strict protocols.

Fully met

External academic/research users can gain access to anonymised (business/enterprise) microdata for scientific research providing that recipients sign a confidentiality undertaking (Act No 89/1995 Coll. 17 (1) (b)). Personal microdata are not made available, because of the Czech Data Protection legislation.

15.5 Metadata are documented according to standardised metadata systems 15.6 Users are kept informed on the methodology of statistical processes and the quality of statistical outputs with respect to ESS quality criteria.

Largely met

The CzSO adheres to the [Special Data Dissemination Standards by the IMF](#), thus provides comprehensive metadata for some key statistical output in the area of economic and financial statistics. Data published on its [website](#) is accompanied by a short description of the subject and more detailed methodological information for

selected areas. Classifications and e.g. changes in methodology are explained comprehensively e.g. in a press release. In addition, some of the methodological information is available as well in paper publications. Need for improvement relates to the rudimentary nature of the information presented next to the data which covers only part of the output and was considered by some users to insufficiently flag e.g. breaks in series. The metadata presentation would benefit from a more systematic approach comprising in addition information on data quality (see as well principle 6). In a subsequent step, internal procedures for monitoring the quality of metadata would contribute to maintaining high standards including of the freshness of metadata.

Improvement actions

- Increase range of statistics for which comprehensive metadata – including on quality – is published on the website (advanced statistical metadata system project)
Time frame: To be implemented together with the implementation of the SMS project from 2009
- Improve the systematic documentation of breaks in series.
Time frame: To be implemented together with the implementation of the SMS project from 2009
- Develop internal procedures for monitoring the quality of metadata.
Time frame: 2009

Annex 1: Programme of the visit

1st day: 29 March 2006

- 09.30 – 10.00 Organisation issues, presentation of additional documents
10.00 – 13.00 Meeting with the management and senior staff
- introduction of the peers and presentation of the aim and scope of the peer review
- short presentation by the CzSO concerning the national statistical system
- comprehensive review of principles 1-6 and 13-15 of the CoP on the basis of the Self Assessment Questionnaire as the starting-point

A presentation by the CzSO of the results of the latest User Satisfaction Survey was replaced by information provided in writing and a meeting with the Quality Committee was considered not necessary as information could be included in the morning session. These programme changes allowed for more time to discuss in depth the single principles of the Code.

- 14.30 – 16.30 presentation of the project of Reform of the Statistical Survey's System
meeting with junior staff
meeting with representatives of two regional statistical offices

2nd day, 30 March 2006

- 09.30 – 11.30 meeting with other producers of statistics (National Bank, Ministry of Industry, and Trade, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Transport

and Communication, Ministry of Health, Research Institute of the Ministry of Agriculture etc.) and some members of the Czech Statistical Council

13.00 – 14.30 meeting with users (representatives of administrative institutions, media, research institutes, association of business enterprises and university)

15.00 – 17.00 summing-up and conclusions
list of improvement actions

3rd day, 31 March 2006

10.30 – 12.00 meeting with the President of the CzSO Mr. Fischer on findings, conclusions
and follow-up (improvement) actions

Annex 2: List of Participants

List of CzSO Participants

Name	Title	CzSO Division
Mr Jan Fischer	President of the CZSO	
Mr Jiří Křovák	First Vice-President of the CZSO	
Mr Stanislav Drápal	Vice-President of the CZSO	
Ms Hana Šlégrová	Director	International Cooperation Department
Mr Zdeněk Veselý	Senior Advisor to the President of the CZSO	
Ms Petra Kuncová	Director	Analyses and Dissemination Branch
Mr Vladimír Mašát	Director	Macroeconomic Analyses and Analytical Methods Department
Ms Jana Bondyová	Director	Information Services Department
Ms Jana Zdráhalová	Head	Legislative Section
Ms Kočvarová	Expert	Legislative Section
Ms Marie Hlaváčková	Head	Education and Training Section
Ms Jarmila Povolná	Head	International Cooperation Planning Section
Ms Hana Graclová	Head	Legal Activities and Administrative Proceeding Department
Ms Sněženka Šourková	Head	Budget Section
Ms Zdenka Benešová	Expert	Budget Section
Mr Vladimír Holý	Expert	General Methodology and Registers Branch
Ms Pavla Trendová	Head	Statistical Surveys Coordination Section
Ms Jitka Prokop	Expert	Mathematical and Statistics Methods Department
Mr Ondřej Vozár	Head	Special Methods Application Section
Ms Bohdana Holá	Head	Specific Population Statistics Department
Mr Marek Rojíček	Head	Input-Output Tables
Mr Juraj Lojka	Head	Transport and Communication Statistics Section
Mr Pavel Vančura	Head	Tourism Statistics Section
Ms Jana Gotvaldová	Expert	Transport and Communication Statistics Section
Ms Šárka Písaříková	Expert	Section for Statistics on Export and Import Services
Mr Vladimír Klimeš	Expert	External Trade Prices Statistics Section
Ms Helena Koláčková	Head	Marketing Section
Mr Murali Parsa	Expert	Research, Development and Information Society Statistics Section
Ms Jana Moravcová	Director	CZSO Regional Office Brno
Ms Kuprová		CZSO Regional Office Pardubice

List of external participants

Producers of statistics:

Mr.P. Vojtisek - director of department, Czech National Bank
Mr.V. Gejdos – director of department, Ministry of Industry and Trade
Ms. Kastlova – head of unit, Ministry of Transport and Communication
Ms. V. Mazankova, Director, Institute of Health Statistics, Ministry of Health
Mr. Holub, head of unit, Ministry of Health

Users:

Mr.V. Valenta, expert, Department of Financial Policies, Ministry of Finance,
Ms. A. Zemplerová, researcher, CERGE (Centre for Economic Research),
Academy of Sciences
Ms.T.Šamanova, Chamber of Commerce of the Czech Republic
Mr.J.Jilek, professor, Economic University Prague
Mr.J. Fischer, Economic University Prague
Mr.Petruš, Reuters Agency

Annex 3: List of Improvement Actions by Principle

Principle 1

Professional Independence

- In the proposed Civil Service Act (or elsewhere), to introduce a requirement to advertise the post of the President of CzSO openly in future. Also, to agree and legislate for a fixed standard term of appointment.
- Take steps to improve users' input to statistical programming, including perhaps the appointment of an independent Chair of the Czech Statistical Council
Time frame: next amendments of the related legislation related

Principle 2

Mandate for data collection

- Amendment of Statistical Service Act to access for statistical purposes to (all) administrative data held by government agencies.
This amendment has been passed in the meantime by the Parliament and came into force as of 1 June 2006
- CzSO list of priority actions and envisaged time frame to facilitate access to administrative data
Time frame: formal agreements will be concluded with respective authorities in 2006-2007

Principle 3

Adequacy of Resources

- Consider funding the State statistical programme on a multi-annual basis, to enable efficiencies and to support medium term planning
To be discussed with the Ministry of Finance and other authorities – time frame: 2007 - 2009

Principle 4

Quality Commitment

- Training on quality in statistics including invitation of other national data producers to participate.
Time frame: Fully implemented from 2007
- The rolling quality audits will continue on a rotating basis according to the five years plan Time frame: continuously
- Consider the use of annual self-assessment questionnaire by survey managers to provide indications of quality problems.

Time frame: To be implemented together with the redesign of the statistical survey system - from 2009

- Information on data quality to be made available to users
Time frame: To be implemented together with the redesign of the statistical survey system – from 2009

Principle 5 Statistical Confidentiality

- Co-operation with Eurostat\ESS in moving towards best practice in the area of microdata access for research purposes (Eurostat workshop October 2006)
- Establish dialogue with users to increase interest in microdata and to discuss how their needs for confidential microdata might be met within a framework of disclosure risk management.
Time frame: To be implemented from 2009

Principle 6 Impartiality and Objectivity

- Invest in a procedure to record errors in published data (workflow system)
Time frame: – to be set up by the end of 2006
- Increase the range of statistics for which comprehensive metadata – including on data quality – is published on the website (Project Statistical Meta-information System (SMS)
Time frame: To be implemented together with the implementation of the SMS project from 2009

Principle 7 Sound Methodology

- Project Statistical Meta-information System (SMS) which will integrate various requirements on the statistical information system (objectives, processes and procedures, quality aspects, producers and users aspects, data storing, outputs etc.) . This project is interlinked with the project Redesign of the Statistical Survey System
Time frame: To be implemented from 2009

Principle 8 Appropriate Statistical Procedures

- Project of the Redesign of the statistical survey system to increase the serviceability of administrative sources (change of national legislation), to

implement and enforce increased use of statistical estimation techniques and common approaches throughout the statistical system.

Time frame: To be implemented from 2009 together with the implementation of the Statistical Meta-Information System (SMS) project (see Principle 7)

- Pre-testing of questionnaires
Time frame: To be set up by the end of 2006

Principle 9

Non-Excessive Burden on Respondents

- Redesign of the statistical survey system with a view to reducing response burden, establishing a permanent dialogue with respondents and to increasing the response rates and enforceability
Time frame: To be implemented from 2009
- Introduce the discipline of measuring the costs to business of complying with statistical surveys, and set targets to reduce this. Develop a methodology to limit the impact of official surveys on small businesses
Time frame: To be set up by 2010

Principle 10

Cost Effectiveness

- Redesign of the statistical survey system with a view to spreading common approaches throughout the statistical system applying latest technology and to increasing the serviceability of administrative sources
Time frame: To be implemented from 2009
- Consider funding the State statistical programme on a multi-annual basis, to enable efficiencies and to support medium term planning – by 20? [please indicate time horizon – see principle 3]
Time frame depends on the approach of the Ministry of Finance
- Optimise division of responsibilities between CzSO and Regional Offices to ensure that work is conducted efficiently
Time frame: To be accomplished by 2009. First changes will be effective as of 1.9.2006

Principle 11

Relevance

- To provide a response to the user community annually on changes and developments made as a result of user feedback.
Time frame: 2007

Principle 12

Accuracy and Reliability

- The rolling quality audits will continue on a rotating basis according to five years plan
- Experimental flash estimates for quarterly GDP.
Time frame: To be implemented from 2008

Principle 13

Timeliness and Punctuality

- An annual punctuality report will be produced
Time frame: 2007
- Experimental flash estimates for quarterly GDP
Time frame: To be implemented 2008

Principle 14

Coherence and Comparability

- The Committee for Coherence and Comparability of Statistical Indicators to extend its work to look at issues such as the relationship between provisional and final estimates.
Time frame: To be implemented together with the implementation of the SMS project from 2009

Principle 15

Accessibility and Clarity

- Increase range of statistics for which comprehensive metadata – including on quality – is published on the website (advanced statistical metadata system project)
Time frame: To be implemented together with the implementation of the SMS project from 2009
- Improve the systematic documentation of breaks in series.
Time frame: To be implemented together with the implementation of the SMS project from 2009
- Develop internal procedures for monitoring the quality of metadata.
Time frame: 2009