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**Peer review on the implementation
of the
European Statistics Code of Practice**

Country visited: Switzerland

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The peer review visit to the Swiss Federal Statistical Office (FSO) had a relatively short preparation time as it was in 2007 only that Switzerland formally joined the European Statistical System and the request for a peer review was only made in summer. Still, the documentation for the review and the agenda were well prepared and even a customer survey has been completed.

The agenda (see Annex) involved meetings with the management and staff of the FSO, and representatives from users and stakeholders, all very helpful in providing information and comments.

It was considered to be an important step forward for the Swiss statistical system that an article on statistics was included in the Swiss Federal Constitution in 1999 (Article 65). This article states that the Confederation shall collect the necessary data on the status and evolution of the population, economy, society, education, research, territory and environment in Switzerland.

Switzerland has a federal structure leading to relatively complex legislative and organisational structures that also affect the statistical system. There is a large number of partners of the statistical system as defined by the Law on Federal Statistics of 1992 and the ordinances appended to the law, comprising some 27 government agencies and in addition some cantonal statistical authorities, communal statistical authorities and officially funded research institutions. While most of the statistical activities are being carried out at the federal level, not all the activities of these partners are based on the same legal framework. In some cases, there are specific laws at cantonal level. In the case of the Swiss National Bank, there is a law related to this institution. This poses several challenges not least in relation to coordination that will be further discussed under Chapter 4.

The main findings are as follows:

- The practice and work culture of the FSO are professionally independent, as also confirmed by the User satisfaction survey. However, the present statistical legislation does not put in place most, but not all the necessary preconditions for the professional independence of the FSO. It does not provide for sufficiently strong coordination mechanism of the Swiss statistical system.
- The statistical legislation provides the FSO with a clear mandate for the collection of data from businesses and households. It also provides for the use of administrative data, and there has been significant progress in the use of such data.
- The FSO appears to need additional resources to increase the scope and the quality of the federal statistics and to meet requirements of European statistics.
- The FSO has a clear strategy to improve the monitoring of quality to put in place more systematic quality management.
- Rules for confidentiality are in general well specified in laws and ordinances. However, the legislation in this area is quite complex partly due to the federal structure and the somewhat unclear borderline between statistical data and administrative/statistical registers creates specific challenges.
- The FSO appears to act in an impartial and independent manner and applies proper statistical methods. There was no indication of political interference.

- The FSO has an extensive dissemination program in several languages, with the web as the main dissemination channel and including extensive documentation. However, access to the full data base is not free of charge.
- The coordination of the statistical system of Switzerland is relatively complex due to the federal structure and the instrument provided by the statistical law for the FSO to coordinate other producers of statistics is still rather weak. However, in reality coordination and cooperation had in practice been gradually improving, not least based on the development of the Charter for Swiss public statistics and the signing of cooperation agreements.

2. INTRODUCTION

With the adoption of the European Statistics Code of Practice, the Statistical Programme (SPC) committed itself to adhering to its principles. At its meeting on 25 May 2005, the 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.

During December 2005 / January 2006 the National Statistical Institutes and Eurostat have completed their self-assessments, the results have been summarised by Eurostat in a report submitted to the Economic and Financial Committee in May 2006 which has been published on the Eurostat website.

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 to help building trust in the integrity of the European Statistical System, its processes and outputs.

The Code of Practice peer reviews follow a common methodology focusing 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. In principle, the peer review is limited to the National Statistical Institute and its co-ordination role within a dispersed national statistical system. A short document provided by the National Statistical Institute which summarises key aspects of the functioning of the national statistical system is published together with this report.

During a three-day visit on-site and on the basis of information material provided by the National Statistical Institute and Eurostat prior to the review, peer reviews yield a report assessing compliance with the Code of Practice at indicator level and by principle following a four point assessment scale. The report 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.

While the peer reviewers will undertake to base their assessment to the extent possible on factual information, 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 and system wide basis. Accordingly, it is not straightforward to ascertain that certain practices or behaviours or systems operate in all statistical domains.

On October 31, 2007, the Swiss Federal Council took note of the Code.

3. FINDINGS PER PRINCIPLE

Principle 1: Professional Independence

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

Overall assessment:

The review team was satisfied that the practices and work culture of the FSO are professionally independent. This was strongly confirmed in the User Satisfactory Survey 2007, and throughout our meetings with the FSO staff and with data users and the mass media. However, while professional independence is supported by the provisions of the statistical legislation, some aspects of the legal basis give cause for concern in relation to independence.

The present statistical legislation does put in place most, but not all necessary preconditions for professional independence of the FSO. It does not provide for sufficiently strong coordination of the Swiss statistical system. The Federal Council can restrict access to statistical results for important reasons other than data protection (Art. 18.4). This power, even if it might not be misused, appears not to be in line with the spirit of the Code of Practice.

The review team considers it necessary to find a legal mechanism which will more clearly demonstrate the FSO professional independence. The team understands that the long historical traditions of the Swiss federal structure of political system and public administration, including statistics, make it difficult to even slightly modify the statistical system in order to adjust it to the principle 1 of the Code of Practice, at least in the short run. The team, however, recommends that the FSO together with national legal services examines the options available for increasing legal underpinning of professional independence of the FSO.

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

Assessment: Largely met

Comments: The FSO reports directly to the Federal Department of Home Affairs (FDI) (equivalent to the Ministry of Interior), which has the power of issuing internal ordinances.

There seems to be no clear rules for limiting internal ordinances to administrative and budgetary issues only. In other words, there are no legal safeguards against issuing ordinances also related to the organisation of statistics.

Section 1, Art. 3 of the Federal Statistics Act specifies that the FSO *prepares representative results in a professionally independent way on the status of and changes in the population, the economy, society, spatial planning and the environment in Switzerland*. Art. 3 and Art. 10 set out the mandate of the FSO. The functions, tasks and rights of FSO are further elaborated in the Ordinance on the Organisation of Federal Statistics, including its functions in relation to collection, and dissemination of statistical information (Art. 3), as well as drafting and implementing the multi-annual programme (Art. 4).

While professional independence of the FSO is emphasised in the Federal Statistics Act gives rather extensive power to the Federal Council, and vaguely specifies the power and prerogatives of the FSO vis-à-vis the other institutions of the Swiss statistical system. The deficiencies are listed below. In addition, the illustration of some of the shortcomings could be found in Ivan P. Fellegi and Jacob Ryten peer review (2000). The legal situation has not been changed since 2000.

The Act defines the FSO as the central statistical organ of Confederation and designates the FSO as the coordinator of federal statistics (Art. 10). Art. 11, however, somewhat narrows its coordination responsibilities: according to Art. 11 the FSO only advises other federal producers of statistics.

The Federal Council has power to assign the statistical duty to the FSO or another statistical office or federal office (Art.10, item 2), and to commission surveys and participation (Section 2, Art. 5 and 6, Section 3, Art. 11). This means that the Federal Council decides 'who is doing what' at the federal level with regards to statistics. In practice, the coordination in the Swiss Statistical System does not always provide an optimal reallocation of functions, and cannot prevent duplication of some statistical work by the various federal offices. For example, the quarterly national accounts are being done by the Department of Economics, while the FSO is responsible for the annual national accounts. In addition to problems of synchronisation of revisions in both institutions, this practice can compromise impartiality of statistics. The Department of Economics not only compiles statistics but also uses it for the policy oriented analysis. The absence of clear border line between creating and usage of statistics, if even might not been an obstacle yet, is in conflict with the spirit of the Code of Practice.

The Act designates the FSO as guarantor of national and international comparability through the data bases. However, according to the Section 4 of Art. 18, the Federal Council could limit the right of the FSO to publish certain results. Moreover, the Act allows the Federal Council to designate some other body in Confederation to carry out a specific collection.

The process for approval of the Multi-Annual Programme gives similar cause for concern.

While these are important questions of principle, the team was satisfied that there has been no political or other external interference in the production of statistics.

Indicator 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.

Assessment: Fully met

Comments: The Director General of FSO holds the same rank as the highest-ranking heads of public offices. Appointment is not based on a fixed term contract, and selection is by open

competition based on professional selection criteria. In all the review team's discussion with staff, management and external stakeholders, the Director General was held in high regard.

Indicator 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.

Assessment: Largely met

Comments: The Act does not clearly underpin this principle. The review team was however satisfied from its discussions that, in practice, the FSO acts independently in relation to methods, standards, procedures and all statistical dissemination matters. For example, cantonal education ministries along with one federal office gave rise to very strong requests to control methodology and publications for the OECD PISA project. In order to preserve professional independence, the FSO cancelled the status of the project as a project within the scope of the Federal Statistics Act.

Indicator 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.

Assessment: Largely met

Comments: The situation described under indicator 1.1 also means that, formally, the FSO is not legally independent in relation to statistical methods, standards and procedures. The review team recommends finding a legal solution which more clearly demonstrates the institutional independence of official statistics. While this is an important question, the team was fully satisfied that there have been no attempts to interfere with the statistical compilation process and that the FSO has sole responsibility for the content and timing of statistical releases. This was confirmed in discussions with junior staff.

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

Assessment: Fully met

Comments: A multi-annual (4-year) programme has to be approved by the Federal Council and submitted for information to the Parliament. In 2000, the reviewers (I. P. Fellegi and J. Ryten) found out that drafting and yearly updating the programme was a rather bureaucratic exercise. In particular, it was stressed in the peer review that the programme has limited use for decision making mainly because of the absence of the legal link of the programme to budget.

The team noted substantial progress in drafting, coordinating and implementing the programme. The FSO put in place a process that illustrates a good example of well performed coordination function by the FSO in setting up strategic and operational objectives and corresponding actions in the framework of the Swiss Statistical System. Despite this progress, there is still a lack of financial commitment for the implementation of the programme.

The reporting system is in place. In the current programme 2007-2011 like in every multi-annual programme, a special chapter covers the evaluation of the preceding programme. The annual progress of the work planned in the multi-annual programme is being reviewed by the

Statistical Council. In addition, the achievement of the programme's targets is being reported at the special annual press conference.

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

Assessment: Fully met

Comments: There is clear separation between statistical releases and political statements or policy interpretation of statistics. Representatives of users and the media confirmed this and FSO staff were well-briefed on the distinction. Statistical releases and announcements by the FSO clearly include the FSO logo.

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

Assessment: Fully met

Comments: The review team did not learn of any serious cases of criticism. It was informed about the recent case or misuse of statistics on the composition of Swiss population in the forecast. It was clear from this case and from the discussions with the staff, users and the media that FSO firmly intervenes when necessary, to explain statistical interpretation. The review team learned also that a special policy has been established in the FSO on how to handle public comments on statistical issues.

Principle 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 deliver data for European statistical purposes at the request of statistical authorities.

Overall assessment: Fully met

The statistical legislation provides the FSO with a clear mandate for the collection of data from businesses and households. It also provides for the use of administrative data for statistical purposes and there has been significant progress in using administrative data sources. The legislation makes it obligatory for businesses and natural persons to submit information free of charge to FSO and to other institutions working with official statistics.

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

Assessment: Fully met

Comments: The Federal Statistics Act provides the FSO with a clear mandate for the collection of data from businesses and households (Art. 4,5,6). Data providers are well aware of the obligations to provide statistical returns.

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

Assessment: Fully met

Comments: The Federal Statistics Act gives a clear mandate for statistical use of administrative data (Art. 7,8). The FSO has concluded bilateral agreements on the use of administrative records with public institutions. This has improved the availability of records for statistical use. In addition to the files from several federal offices, due to the split of responsibilities between the 3000 communities, 26 cantons and confederation, the FSO currently receives thousands of administrative files. All of them are being used by FSO for statistical purposes. Better coordination of administrative records across public agencies would yield further benefits for statistics.

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

Assessment: Fully met

Comments: Under the Federal Statistics Act (Art. 6), businesses and natural persons are obliged to provide information. In a small number of cases, sanctions have been imposed on businesses for non-response. The Census of Population is also obligatory (Federal Act on the Federal Census based on Art. 65 of the Federal Constitution). There is a legal enforcement mechanism for non-response.

Principle 3: Adequacy of Resources

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

Overall assessment: While there are some difficulties, notably in relation to the budget, human and IT resources, the review team found the current situation acceptable and manageable. Additional financing would allow to increase the scope and quality of the federal statistical services and to better meet the requirements of European statistics.

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

Assessment: Partly met

Comments: Comparative analysis of personnel employed in FSO (the number of staff per capita in Switzerland and other European countries with comparable statistical system) gives the impression that the FSO is probably understaffed compared to other European countries. Taking into account the decentralised nature of the Swiss Statistical System and the untypical allocation of tasks between many statistics producers at the federal, regional and cantonal levels, the team recommends supplementing the analysis by 'staff per task' approach in order yield further insight.

The team found some evidences that the FSO is underfinanced. The lack of financing resulted in reducing or cancelling important statistical activities. For example, the FSO does not produce input-output tables as input for national accounts. Another example is the lack of money for the OECD PISA project in the FSO budget. The budget was assigned to another federal office that used this situation for demanding control over the PISA project which resulted in the FSO cancelling the status of the OECD PISA project as a project within the scope of official statistics.

The lack of direct financing from the budget is partly substituted by additional funds from other federal offices, cantons or private organisations. However, in some cases co-financing creates very strong demand from those who pay to control statistical output.

Due to lack of resources the compliance with the European Statistics has not been achieved in some important areas, for instance in the field of short-term statistics.

While in general the IT resources seem adequate, the team was informed about the negative consequences of the centralisation of IT services for the whole federal administration in the late nineties. As a result of this centralised system, demands for IT tools and processes for special statistical needs are often not adequately met.

Indicator 3.2: The scope, detail and cost of European Statistics are commensurate with needs.

For European level reply.

Indicator 3.3: Procedures exist to assess and justify demands for new European Statistics against their cost.

For European level reply.

Indicator 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.

Indicator 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.

Principle 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: The FSO policy is strongly oriented towards the establishment of a solid and regular system of quality management for the reorganization of the internal processes and the improvement of the quality culture. The recruitment of a quality manager is a concrete evidence of this strategy and there is a strong expectation on the effects of this quality commitment in the strengthening of the role and image of the FSO in the country; moreover, the need to comply with the recommendations of the ESS quality declaration for the reorganization of the internal processes is highly perceived at all levels of staff. However, at present, the FSO is at a very preliminary stage with regard to both the management and the

regular application of a quality control system in all the production processes. In the planning documentation it is clearly stated that this process should be concluded in 2010 with the introduction and application of the TQM model.

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

Assessment: Largely met

Comments: The quality of statistical products according to the ESS quality dimensions is not regularly monitored for all the products, and the publication of the quality results is not yet a current practice. However, in the FSO strategy it is clearly stated that this monitoring activity will be improved and a very good example is the report "Quality Assurance of the Swiss Consumer Price Index" where a CPI-Total Quality Management has been introduced after the change of methodology in 2000. The personnel involved in the production processes are supposed to regularly improve its competences on quality issues, and close relations exist between FSO and universities on the development of best methods and tools for statistical surveys.

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

Assessment: Largely met

Comments: The quality of statistical production processes is monitored for most surveys, but not in a fully systematic way. Moreover the methods and the tools for assessing the quality of the different phases of the production cycles are applied for an ex-post analysis and are based on internal auditing, self-assessment and partly on quality indicators, without following any control system fully integrated in the statistical production sectors. There is, however, the ambition of the FSO to adopt more standardized methodologies, techniques and software in quality checking.

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

Assessment: Largely met

Comments: There are no formal processes in place to deal with quality considerations. The coordination bodies (The Statistical Council, Fedestat and Regiostat) as well as expert groups, composed of internal and external experts, are forums for the discussion of coordination and planning of statistical activities, including quality issues but they have only an advisory role. However, a more systematic approach cf. the preceding points, can be envisaged.

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

Assessment: Largely met

Comments: Guidelines for measuring quality are documented and made known to the public but not for all the statistical processes. The handbook on quality control for CPI represents a very valuable example of the quality approach of the FSO. Staff is trained on quality issues,

and also the high mobility of the personal from production units to the central directorate is a current practice to improve the internal knowledge and the interaction between the different activity areas. Moreover, meetings are frequently organized to promote an internal dialogue. In the FSO organization IT and methodological units belong to the same directorate in order to more efficiently coordinate the application of common standards in methods and tools.

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

Assessment: Partly met

Comments: The review of key statistical outputs by external experts is not a regular practice and there is not a programme of quality review in the FSO policy. The quality assessment is done through internal review by the Federal Statistical Council and the expert groups working in the different areas. Reviews have been conducted in the past by other NSIs experts and when necessary by people from academics.

Principle 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: In general, rules for confidentiality are well specified in laws and ordinances, and the reactions on any breaches are clear. However, the legislation in this area is quite complex partly due to the federal structure, and thus both application and supervision can be difficult. There is a somewhat unclear borderline between statistical work and data and administrative/statistical registers mainly due to the fact that the FSO also has the role of maintaining some federal registers on business, buildings and students that also are used by other authorities for administrative purposes. These registers are based on specific legal acts, and also provided for in the Statistical law. Even if legally based, and although respondents as a principle are informed when data are used both for administrative and statistical purposes, the present double function of the FSO can in the long run harm the status of the institution and its reputation for confidential treatment.

Indicator 5.1 Statistical confidentiality is guaranteed in law.

Assessment: Partly met

Comments: The Federal Statistics Act states in Article 14 that data collected for statistical purposes may not be used for other purposes unless a Federal Act expressly orders another use or those concerned provide their written consent.

Article 14 furthermore explains the duty of persons entrusted with statistical work to treat as confidential all data they come across in their work. In particular it mentions persons who are employed by cantons, communes and other offices to conduct surveys or who receive data in accordance with Article 19.

In Article 19 are further spelled out the conditions for disclosing personal data for purposes not related to specific persons, for instance that the data should be rendered anonymous, that the

recipient only discloses the results so that the persons concerned are not recognisable and that the recipient meets the requirements of the compliance with statistical secrecy and other data protection provisions.

The Ordinance on the Execution of Federal Statistical Surveys (431.012.1) also addresses use of data (Art. 8) and the communication of microdata (Art.9). Actually, it is stated in Article 8 that data from surveys can only be used for statistical purposes, with some specific exceptions (see below).

The ordinance also specifies that data from surveys on firms and enterprises can be used to update the business register within the FSO, provided that the respondents are informed. It also says (Art. 9. 2) that identifiable individual records can be transmitted to federal statistical services, cantons or communes in order to perform statistical work, provided that the protection of data are guaranteed and that the conditions are fixed by contract.

The Annex mentioned contains a long list of statistical surveys with responsible institution, definition of survey, objective, enquiry method, target population, whether response is obligatory, periodicity and specific comments where any exceptions from the confidentiality requirement are mentioned. Apparently, these are mainly related to the mentioned updating of the business register, the students register and statistics on causes of death.

Furthermore, the ordinance on the Organisation of Federal Statistics (431.011) handles data protection in Article 10 and it is said that in order to guarantee data protection the provisions of the Data Protection Act of 19 June 1992 and the Data Protection Ordinance of 26 September 2003 (235.11) apply.

Thus there are a number of legal documents related to data protection be taken into consideration, and in general data protection should be well taken care of. However, the peer review team has some concerns concerning the potential risks in this area. The concerns are related to the complexity of legislation in this area, which is somehow linked to the complexity of the statistical system and the unclear borderline between statistical work and administrative tasks both in the system as a whole and within the FSO, illustrated by the exceptions.

As illustrated, handling of data protection in the field of statistics will need to consider several legal documents, which to some extent are overlapping, but where there also might be nuances in interpretation. Furthermore, given the relatively wide definition of potential partners it must be rather difficult to ensure that the conditions for delivery of microdata to partners are fulfilled in all cases, especially as the legal framework related to data protection differs between the cantons.

Another major concern is the exceptions to confidentiality as provided for in the mentioned Article 14 of the Federal Act on Statistics.

It was underlined that such an order by a Federal act could have no retroactive effect in relation to data already collected. Thus respondents always should be informed when filling out a questionnaire whether the data would be used both for statistical and administrative purposes.

Even if it can be argued that there was no administrative use of statistical data there is a problem with the somewhat unclear borderline between (public) statistical work and administrative tasks within the totality of the Swiss statistical system, which in principle includes all Cantons and a number of Federal offices, some of which basically have administrative tasks. This unclear borderline also exists within the FSO, which has a double role as a statistical producer, based on the statistical law, and as responsible institution for maintaining some registers, which are used also for administrative purposes. The present registers on businesses, dwellings and students, which is partly used for administrative purposes by other

agencies, are all based on separate laws which regulate their usage. It was argued that the FSO was the only institution at central level that for the moment could keep such registers.

Thus there is no clear principle of one way traffic of identifiable micro data to the FSO as an organisation, and there seems to be no clear separation of the organisation of register work and the organisation of statistical work within the FSO either.

At present the FSO did not see any alternative to this organisation and saw neither any major problem with this double function. On the other hand, register development and harmonisation had proven to be a great benefit for developing public statistics and lowering response burden. It was also verified in the discussion that the FSO takes data confidentiality seriously through guidelines, training and through a restrictive practice.

Actually it was mentioned by one of the contacts interviewed that the issue of confidentiality might have to be considered to be of less importance within some cantons, and it was also mentioned in the self-assessment by the FSO that supervising is difficult – possibly due to the mentioned complexity. Thus, there seems to be structural challenges related to the legislation and the organisation of the statistical work and related registers that may cause at least future problems. It is advised to address this through amendments/consolidation of existing laws/ordinances and possibly through administrative/organisational reforms.

Indicator 5.2 Statistical authority staff sign legal confidentiality commitments on appointment.

Assessment: Largely met

Comments: Not all staff has signed such declaration at the moment and an action is planned to fulfill this obligation, even if the obligation is in principle covered by their work contract. A document for this purpose was presented and judged as satisfactory.

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

Assessment: Fully met

Comments: Article 23 of the Federal Statistical law prescribes the penalties (imprisonment or fine) for breaking the rules of Article 14 on confidentiality. Furthermore other legal acts could be taken into consideration, such as the Federal personnel law, Swiss penal law, Administrative criminal law and the Data protection law.

Indicator 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.

Assessment: Largely met

Comments: The FSO provided documentation of guidelines for data protection by distribution of micro data to third parties. The latest version dated 18 October 2006, and provided an overview of the different legal acts and gave quite precise definitions and conditions. Some annexes are still missing. These guidelines are quite extensive and mainly for internal usage, but some external partners may get this information.

In the Charter on Swiss public statistics, which is publicly available, the point of Statistical confidentiality says that Public statistics bodies shall treat all data concerning individuals or legal entities in the strictest confidence.

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

Assessment: Fully met

Comments: The FSO has addressed data protection both from the organisational, methodological and the technological point of view through a document from 2003 adopted by the management of FSO. Three levels of data sensitivity were defined, an internal data protection committee was established with several tasks related to the different aspects of data protection. While the FSO has responsibility for the handling and dissemination of data the IT processing has been outsourced to the Federal Office of Information Technology, Systems and Telecommunication. The activity is based on the Ordinance on informatic and telecommunications within the federal administration of 2003 (172.010.58). The Federal Informatics Council has on this basis elaborated for information security in the public administration. These seemed to be in line with good practice and no major concerns were raised.

It might also be mentioned that the FSO has put strong efforts into developing a Corporate Data Management (CODAM) solution in order to ensure the harmonised and common handling of statistical data and metadata within the FSO and possibly also for all public statistics.

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

Assessment: Fully met

Comments: All external users that get access to statistical microdata for research purposes have to sign a contract specifying strictly the conditions for these usage. There are clear guidelines and checklists for the elaboration of such contracts.

Principle 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: In general the FSO seems to act in a professional and independent manner, and to apply the proper statistical methods. This was also confirmed by all external partners met, and there was no indication of political interference. The surveys are also well documented on paper and on web. However, the formal basis and the procedures for elaborating the details of the programmes and the surveys could be improved in order to avoid any possibility for political interference regarding scientific independence. The praxis for pre-release and consultations needs to be clarified and tightened and made more transparent.

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

Assessment: Fully met

Comments: Indicator 6.1 and 6.2 should to some extent go together, and these indicators are also to some extent linked to the overall independence of the statistical institute and statistical system. As noted under principle 1 there are some concerns about independence from the

legal point of view and it should be noted, especially for principle 6, that both the definition and the scope of the surveys, the target population and the data collection method used is fixed through a ordinance issued by the Federal Council. Thus a decision by the Federal Council might also limit the scope of the compilation of public statistics.

However, there was no evidence, neither from internal nor external contacts, that the compilation of statistics by the FSO was made on an impartial basis. Actually some users underlined the independence of the office, also in relation to commenting on the misuse of statistics as given by a recent example. The customer survey provides the highest mark to the statement that the FSO is an independent information source. The Charter on Swiss public statistics also clearly specifies the principles that should be followed related to independence; scientific independence, impartiality, responsibility, warning (commenting on wrong interpretation/misuse).

Indicator 6.2: Choices of sources and statistical techniques are informed by statistical considerations.

Assessment: Fully met

Comments: It was well justified through the discussions with both internal and external representatives that the choices of sources and statistical techniques were based on statistical and not political considerations. See also comments to indicator 6.1.

Indicator 6.3: Errors discovered in published statistics are corrected at the earliest possible date and publicised.

Assessment: Fully met

Comments: The FSO has in place a policy for error handling distributed in a specific document, which is also referred to in an internal management policy document (Geschäftsordnung) and in the Charter on Public Statistics. A main part of this policy is to publish corrections of any errors as soon as discovered to those who got the message with wrong figures, and a recent example was provided. Representatives from the media reported that they actually could not recall any cases where errors had been corrected and publicised. This can indicate that such happens rather rarely.

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

Assessment: Fully met

Comments: The portal of the Swiss statistical system maintained by FSO contains a well organised overview of the different statistical themes and a description of surveys, sources, nomenclatures and definitions for each of these themes. This overview also includes statistics covered by other producers. For many surveys there is an overview (Fiche signalétique) that contains a more detailed description of the survey, legal basis, type of survey, discussion of quality issues etc. Often there is also a link to a specific document explaining more in details methods and procedures. Most so far are only on German and French, but there is also an increasing part available in English.

Indicator 6.5: Statistical release dates and times are pre -announced.

Assessment: Fully met

Comments: The dates and time for press releases is published and updated regularly on the FSO web site in the three official languages (not English). The users expressed satisfaction with the praxis and follow up.

Indicator 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.

Assessment: Largely met

Comments: The FSO has had a somewhat vague policy for pre-release access. Until recently some major news agencies had received press-releases 30 minutes before the official release under embargo, but there had apparently been no contractual obligation. This practice had been stopped with no warning, which gave rise to complaint by the news agencies. The news agencies also provided some valid arguments for pre-release access in their case. However, the FSO had no intention of introducing this praxis again.

It is explained that there are some exceptions in relation to the equal access rule. Especially the Swiss National Bank receives consumer price index 24 hours in advance as well advance information in order to prepare quarterly monetary policy decisions.

Under the French, German and Italian version (not the English!) of press releases it is given a list of which releases are released to whom (under embargo) and with what time limit. Actually there are several more than mentioned in the self-assessment and the reasons for some of these exceptions should be better explained, and it might be better to limit this list even more – or to implement a more transparent policy in this area.

It is also mentioned that some press releases are produced in cooperation with some external partners. Especially in those cases it is important to clarify the rules and responsibilities to avoid any suspicion of infringement of statistical impartiality.

Thus there is need for an action in this area to clean up the cases, to clarify reasons and procedures and to improve transparency, for instance by explaining these exceptions also under the documentation of the different surveys, and the meta-information pages.

Indicator 6.7: Statistical releases and statements made in Press Conferences are objective and non-partisan.

Assessment: Fully met

Comments: A review of some press releases (which are not published in English) confirms that the text in these releases are quite fact oriented with a relatively high number of figures illustrating the rather neutral remarks made. Thus, the challenge might not be so much objectivity but rather the degree these releases targets a wider audience (principle 15).

There was no indication from representatives from media or other users that the releases of the statistical office were in any way not considered impartial and objective.

The Customer survey actually gave the highest score to the statement that the FSO is an independent organisation, followed by the statement that comments on methodology are useful.

Principle 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 FSO publishes more than 200 publications and about 160 press releases every year and responds currently to numerous external users' inquiries. A very important data dissemination channel is the website (www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/portal), recently reviewed and more efficiently organized according to an overall strategy where internet is considered an essential source of information for public statistics providers. It is a matter of fact that dissemination and communication activity is a core business for the FSO and a tool to improve its image and its credibility. All users interviewed seemed to be very satisfied with the accessibility and clarity of the statistical information released by the FSO.

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

Assessment: Fully met

Comments: As indicated in the Multi-annual Programme of the federal statistics, the dissemination policy is marked by a growing user-oriented approach, both in terms of products and of services: in the achievement of this objective, an important role is given to the modernisation of the website and to its enhancement in terms of contents and functionalities. The portal offers a wide range of statistical information (in three different languages) and such information is well presented and supported by adequate explanation on sources, definitions and classifications. The catalogue of products and services is available on the website and an important publication as the Yearly Statistical Book is organized in order to facilitate the comparability of statistical data with other countries.

Indicator 15.2: Dissemination services use modern information and communication technology and, if appropriate, traditional hard copy.

Assessment: Fully met

Comments: The dissemination services are oriented towards the adoption of modern technologies for improving the efficiency of the dissemination and communication policy. The new portal allows a centralized access to the information coming from public statistical providers and links to the entire relevant national and international statistical websites. Navigation is easy and user-friendly; the Swiss Statistical Database allows users to enter the results of numerous surveys and to download data-files for personal purposes.

Indicator 15.3: Custom-designed analyses are provided when feasible and are made public.

Assessment: Fully met

Comments: The dissemination policy of FSO aims at increasing the capacity of meeting the demand for information made by statistical data users. Providing tailor-made tables is a current practice for FSO and users consider its capacity to respond to their inquiries well performing. The results of these analyses are not always made public.

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

Assessment: Fully met

Comments: Data protection and data security have legal basis and are clearly stated in the Federal Statistics Act. Access to micro data for research purposes is allowed, but subject to strict rules in compliance to Data Protection Act of 19 June 1992. See also comments on indicator 5.6

Indicator 15.5: Metadata are documented according to standardised metadata systems.

Assessment: Largely met

Comments: The FSO has not adopted any standardized system to document metadata but information on methodologies and data sources on statistical products is largely documented also in the website. According to satisfaction survey's results the large majority of users consider that the information on metadata is adequate and appropriate. However, still some improvement actions can be foreseen.

Indicator 15.6: Users are kept informed on the methodology of statistical processes and the quality of statistical outputs with respect to the ESS quality criteria.

Assessment: Largely met

Comments: In general, users are kept informed on the methodology of statistical processes and outputs through both paper and on-line documentation. In case of new surveys or changes in methodology for relevant statistics FSO could be more active to present to the users the scientific approach and the results in scientific publications. With respect to the ESS quality dimensions, the peer review team thinks that users could be better and more systematically informed on methodology implementation in the FSO statistical processes and outputs. Users are not fully aware of the ESS quality criteria.

4. CO-ORDINATION ROLE OF THE NATIONAL STATISTICAL INSTITUTE

The coordination of the statistical system of Switzerland is relatively complex, due to the federal structure of the country. There is a large number of partners of the statistical system as defined by the Law on Federal Statistics of 1992 and the ordinances appended to the law, comprising some 27 government agencies and in addition some Cantonal statistical authorities, communal statistical authorities and officially funded research institutions. Not all of these partners produce statistics of relevance for the European Statistical System and delimitation in this respect is necessary in connection with the extension of the Code of Practice.

While most of the statistical activities are being carried out at the federal level, not all the activities of these partners are based on the same legal framework. In some cases there are specific rules and regulation at cantonal level, in other cases there are specific laws at cantonal level. In the case of the Swiss National Bank, there is a specific law related to the institution. There is also a potential mixture between statistical and administrative activities within some institutions. One example illustrating this issue is the production of quarterly national accounts which by some historical reasons is produced by The State Secretariat for Economic Affairs

(SECO) but this compilation is not clearly separated from the more political/economical analysis performed. The harmonisation with the annual national accounts raises also some problems and confusion, not least in timing of releases, as confirmed by representatives from the media. In general, the area of economic statistics seemed to present a major challenge for coordination with the present distribution of tasks, and the formal power of the Federal Statistical Office is rather weak. However, there are some mechanisms in place that can help.

There seems to be a traditional tension between the Cantonal and Federal level, also in the field of statistics. This tension has been at a relatively high level during the last years due to discussion around the harmonisation of registers and the preparation of the 2010 census, where some cantons have felt that their arguments have not been well taken care of by the federal statistical office. Apparently the situation is now being settled, as the major legal acts on harmonisation of registers and on the population census have been adopted.

In spite of the institutional and legal complexity it is considered that the relationship between federal and regional statistics is good, several initiatives have been taken to ensure improved better coordination and homogeneity. One important milestone was the adoption of a charter for Swiss Public Statistics in 2002 and revised in 2007 to take account of the Code of Practice. This has now been signed by 25 Cantons, 7 cities, 8 federal offices and two others. However, it should be noted that several of the Federal agencies that are listed as producers of official statistics in the multi-annual programme, have not signed the Charter yet. The Swiss National Bank, which produces for instance balance of payments and financial accounts, is currently evaluating whether they can sign, due to the specific legal basis.

The instrument provided by the statistical law for the federal office to coordinate other producers of statistics is still rather weak – as also pointed out by the peer review performed in 2000. Actually, the power of coordination seems to lie in the hands of the Federal Council which has the power to name partners and distribute tasks linked to the statistical law.

A report by Institut für Politikstudien from 2002 on 'Koordination der Bundesstatistik: Kernprobleme und Lösungsansatz' also addresses the issue of coordination as it was acknowledged by the majority of the Statistical Council at that time, i.e. that the efficiency of the Swiss statistical system is hampered by some lack of coordination.

The main problems were identified as lacking coordination of resources, competition and unclear split of responsibilities between the FSO and other partners and a missing visibility of the services and products of official statistics. A recommendation was to develop the process of the multi-annual and the annual programs so as to clarify conflicts of interest and put in place measures to solve them. Furthermore, improved networking was suggested.

The organisation of the Federal Statistics is treated in Section 3 of the Federal Statistics Act. In Article 10 point 2 the coordination role of the Federal Office is described. The FSO shall for instance draw up standard principles, prepare the multi-annual programme and perform surveys, provided that the Federal Council does not assign this duty to some other body!

Coordination is handled more explicitly in Article 12 where it is stated that the FSO must be consulted on the presentation of surveys and data collection. Furthermore the FSO has been given the task of promoting coordination with cantonal statistics and cooperation with cantons, universities and research centres.

In Article 10, point 4 the duties of administrative units and other organisations to provide the FSO with results of statistical activities and with data from data collections and surveys are specified.

Article 11 further discusses the role of other Federal Statistics Providers: it should be noted that it states in point 3 that the statistical analysis of administrative data of the Confederation in principle is the duty of the administrative unit. Other solutions require an agreement with the FSO or Federal Council resolutions. This point can to some extent be used to undermine the role of the FSO as the central body for public statistics and the integrator of a public statistical system which to an increasing degree will be built on data from administrative sources.

Article 13 finally establishes the Commission for Federal Statistics which has the role of advising the Federal Council and the Federal statistics providers with representatives from cantons, communes, the scientific world, the private sector, social partners as well as the administrative units and the organisations governed by the statistics act.

The implementation of the Statistical law is mainly done through ordinances adopted by the Swiss Federal Council (the seven ministers constituting the government).

One such Ordinance is on the Organisation of Federal Statistics (431.011). This ordinance defines federal statistics data providers which may be partly subject to the ordinance insofar as they carry out statistical work. Statistical work is further specified in a relatively broad sense and there is an effort in point 3 to define what statistical work is not.

The Ordinance further has articles related to cooperation (Commission for Federal statistics, FEDESTAT, REGIOSTAT, expert panels and coordination). In Article 9, for instance, it is stated that federal statistics providers must consult with the FSO before starting, modification or termination of statistical work. A consultation is further required for the creation, modification or termination of federal administrative data collections or federal registers that are suitable for federal statistical purposes.

This ordinance also provides some basis for the FSO for advising federal and regional statistical offices and provide training (it is interesting to note that this ordinance uses the term 'regional statistical offices' which in the strict sense cannot be considered as regional statistical offices as these are cantonal offices (which not all cantons have)).

The ordinance further provides the basis for the FSO for issuing recommendations and technical and methodological guidelines.

The **Statistical Council**, as specified in the law, can be an important tool for promoting coordination and cooperation, but it has only an advisory role and the actual implementation of proposals seems to be in the hands of the Federal Council.

The Council has for the moment 12 representatives outside the FSO and it is said that in general the role of this committee is to ensure that the public statistics meets the requirements of a democratic society

A meeting with the chair of the Council confirmed that the role of this body is dependent on the composition and the interest of its members. The present chair had the intention of improving its functioning and to raise issues for instance related to the protection of independence of

statistics work or coordination with superior political bodies. However, this does not change the relatively limited advisory mandate of the Council. It should also be noted that at present only the chair gets some minor compensation for work invested in the Council, whereas other members have no compensation.

The impression is that this Council as such has a relatively weak role in its strategic support to the development of the public statistics programme.

Fedestat is a committee consisting of producers of statistics in the Confederation and other bodies and institutions that are wholly or partially subject to the federal statistical law.

The committee has the task to promote cooperation among the services that take part in federal statistical work. It should systematise the coordination of the statistical producers in order to avoid double work and inconsistencies and to improve the quality and the harmonisation of the activities of the Confederation.

Fedestat since 2007 also comprises an executive committee consisting of 10 members presided by the FSO and meeting 3 to 4 times a year.

REGIOSTAT unites representatives from the FSO, statistical offices of cantons, statistical services of cantons with no proper statistical office, and the statistical services of towns. The director general of the statistical office presides over the meetings, which normally are summoned once a year. Furthermore, there is an executive committee comprising eight regional deputies (from cities and counties) and three deputies from the FSO who meet four times a year.

Its task is in general to promote cooperation and it also has some specific tasks such as the participation in the preparation of the multi-annual programme, the participation of the regional level in the harmonisation work at federal level and the participation in the development and evaluation of the training programme.

At present, Regiostat has almost 40 members.

It was mentioned that the Regiostat had served as an important forum for improving the working relationship between the statistical offices/services of the cantons and the FSO.

Expert groups exist for the moment in ten areas, in order to handle statistical issues or the need for data within specific areas. These groups include representatives from concerned federal offices, cantons, communes, businesses, social partners and research, as well as representatives from the Council for federal statistics, FEDESTAT and REGIOSTAT.

The team met several participants in such expert groups. In general it was felt that these groups served as an important place for information on planned and ongoing activities of the FSO. Some also underlined the importance of these groups for discussion and exchange of views on statistical and strategic issues, whereas others felt that the groups could be more developed as a place for in-depth discussion of statistical challenges and even contribute to coordination in their respective areas.

The multi-annual programme:

The programme is prepared on the basis of extensive consultations with the bodies mentioned above and other statistical producers. A final proposal is passed via the Federal Department of Home Affairs to the Swiss Federal Council, who approves the programme. It is then sent to the Parliament for their information.

The programme is settled by a decision issued by the Federal council based on a preparatory process organised by the FSO and involving the mentioned coordinating bodies.

The existing programme 2003-2007 listed 7 strategic objectives, described shortly as:

1. To reinforce cooperation between different statistical bodies
2. To offer statistics in response to user needs
3. To harmonise person registers in order to develop register based 2010 census and diminish response burden
4. To develop utilisation of ICT for improving the efficiency of data collection and dissemination
5. To give priority to areas of political strategic importance in order to meet new requirements
6. To improve the offer of economic statistics
7. To improve consistency between Swiss and European statistics

The programme estimated that the total costs of the programme in 2007 would be CHF 116,6 mill. of which the FSO would take CHF 82,2 mill. or 70 per cent. It should be noted that the activities of the Swiss Central bank and of the Centre for conjunctural research, which are quite substantial in the field of economic statistics, are not included.

The strategic programme further lists all the activities and projects to be undertaken, as well as the responsible institutions.

The strategic programme 2007-2011 builds on the following strategic objectives:

1. Strengthen the user orientation of the statistical system
2. Develop an integrated statistical system
3. Harmonisation of registers and use of administrative and register data
4. Population census 2010
5. Implement the bilateral agreement with EU and continue international cooperation in statistics
6. Develop public statistics as part of the Swiss science and research system and develop new forms of cooperation

The programme has been gradually reoriented, with more focus on the strategic and operational objectives and less on the detailed list of activities.

A major weakness is that the detailed list might be considered to some extent as a wish list as it is not connected to a budgetary commitment. Thus a decision on the program might not be followed up with the required funding. Apparently, it is possible to include new activities and delete activities from the programme in the annual programming exercise, thus the details of the multi-annual programme might be considered as bureaucratic paperwork, as expressed by some contacts.

The Swiss Public Statistics Charter

A Charter for Public Statistics has been developed comprising basic principles, recommendations for devising the public statistics system and the setting up of an Ethics Board for Public statistics. The principles build on the UN Fundamental principles as well as the Declaration on Professional Ethics of the ISI (August 1985).

The recommendations include proposals for institutional cooperation and the processing of information. So far it is signed by 25 cantons, 6 towns, 9 federal agencies and two others.

This charter seems to be an important step in the direction of improved coordination and an integration of the statistical system based on agreed standards.

One issue is that not all producers of statistics, as included in the multi-annual programme, have signed this charter.

Framework agreements

The FSO has been developing framework agreements to improve the coordination in specific areas. One example is an agreement on cooperation and division of work with the field of mobility and transport statistics from December 2006. This agreement involves the FSO and several federal offices under the Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications working in the field of energy, environment and transport. It specifies the division of work related to different surveys and lists definitions of different variables in this area. It is foreseen that the agreement is followed up by a process to develop and integrate also regional data in cooperation with authorities at regional, cantonal and city level.

The FSO has also made an agreement with the Swiss National Bank on cooperation in the field of economic statistics. The agreement provides a general basis for pre-release access to economic statistics under embargo, to be more precisely agreed between the bank and the responsible department within the FSO. Furthermore the document contains agreements related to the timeliness, frequency and/or content on some specific data sets. The version available was developed in 2003 and an updated and revised version was under discussion

Thus the law and related ordinances provide several articles and points that should help coordination. However there are several observations that can be made, also supported by the peer review of the Swiss Statistical System performed by Ivan P. Fellegi and Jacob Ryten in year 2000:

- The statistical system is relatively complex with a relatively broad definition of the federal statistics – to be implemented by the Federal council (the government).
- The real power of coordination allocated to the statistical office appear to be relatively weak:
 - Some real power of coordination only at the level of the Federal Council which can take several decisions with implications for coordination, for instance by naming which institutions have the different tasks.
 - Even if the FSO is said to coordinate federal statistics which according to the scope of application, can be understood in a relatively broad way, the law does not provide a clear mandate for this coordination.
 - Even if it said that the Federal office must be consulted on the presentation of the surveys, the collected data as well as the other data sources, it is not clear

how this is implemented in practice and what could be the outcome of such consultations.

- Actually it is said in the law that the statistical analysis of administrative data is the duty of the administrative body possessing the data rather than providing a clear legal basis for an integrated statistical system, coordinated by the FSO.
- The efficiency of the different coordination bodies varies and can still be improved.

Implementation of COP

One major challenge for the implementation of the European Statistics Code of Practice of other producers in Switzerland seems to be the broad delimitation of statistical institutions and the different degree to which these institutions actually are producers of official statistical and especially of statistics covered by European regulations and requirements.

Actually, in Ordinance 431.011 it is mentioned that in some cases only parts of administrative units are subject to the statistical law.

5. GOOD PRACTICES TO BE HIGHLIGHTED

The Charter for Public Statistics is an important milestone for the Swiss statistical system its further extension and implementation is important to improve the overall quality of Swiss public statistics.

The FSO has developed quite well structured documentation of surveys (metadata), not only of surveys of the FSO. In most cases it is in three languages (French, German, Italian) and to an increasing degree in English.

The FSO has been working hard on establishing a corporate management system (CODAM) in order to ensure a central and uniform handling of data and metadata within the FSO, but also with the possibility of inclusion of other partners. A central multilingual metadata solution is central to the system.

The FSO has a clear strategy to develop the use of administrative sources and registers in order to improve efficiency and reduce response burden. This is a major challenge, especially given the rather complex institutional and legal situation, and good progress is being made and positive experiences can be shared..

The FSO has strong dissemination traditions, not least regarding cartographic presentations.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PEER REVIEW TEAM

The main recommendations of the peer review team are the following:

- To look into the possibility of revising the existing statistical law and related ordinances both to clarify the independence, confidentiality and the coordinating role of the FSO.

- To seek a clearer split between statistical and administrative tasks, for instance by allocating the task registers that also are used for administrative purposes, to a separate administrative body.
- The FSO should develop its coordination role through active usage of the tools available, such as cooperation agreements and review the functioning of the present coordinating bodies.
- To put in place overall quality management and clear procedures for quality control and documentation in all areas.
- To put in place a more clear and transparent policy in relation to pre-releases of statistics.
- To improve the overall status and profile of official statistics through a better communication policy and by producing analytical articles explaining the use of statistics for different purposes.
- The Swiss statistical system faces a major challenge, due to the integration into the European statistical system. This might require additional resources and not least the reorganisation of tasks and responsibilities, especially in the field of economic and short term statistics, where some coordination for the moment is missing. This might also help to pool competences and resources and ensure a better integrated product for instance related to national accounts/quarterly accounts and different price indexes.

Some of these challenges seem to require amendments to existing legislation. However, one might also think that clarification and strengthening the coordination and strategic role of some existing coordinating bodies, such as the Commission for federal statistics, might be enhanced, but this, too, is linked to amendments of laws.

7. LIST OF IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS BY PRINCIPLE OF THE CODE

Improvement Action of Principle concerned	Timetable
Principle 1: Professional Independence	
Insertion of clear rules into the ordinance to the statistical law for dealing with external partners to guarantee professional independence. This is very important when statistics are fully or partly paid for by other federal offices, cantonal ministers or industry associations (up to 10% of the total regular FSO budget)	2007 – 2009
External study to investigate improvements for coordination	2009
Principle 2: Mandate for Data Collection	
Change from the traditional stove pipe survey approach to an integrated system based on using registers and supplementary surveys: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • implementation of the general program for enterprise statistics (GUS) • implementation of the system of household and population surveys (SHAPE) • implementation of the new concept for the population census (approved by the Swiss parliament in June 2007) 	2005 – 2011 2006 – 2015 2007 – 2015

Principle 3: Adequacy of Resources	
Relevant actions are assured by a careful annual planning (MAP) as well as by a controlling conducted every 4 month	ongoing
Communication of the Peer Review findings concerning resources to the Swiss Federal Audit Office	2008

Principle 4: Quality Commitment	
Introduction of the CAF Model	2008 – 2012
Establishment of a quality pool of people for knowledge transfer	2008
Implementation of the concept “Restructuring of the quality management – implementation of the Code of Practice”, comprising quality guidelines, process and product quality monitoring and reviews and quality trainings	2010

Principle 5: Statistical Confidentiality	
Confidentiality statement signature of employees who joined the FSO before 2007	2008
Concept and implementation of a common strategy with the new data and information centre at the University of Lausanne	2008 – 2012
Workshop for key people of the FSO who have to manage exceptions according to Art. 14 of the Federal Statistics Act to discuss possibilities for improvement	2008
Amendment of the ordinance to the Federal Statistics Act to increase clarity on confidentiality measures	2010

Principle 6: Impartiality and Objectivity	
Discussions of the Peer Review Results with other federal and regional statistical offices at the next "Swiss Statistics Meeting" in general and in particular regarding impartiality and objectivity	2008
Further measures regarding pre-release access, i.e. application of the Code of Practice by other key Federal Offices	2009
Establish formal agreements for exceptions to the equal access rules.	2009
Increase transparency on equal access measures by explaining these exceptions also in the documentation of the different surveys and metainformation pages.	2009

Principle 7: Sound Methodology	
Build up a research cooperation on “Questionnaire Testing and Survey Management” with the new research centre at the University of Lausanne	2010
Continue methodology research cooperation with the University of Neuchâtel	ongoing

Principle 8: Appropriate statistical procedures	
Introduction of integrated statistical frameworks based on registers,	2005 – 2015

comprehensive sample management and harmonisation of variables in both enterprise and household surveys (GUS, SHAPE)	
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Principle 9: Non-excessive Burden on Respondents

Change from the traditional stove pipe survey approach to an integrated system based on using registers and supplementary surveys:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • implementation of the general program for enterprise statistics (GUS) • implementation of the system of household and population surveys (SHAPE) 	2005 – 2011 2006 – 2015 2007 – 2015
implementation of the new concept for the population census (approved by the Swiss parliament in June 2007)	

Principle 10: Cost effectiveness

Continuation of existing controlling procedures	ongoing
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Principle 11: Relevance

Repeat user satisfaction survey	2009
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Principle 14: Coherence and Comparability

Systematic coordination of single statistics to move to integrated statistical systems (similarly to the Eurostat program MEETS or the UN Statistical Commission FOC activity lead by the FSO on integrated economic statistics) according to the strategic objectives of the MAP 2007 – 2011	2005 – 2015
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Principle 15: Accessibility and Clarity

Upgrade of the current Statistics Portal to a version conforming to WAI AA standard	2008
Enlarge the number and optimise visibility of standardised metadata descriptions	2010
Improve metadata documentation using the ongoing IT project SIS@BFS (Statistical Information System)	2010
Workshop to discuss improvement measures for methodology information	2008

8. ANNEX A: PROGRAMME OF THE VISIT AND LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Peer Review Program				21.11. - 23.11.2007	
November 21 2007				DISCUSSION WITH INTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS	
Start	End	Place	Activity	Participants	Principles concerned
09:00	09:30	512	Welcoming Session and introduction of programme, organisational matters	Ms. Adelheid Bürgi-Schmelz (Director General) Mr. Felix Herzig (Deputy Director General) Ms. Silvia Steidle-Kubli (Communication) Mr. Michel Kammermann (Director, Spatial Economics and Sustainability) Mr. Hans-Peter Diener (Planning and Processes) Ms. Andrea Eichholzer (Quality Office)	
09:30	11:00	512	Meeting with management and senior staff	Ms. Adelheid Bürgi-Schmelz (Director General) Mr. Felix Herzig (Deputy Director General) Mr. Rolf Ritschard (Director General's Secretariat) Ms. Ruth Meier (Director, Economy, State and Social Issues) Mr. Dieter Rosboth (Director Health, Education and Science)	1, 2, 3
11:00	11:15		<i>Coffee break</i>		
11:15	11:45	512	Meeting with representative of the cantons	Mr. Gian Antonio Paravicini (Statistics Lucerne)	
11:45	12:30	512	Meeting with management and senior staff / Presentation of results user survey	Ms. Adelheid Bürgi-Schmelz (Director General) Mr. Felix Herzig (Deputy Director General) Ms. Silvia Steidle-Kubli (Communication) Mr. Armin Grossenbacher (Information and Publications) Ms. Ruth Meier (Director, Economy, State and Social Issues) Mr. Dieter Rosboth (Director Health, Education and Science) Ms. Andrea Eichholzer (Responsible Quality Office)	(1, 2, 3) 6, 15
12:30	13:30	BFS	<i>Short Business Lunch with members of the FSO</i>		
13:30	14:30	512	Interview with DG and quality manager	Ms. Adelheid Bürgi-Schmelz (Director General) Mr. Felix Herzig (Deputy Director General) Mr. Hans-Peter Diener (Planning and Processes) Mr. Philippe Eichenberger (Statistical Methods) Ms. Becker Vermeulen Corinne (member of section "Price") Ms. Andrea Eichholzer (Responsible Quality Office)	(6, 15) 4
14:30	15:15	512	Meeting with management and senior staff	Ms. Adelheid Bürgi-Schmelz (Director General) Mr. Felix Herzig (Deputy Director General) Mr. Rolf Ritschard (Director General's Secretariat)	5
15:15	16:15	512	Meeting with junior staff	Ms. Petra Keller (Responsible Project Office) Ms. Olivia Huguenin (member social security) Ms. Esther Nagy (member Business Register) Mr. Eric Crettaz (member Socio-economic Analysis) Mr. Fabien Perrot (member CODAM)	

				Mr. Gregory Rais (member Economic Structure and Cycle) Ms. Sylvie RoCHAT (member Population Studies and Household Surveys) Emmanuel von Erlach (member Education Systems and Science)	
16:15	17:00	512	Meetings with with Heads of departments and Directors from production units	Mr. Jacques Babel (for Higher Education) Mr. Christophe Siegenthaler (for Enterprise Structure) Mr. Philippe Stauffer (Economic Structure and Cycle) Mr. Bertrand Loison (Information Technology) Mr. Didier Froidevaux (Wages and Working Conditions) Ms. Ruth Meier (Director, Economy, State and Social issues)	
17:00	17:15		<i>Coffee Break</i>		
17:15	17:35	512	Presentation of strategic master plan	Mr. Rolf Escher (Responsible Multi-year-planning) Mr. Hans-Peter Diener (Planning and Processes)	
November 22 2007				DISCUSSION WITH EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS	
Start	End	Place	Activity	Participants	Principles concerned
09:45	10:45	GS-EDI 115	Meeting with national data producers (National Bank, Tax Administration, etc.)	Mr. Boller (Swiss National Bank) Mr. Wagnon (Federal Customs Administration) Mr. Parnisari (State Secretariat for Economic Affairs)	all
10:45	11:00		<i>Coffee Break</i>		
11:00	12:00	GS-EDI 115	Meeting with representatives from Statistical Council and Expert Groups	Mr. Brachinger (Head of Statistical Council) Mr. Reis (employer's association)	all
12:00	14:00	<i>Rest.</i>	<i>Lunch Break</i>		
14:00	15:00	GS-EDI 115	Meeting with main users (representatives from university or other)	Mr. Tillé (Neuchâtel University) Mr. Bechtold (University of St. Gallen) Mr. Wenger (APP)	all
15:00	16:00	Media Center	Meeting with media	Mr. Egenter (Reuters) Mr. Baumgärtel and Mr. Hamade (Bloomberg) Ms. Greil (Dow Jones Newswires)	all
16:00	16:15		<i>Coffee Break</i>		
16:15	17:45	GS-EDI 115	Meeting with representatives of respondents	Mr. Minsch (economiesuisse) Mr. Sturm (Economic Research ETH Zurich) Mr. Zarin (Neuchâtel University)	all
17:45	18:15	GS-EDI 115	Meeting with Ministry (General Secretariat GS-FDHA)	Mr. Strupler (General Secretariat GS-FDHA)	all
November 23 2007				CONCLUSIONS	
Start	End	Place	Activity	Participants	Principles concerned
11:00	13:00	512	Meeting with top management for conclusions, recommendations and follow-up (improvement actions)	Ms. Adelheid Bürgi-Schmelz (Director General) Mr. Felix Herzig (Deputy Director General) Mr. Dieter Rosboth (Director Health, Education and Science) Ms. Silvia Steidle-Kubli (Communication) Mr. Ernst Matti (Director, Statistical Infrastructure) Mr. Hans-Peter Diener (Planning and Processes) Ms. Andrea Eichholzer (Quality Office)	all
13:00	14:15	<i>Rest.</i>	<i>Lunch hosted by BFS for the peer team</i>	dito	

