

PEER REVIEW REPORT

ON COMPLIANCE WITH THE CODE OF PRACTICE AND
THE COORDINATION ROLE OF THE NATIONAL STATISTICAL INSTITUTE

AUSTRIA

ULRIKE ROCKMANN

RIMANTAS JUOZAS VAICENAVIČIUS

JÓZSEF KÁRPÁTI

JANUARY 2015

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
2. INTRODUCTION	7
3. BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE NATIONAL STATISTICAL SYSTEM	9
4. COMPLIANCE WITH THE CODE OF PRACTICE AND THE COORDINATION ROLE WITHIN THE NATIONAL STATISTICAL SYSTEM	11
4.1 Strengths of the National Statistical Institute in relation to its compliance with the Code of Practice and its coordination role	11
4.2 Issues and recommendations	13
4.2.1 Legal aspects and strengthening the role of Statistics Austria	13
4.2.2 Planning the future impact of Statistics Austria on statistics	17
4.2.3 Statistical production	20
4.2.4 Budget	27
4.3 National Statistical Institute views where they diverge from peer reviewers' assessment	30
ANNEX A: PROGRAMME OF THE VISIT	31
ANNEX B. LIST OF PARTICIPANTS	34

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Statistics Austria is the main producer of official statistics in Austria. It has a strong legal mandate and enjoys a high level of trust; its independence and impartiality are widely recognised and unchallenged. Statistics Austria has a longstanding commitment to quality, and a variety of components of the European statistics Code of Practice (CoP) are implemented by the Austrian Statistics Law.

Official Statistics in Austria is advanced through the cooperation of Statistics Austria, other national statistical authorities, two independent councils and their substructures. The Statistics Law stipulates the existence of two Councils - a Statistics Council and an Economic Council. In this context, especially one sub-committee of the Statistics Council – the sub-committee on quality – plays a prominent role. Statistics Austria meets with the Quality Sub-committee regularly. In Feedback Talks, Statistics Austria and the Quality Sub-committee discuss with the main users and experts the methodology, further developments and user needs regarding special statistical areas and products. Besides this, Statistics Austria conducts user satisfaction surveys and through them takes the needs of any “unknown” users into consideration.

The Austrian statistical system relies heavily and increasingly on the use of administrative data sources, especially in the area of non-business statistics. This results in the increasing cost-effectiveness of official statistics and decreasing of the burden for respondents. Hence, the quality of the statistical products is highly dependent on the quality, availability and completeness of these data sources. In general, dependence on the administrative data makes the system vulnerable to changes in the characteristics of input data. The implemented functionality of linking related databases with a unique statistic identifier has significantly reduced these risks and presented the opportunity for cross checking the administrative databases using sophisticated procedures.

The direct state budget allocations for Statistics Austria have not been increased since the year 2000. Although the staff was reduced considerably and a deep restructuring took place, the Peer Review team is aware of the risk that Statistics Austria might not have many possibilities left to increase efficiency in order to compensate for the continuous budget reduction in real terms.

Austria’s production of European statistics is highly centralised. More than 90% of the European statistics are produced by Statistics Austria. Besides Statistics Austria, six other Austrian bodies and the Austrian National Bank are providers of European statistics. Several recommendations in this report are intended to support further enhancement of the cooperation between all producers.

Generally, the Peer Review team considers that Statistics Austria has a high level of compliance with the CoP.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Legal aspects and strengthening the role of Statistics Austria

1. Article 6(3) of the Statistics Law should be amended clarifying that Statistics Austria is the decision-making institution as to whether existing administrative databases can be used for European statistics or whether a survey must be carried out. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 1.4, 6.2, 8.1 and 9.4.)
2. Article 6(2) of the Statistics Law should be amended clarifying that Statistics Austria is the decision-making institution as to whether a survey is voluntary or compulsory. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 1.4 and 2.3.)

3. The Statistics Law should be amended to require an electronic response for all business statistics. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 1.4, and 2.3.)
4. The Statistics Law should be amended with regard to the permanent involvement of Statistics Austria at an early stage in the legislative process when administrative data sources of official statistics are affected. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 2.2, 7.7, 8.1, 8.7, 8.8, 8.9 and 10.3.)
5. The Statistics Law should be amended granting Statistics Austria access for evaluation purposes to administrative data that could be used for official statistics when access is not explicitly covered by legislation. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 2.2, 7.7, 8.1, 8.7, 8.8, 8.9 and 10.3.)
6. Austrian authorities responsible for legislation regarding use of administrative databases should codify in the respective laws permission for Statistics Austria to use these databases for European statistics. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 2.2, 7.7, 8.1, 8.7, 8.8, 8.9 and 10.3.)
7. Responsible Austrian authorities should reconsider whether the existing dissociation of statistical and financial responsibilities at top management level in Statistics Austria is advantageous for the institution's core tasks. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 1.4.)
8. Responsible Austrian authorities should consider strengthening the role of Statistics Austria as the coordinating body for European statistics. This includes securing a budget line for these activities. (Coordination)
9. Statistics Austria should facilitate written agreements with Other National Authorities on the production of European statistics with the support of the Statistics Council. Agreements with Other National Authorities should address, as much as possible, the production of quality reports, as well as statements about deviations from the European statistics Code of Practice. (Coordination)
10. Statistics Austria should consider facilitating the establishment of a research committee to initiate a formal consultation process with researchers and to enhance cooperation with the scientific community. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 4.4, 5.6 and 7.7.)
11. The Statistics Law should be amended to grant access to business microdata for scientific purposes in a safe, central environment (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 4.4, 5.6 and 7.7.)
12. Responsible Austrian authorities should consider funding a safe, central environment in which microdata are accessible. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 4.4, 5.6 and 7.7.)

Planning future impacts on statistics

13. Institutions nominating members to the Statistics Council should balance academic, scientific and other competencies in the Council. The ministry responsible for the Statistics Council should consider securing an adequate budget for the work of the Statistics Council. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 1.4, 1.5, 2.2, 3.3, 3.4, 8.7 and 10.3.)
14. Statistics Austria should include a long-term vision up to 2025 in its next strategic programme. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principles 3 and 11.)
15. Statistics Austria should continue to participate in those European Statistical System projects that are strategically important for its tasks, and consider assigning a dedicated budget reserve line for forthcoming issues. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principles 3 and 11.)
16. Statistics Austria should more actively enable and encourage staff participation in training programmes, including the elaboration and implementation of personalised, individual training schemes throughout the office. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 7.6.)
17. Statistics Austria should explore the further usability of additional human resource development tools during the elaboration of individual development plans (e.g. increased internal rotation, international staff exchange, internships). (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 3.1 and 7.6.)

Statistical production

18. Statistics Austria and Other National Authorities, in close cooperation with the Federal Economic Chamber and other relevant institutions, should consider further motivating data providers to respond to surveys by maximising their benefits in the system, while minimising their response burden. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 2.1, 2.3, 9.2, 9.3 and 9.4.)
19. Statistics Austria should introduce internal, systematic quality audits of statistics. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 4.1, 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4.)
20. Statistics Austria should create a public, searchable repository of its statistical concepts, definitions and methods. Statistics Austria should provide English translations of standard documentation or its executive summaries on its website. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 6.4, 7.1, 7.2, 15.1 and 15.6.)
21. Statistics Austria should explore new visualisation techniques (e.g. infographics) and further modernise its dissemination techniques (e.g. consider developing an app and optimising the website format for mobile devices; make advances in communication techniques via Twitter). (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 13.3, 15.1 and 15.2.)

22. Statistics Austria should further promote (both in-house and within the European Statistical System) the development and use of integrated, harmonised information technology solutions, especially a single framework for data processing actions. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 7.2, 8.4, 8.5, 8.6, 14.1 and 14.3.)
23. The responsible ministries should review Article 30(1a) of the Statistics Law to enable Statistics Austria to apply equal dissemination guidelines to all products. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 6.7; Principle 15.)
24. Statistics Austria should facilitate the compliance of Other National Authorities producing statistics with the European statistics Code of Practice, especially by requiring regular quality reports on their data production, examining their dissemination guidelines and mandating a release calendar. (Precondition: implementation of Recommendation 8) (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 4.1–4.4, 11.2, 13.2–13.5, 15.2, 15.3 and 15.5–15.7.)
25. Statistics Austria should facilitate a reasonable presentation on the statistics activities of Other National Authorities in order to provide a full overview of European statistics for the public, for example a single web portal for European statistics. (Precondition: implementation of Recommendation 8). (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 1.5 and 15.1–15.7.)
26. Responsible national authorities should reconsider the budgetary arrangements for Statistics Austria with a view to securing the sustainability of funding for European statistics. The planning of the five-year strategy programme should be more securely based on a binding financial basis. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principles 3 and 10.)
27. Statistics Austria should enrich its annual work programme with relevant financial information of public interest on the costs of statistics. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 1.5; Principles 3 and 15.)
28. Statistics Austria should make its pricing policy publicly available (tariffs document). Statistics Austria should re-examine its pricing policy to ensure that prices are not prohibitive, including data access for researchers, and provide articles on European statistics published in the periodic journal of Statistics Austria *Statistische Nachrichten* free of charge. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 1.5; Principles 3 and 15.)

2. INTRODUCTION

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

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

The first global assessment, a round of peer reviews in 2006 – 2008, explored how the NSIs and Eurostat were progressing in implementing the parts of the CoP relating to the institutional environment and dissemination of statistics (principles 1 – 6 and 15). This resulted in reports for each NSI and Eurostat, available on the Eurostat website². These reports also include a set of improvement actions covering all the principles of the CoP; these informed the annual monitoring of the implementation of the CoP in the ESS in the period 2009-2013.

The scope of this second round of peer reviews is broader: the assessment of CoP compliance covers all principles; the CoP compliance of selected other national producers of European statistics (as well as the NSI) in each country is being assessed; and the way in which statistical authorities coordinate the production and dissemination of European statistics within their statistical systems is being explored.

It should be underlined that there is a fundamental difference between the reports in the previous round of peer reviews conducted in 2006-2008 and the reports from this round. In the 2006-2008 round compliance with principles 1 to 6 and 15 of the CoP was assessed by means of a four-level scale (fully met; largely met; partly met and not met) and improvement actions were agreed on all 15 principles. After five years of continuous development most of the improvement actions have been implemented and significant progress towards full compliance with the CoP has been made. Therefore, rather than stating the state of play for all principles of the CoP, the reports from the 2013-2015 round mainly focus on issues where full compliance with the CoP has not been found or further improvements are recommended by the Peer Review team.

In order to gain an independent view, the peer review exercise has been externalised and an audit-like approach, where all the answers to the self-assessment questionnaires have to be supported by evidence, has been applied. As in 2006-2008, all EU Member States and EFTA/EEA countries and Eurostat are subject to a peer review.

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

To test and complete the methodology, it was piloted in two countries, Iceland and Slovakia, over the summer 2013.

The Austrian Peer Review was conducted by Ms Ulrike Rockmann (chair), Mr Rimantas Vaicenavičius and Mr József Kárpáti, with a peer review visit to Vienna on 13 - 17 October 2014. The programme of the visit is in Annex A and a list of participants in Annex B.

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

² <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/quality/first-round-of-peer-reviews>

This report focuses on compliance with the CoP and the coordination of European statistics within the Austrian statistical system. The report highlights some of the strengths of Statistics Austria in these contexts and contains recommendations for improvement. Improvement actions developed by Statistics Austria on the basis of this report will be published within the four-week period starting when the final report is sent to the NSI.

3. BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE NATIONAL STATISTICAL SYSTEM

Statistics Austria is an independent and non-profit federal institution under public law. It is the principal provider of scientific services in the area of federal statistics in Austria. As a profoundly user-oriented institution, it offers a variety of modern services for users and researchers.

The Federal Statistics Act 2000 defines federal statistics as an information system of the government, providing data on the economic, demographic, social, ecological and cultural situation in Austria. The implementation of European statistical legislation takes place - except in exceptional cases - through the establishment of national laws and regulations.

Austria's national statistical system (NSS) is highly centralised and has no regional offices. Statistics Austria is responsible for the vast majority of European and federal statistics produced within Austria. According to the Federal Statistics Law, other federal institutions may also act as organs of federal statistics. Besides Statistics Austria, six other Austrian bodies and the Austrian National Bank are producers of European statistics.

Statistics Austria is headed by two directors - the Director General of Statistics (DG Statistics) and the Director General of Finance (DG Finance). They are nominated through an open competition, as regulated by the Austrian staffing act that applies to all high level positions. The nomination is based on public tendering. The term of both Directors General is fixed at a maximum of five years and can be renewed an unlimited number of times on the basis of public tendering.

The DG Statistics is responsible for the management of Statistics Austria with regard to all statistical and sovereign duties. In all statistical issues he holds sole responsibility and is not bound by any instructions in the performance of these tasks. The DG Finance is responsible for the business management of Statistics Austria and for all other tasks that the DG Statistics is not in charge of. The DG Finance has to act with the diligence of a prudent businessman. The DG Finance has sole responsibility for the company accounts and is discharged by the Economic Council of Statistics Austria and the Federal Chancellor of Austria.

Statistics Austria is organised in four statistical directorates (population statistics, business statistics, spatial statistics, and macro-economic statistics), two horizontal divisions (one for Registers, Classifications, Geo-information, and one for Information Technology) and several central services and other units. The available working capacity is 754 average person's years. 34% hold an academic degree (master or Ph.D.).

Statistics Austria has one advisory board - the Statistics Council, and one supervisory board - the Economic Council, as well as several technical sub-committees. Both councils are under obligation to hold meetings at least four times per year. Members of the councils may not hold positions in both councils simultaneously. The DG Statistics and the DG Finance are entitled to attend the meetings of the councils. The councils may make their attendance obligatory. Both councils report to the Federal Chancellor annually, while the Statistics Council also reports to the Parliament.

The Statistics Council consists of 16 members, appointed by the Federal Chancellor, ministries, the Austrian National Bank, a delegate of the Conference of Provincial Governors and interest groups, for a term in office of five years as independent experts not representing the nominating institutions. Members do not have to be employees of the nominating institution. The main tasks of the Statistics Council are the earlier mentioned annual reporting to the Chancellery and the Parliament, issuing recommendations and statements concerning major statistical topics, e.g. on the coordination of federal bodies concerning federal and European statistical matters, issuing recommendations on the design of administrative data used for statistical purposes towards responsible ministries, commenting on legal drafts concerning EU statistics and issuing statements and recommendations on work programmes and budgets.

The Statistics Council forms internal committees on quality and on the work programme. The Quality Sub-committee meets several times per year to discuss general cross sectional topics as well as product-specific issues. It consists of five members of the Statistics Council.

The two Directors General of Statistics Austria and the head of the Quality and Methods department are invited to participate on a regular basis. Internal and external experts join the meetings depending on the agenda. Another crucial role of the Quality Sub-committee is to participate in Feedback Talks, which are held on a monthly basis and focus on different statistical areas, their documentation and future development.

The Economic Council consists of 12 independent members, appointed by the Federal Chancellor (3), ministries (5) and the workers council (4) for a term in office of five years. The main task of the Economic Council is to supervise the management of Statistics Austria and to examine the annual statement of accounts and the status reports, including reports to the Federal Chancellor. The Economic Council may at any time require the management to submit a report on the matters and vision of Statistics Austria. The Economic Council can audit any Statistics Austria books and records that are not subject to statistical secrecy. The duties of the Economic Council among others include accepting the accounts presented by the DG Finance. The Economic Council informs the Federal Chancellor of anything affecting the asset position of Statistics Austria.

In accordance with the provisions of the Austrian Federal Statistics Act, the management of Statistics Austria shall submit an annual work programme for the ensuing calendar year and an outlook for the ensuing four calendar years to the Statistics Council for comments and to the Economic Council for decision. The statistical work programme for the year 2014, including an outlook for the years 2015-2018, provides information about the statistical projects to be implemented by Statistics Austria in the period of 2014-2018.

Statistics Austria operates 15 technical sub-committees established by DG Statistics. Their responsibilities cover the main statistical areas. The task of the technical sub-committees is to advise the federal ministries, the federal statistics bodies and Statistics Austria on technical matters related to federal statistics.

Statistics Austria has one central office in Vienna and no regional agencies. The provinces and municipalities maintain small statistical services. They use federal statistics for their purposes, but may also produce regional statistics on their own. The cooperation and coordination is based on an agreement from 1985, following the Austrian Federal Constitution (Article 15a B-VG). Special agreements between Statistics Austria and the regional statistical services are in place in order to ease communication and data exchange. The provinces appoint their representatives to the technical sub-committees and nominate one member of the Statistics Council.

4. COMPLIANCE WITH THE CODE OF PRACTICE AND THE COORDINATION ROLE WITHIN THE NATIONAL STATISTICAL SYSTEM

This section summarises the Peer Reviewers' views on the extent of CoP compliance and the nature and effectiveness of coordination within the NSS. It first summarises the strengths of Statistics Austria in these respects, and then explores specific issues, including providing recommendations that the Peer Reviewers consider would strengthen compliance with the CoP.

4.1 STRENGTHS OF THE NATIONAL STATISTICAL INSTITUTE IN RELATION TO ITS COMPLIANCE WITH THE CODE OF PRACTICE AND ITS COORDINATION ROLE

The Austrian statistical system is highly centralised, with Statistics Austria playing the central role as the main producer of official and European statistics in Austria. It has a strong legal mandate and enjoys a high level of trust; its independence and impartiality are widely recognised and unchallenged. Statistics Austria has a longstanding commitment to quality, and a variety of components of the CoP have been implemented by the Austrian Statistics Law. In this law, the principle of professional independence is directly addressed – the DG Statistics can decide on methods, timing and content of statistical releases (Statistics Law, Article 38(1)). Article 24 lists the principles that shall be applied to the duties such as “compiling of statistics shall be objective and impartial”, “statistical methods and procedures shall be applied using internationally accepted statistical principles and standards”. (CoP indicators: 1.1, 1.4, 2.1, 5.1, 6.1, 6.2, 7.1, and 7.2)

An important role is played by the two respective bodies - the Statistics and the Economic Council. One of the sub-committees of the Statistics Council is the Quality Sub-committee that is involved in several quality monitoring procedures on a regular basis. Particularly in the so-called Feedback Talks, Statistics Austria and the Quality Sub-committee discuss with the main users and experts the methodology, further development and user needs of special statistical areas and products. (CoP indicators: 4.1, 4.3, 4.4, 6.4, 11.1, 13.3, 15.6, and 15.7)

The quality management procedures of Statistics Austria are highly developed. The systematic approach to quality helps the office in implementing an integrated vision on quality, beginning with a unified application of definitions, to detailed quality audits of procedures and products. Due to relatively recent organisational reforms, the specific areas of quality management and methods were brought together into one unit. The quality management and methods, as well as risk management, analysis and internal audit are of special importance as these areas, among others, are directly accountable to the Director General. (CoP indicators: 4.1, 4.2, 7.1, 7.2, 8.2, 8.3, 8.4, 8.5, and 8.6)

Statistics Austria should use administrative or register data rather than direct surveys whenever possible (Statistics Law Article 6). Consequently, the Austrian NSS relies heavily on these sources. The 2011 census was fully register-based. This strategy has resulted in increasing the cost-effectiveness and decreasing the response burden. As a consequence, the quality of the Austrian statistical products is mainly dependent on the quality, availability and completeness of administrative data sources. The procedure of linking these databases with a unique statistics identifier and cross checking similar or related content in different databases is crucial in this context. Statistics Austria has in this way established sophisticated quality monitoring, although direct survey data are not available. (CoP indicators 2.2, 4.3, 5.1, 7.3, 8.1, 8.8, 9.4, 9.5, and 10.3)

Statistics Austria has a long tradition of producer-user dialogues, supported by councils, committees, expert groups and other bodies. Moreover, key users are openly and thoroughly integrated into the discussion process. Enterprises are provided with certain information packages on the survey results. Statistics Austria also conducts user satisfaction surveys and through them takes into consideration the needs of any “unknown” users. (CoP indicators: 4.3, 6.4, 11.1, 11.3, and 13.3)

The Peer Review team was convinced that Statistics Austria is managed efficiently and has a participative and open corporate culture. The staff members they met with showed high involvement and dedication. The share of staff with a master degree or a higher qualification has increased rapidly in the past years and is now at 34%. The internal management and production processes are extremely streamlined. The financial accounting and controlling system is based on business management principles with an impressive amount of detail. Production costs are known for each statistic in detail. (CoP indicators: 3.1, 3.3, 3.4, 5.4, 7.5, and 10.1)

Based on discussions with the staff, media, ministries and other stakeholders, the Peer Review team concluded that the independence and credibility of Statistics Austria is accepted by the public and unquestioned by the user groups (CoP indicators: 1.1, 1.3, 1.6, 1.7, 5.4, and 6.1).

As Statistics Austria uses numerous advanced solutions in its operation, the Peer Review team has identified several practices that can be considered innovative throughout the ESS.

The strong cohesion between Risk Management / Quality Management / Internal Audit

The Peer Review team found a very close, dynamic cooperation between the major actors of the quality framework. This level of integrated thinking and acting is highly efficient and tailored to the specific core business of a statistical institution.

The scale and role of Feedback Talks

The Peer Review team has received detailed information on how Statistics Austria analyses the needs and opinions of users. The most important elements among these actions are the Feedback Talks. Based on the standard documentation and user experience, about 10 meetings are organised annually in different areas, with the involvement of the Statistics Council sub-committee, where detailed information is gathered by Statistics Austria.

The implementation of a Response Burden Barometer

The Response Burden Barometer is implemented in many areas of business statistics. The response burden data are continuously collected through electronic questionnaires. At the end of each questionnaire the respondent provides information on the time spent, which indicates that Statistics Austria monitors and takes care of this issue.

An innovative Quality Framework for administrative data sources

Administrative data plays a major role in Austrian statistics. The legal obligation to use as much administrative data for statistics as possible made the design of advanced tools for quality monitoring of these data sources inevitable. The so called "Bpin OS", a statistics identifier that enables the merging of administrative datasets, is one major element that makes quality analysis possible.

Advanced practices of budgeting and controlling

The legal regulations on the financial operations of Statistics Austria require the implementation of modern management control techniques. All statistical and other horizontal activities are mapped in an advanced business intelligence environment. Therefore, the management of Statistics Austria can rely on detailed control tools and mechanisms.

The intensive involvement in development

Statistics Austria is very active in participating in projects for developing tools related to the statistics production process, at a European and international level, as well as with the scientific community. Statistics Austria supports the development of new methods and techniques that may be applied throughout the entire European Statistical System, e.g. the development of Open Source Software (R-packages) for methodological applications.

4.2 ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.2.1 LEGAL ASPECTS AND STRENGTHENING THE ROLE OF STATISTICS AUSTRIA

The Austrian Statistics Law is very detailed. It includes several principles and indicators of the CoP. Nevertheless, Austrian authorities should consider the feasibility of reinforcing the legal framework to take even better account of the requirements of European statistics. Some less detailed descriptions or vague legal concepts leave room for interpretation and, therefore, may pose a potential risk of deviations from the CoP.

4.2.1.1 SURVEYS AND ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

Use of data sources

The Statistical office should have the sole responsibility concerning the methods. The Austrian Statistics Law states in article 6 (3) that a survey can only be conducted in the event that data are not available from administrative databases, registers or other databases. The law should clarify that the existence of databases is only one necessary precondition for their use for European statistics. The other condition is that their quality is sufficient for compiling European statistics. The decision on whether the quality is sufficient should be taken by Statistics Austria due to its sole responsibility for methods.

To further enhance compliance with the CoP, the Peer Reviewers recommend that:

- 1. Article 6 (3) of the Statistics Law should be amended clarifying that Statistics Austria is the decision-making institution as to whether existing administrative databases can be used for European statistics or whether a survey must be carried out. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 1.4, 6.2, 8.1 and 9.4.)**

Survey types and collection mode

Article 6 (2) of the Austrian Statistics Law stipulates that data collection in a survey should be voluntary whenever it is possible. This legally preferred approach may not always be optimal, e.g. with regard to quality criteria applied to samples. Although it was communicated to the Peer Review team that the response rates with regard to voluntary statistics are currently reaching relatively high levels due to the extensive engagement of Statistics Austria. However, the response behaviour could deteriorate in the future. Other countries are already experiencing this. Therefore, it should be specified in the Statistics Law that the decision on whether a mandatory survey is necessary shall solely be taken by Statistics Austria.

New data collection methods, such as internet data collection, are envisaged in order to reduce the costs of data collection procedures, but also to enhance the quality of statistics, beginning with the input side. The widespread need for electronic systems for all business activities and the existing thresholds for reporting to business statistics makes it reasonable to require response in electronic form for all business statistics.

To further enhance compliance with the CoP, the Peer Reviewers recommend that:

- 2. Article 6 (2) of the Statistics Law should be amended clarifying that Statistics Austria is the decision-making institution as to whether a survey is voluntary or compulsory. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 1.4 and 2.3.)**
- 3. The Statistics Law should be amended to require an electronic response for all business statistics. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 1.4 and 2.3.)**

Administrative data usage

The Austrian NSS mainly relies on the use of administrative data and is obliged whenever possible to use these sources in preference to direct surveys (Statistics Law Article 6). Accordingly, Statistics Austria has built up a close cooperation with the main providers of administrative data.

Article 10 of the Statistics Law focuses on the responsibilities of the administrative data providers, especially on the transmission of data to Statistics Austria, on providing information regarding the definitions and methods used, as well as on changes affecting the production of official statistics (Article 10 (4)). Additionally, the Statistics Council is entitled to deliver official opinions on the design of administrative databases to the responsible ministries (Article 47 (2) a). However, the Austrian authorities may consider increasing the awareness of the administrative data providers about the quality needs of official statistics by including the use of the data for European statistics as one of the purposes of the administrative database directly in the respective laws. The Peer Review team thought, also with reference to the Statistics Council protocols and the meeting with data providers, that the early involvement of Statistics Austria in legislative processes concerning administrative data sources could be substantially enhanced.

The possibilities of Statistics Austria to access administrative data are bound by national statistics laws, stating precisely which data of an administrative database can be accessed (Statistics Law Article 10 (2) (3)). Besides this, upon request by Statistics Austria, administrative data owners provide information about the existence and the structure of administrative data in cases of possible relevance for statistical surveys or for the completion of the register of statistical units (Article 10 (5)).

The Peer Review team sees the possibility for enhancing the legal grounds in order for Statistics Austria to even more proactively improve the methodology and its effectiveness, as well as to monitor quality. However, one necessary precondition is to find a solution for providing Statistics Austria with access to potentially relevant administrative data. This should be made possible by Statistics Law without any other specific statistics legislation. The extremely narrow obligation for administrative data owners to inform Statistics Austria about the content of their databases only with regard to existing or upcoming legislation should be widened to empower Statistics Austria to assess the applicability of administrative data for EU statistics. This may be done through meta-information and samples of data not yet used for producing official statistics. An extension of Article 10 (5) could provide the legal basis. Statistics Austria would thereby be enabled to increase its rights in the methodological development activities, especially when it is not yet directly related to any existing statistics.

To further enhance compliance with the CoP, **the Peer Reviewers recommend that:**

- 4. The Statistics Law should be amended with regard to the permanent involvement of Statistics Austria at an early stage in the legislative process when administrative data sources of official statistics are affected. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 2.2, 7.7, 8.1, 8.7, 8.8, 8.9 and 10.3.)**
- 5. The Statistics Law should be amended granting Statistics Austria access for evaluation purposes to administrative data that could be used for official statistics when access is not explicitly covered by legislation. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 2.2, 7.7, 8.1, 8.7, 8.8, 8.9 and 10.3.)**
- 6. Austrian authorities responsible for legislation regarding use of administrative databases should codify in the respective laws permission for Statistics Austria to use these databases for European statistics. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 2.2, 7.7, 8.1, 8.7, 8.8, 8.9 and 10.3.)**

4.2.1.2 ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE / FULFILLING ROLES

Decision taking with regard to statistical matters

Statistics Austria has two Directors General (DG): the DG Statistics responsible for matters of statistics and the DG Finance responsible for other matters concerning Statistics Austria (Statistics Law Article 37 (1)). The Statistics Law stipulates in Articles 52 (5) point 11 and 53 (4) point 2 that the DG Finance has the sole responsibility concerning the accounts of Statistics Austria. In the event that the two Directors General are not able to come to an agreement regarding an issue, the DG Finance has a casting vote, following which the DG Statistics may appeal to the Economic Council. The Peer Review team was told that the DG Finance has never used this instrument.

The Peer Review team sees a potential risk that neither the DG Statistics nor the DG Finance and the Economic Council may take statistics related decisions. It is evident that the person with the sole economic responsibility should have the casting vote on all cost related issues. Whether such assignment of roles laid down in the Statistics Law never affects statistical independence remains unclear, as well as the possible outcomes of handling trade-offs in balancing costs and quality issues.

To further enhance compliance with the CoP, **the Peer Reviewers recommend that:**

- 7. Responsible Austrian authorities should reconsider whether the existing dissociation of statistical and financial responsibilities at top management level in Statistics Austria is advantageous for the institution's core tasks. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 1.4.)**

Background of the coordination role

Although over 90% of all European statistics are produced by Statistics Austria there is a need for coordination and cooperation between all ONAs producing European statistics, especially in order to ensure the application of the CoP. The Austrian Statistics Law uses the term 'coordination' only in Article 47 (2b) as one of the duties of the Statistics Council. The Statistics Council is entitled to give recommendations with regard to the coordination on matters concerning statistics, to the Federal Government and the European Union. Several other articles (Articles 18 and 23) clearly indicate the responsibility of Statistics Austria for the NSS, the production process as a whole and especially regarding the European Union. Regrettably, these articles do not elaborate on duties or rights of the national coordinating institution in official statistics.

The Peer Review team was reassured that good cooperation exists between Statistics Austria and the ONAs, mainly on a bilateral basis. In some cases Statistics Austria was able to insource the production of European statistics from ONAs on a consensual basis. Remarkably, the main argument of the institution that previously produced asylum statistics has been the independence of Statistics Austria. Statistics Austria is the single point of contact with Eurostat. All ONAs with the exception of the Austrian National Bank send their data via Statistics Austria to Eurostat.

Although not equipped with effective instruments, Statistics Austria is active concerning the implementation of the CoP in the ONAs. Statistics Austria strives for formal agreements with the ONAs. The standard document includes a commitment to the CoP, the delivery of an annual quality report to Statistics Austria and the data delivery to Statistics Austria. Two out of seven ONAs have already signed and the two ONAs who participated in the peer review are in the process of signing the agreements. The Austrian National Bank has postponed the debate until the amendment of Regulation 223/2009 is finalised. Nevertheless, the relations are considered generally as very good, confirmed by the representatives of both sides.

Statistics Austria evidently needs additional legal power to advance the implementation of the CoP among the ONAs. This should be supported by a dedicated budget for the implementation of the coordination role of Statistics Austria. If the coordination role is to include the monitoring of the

ONAs, the role of Statistics Austria must be strengthened so as to also make available the appropriate legal instruments. (See also recommendation no. 24 and 25)

To further enhance compliance with the CoP, the Peer Reviewers recommend that:

8. **Responsible Austrian authorities should consider strengthening the role of Statistics Austria as the coordinating body for European statistics. This includes securing a budget line for these activities. (Coordination)**
9. **Statistics Austria should facilitate written agreements with Other National Authorities on the production of European statistics with the support of the Statistics Council. Agreements with Other National Authorities should address, as much as possible, the production of quality reports, as well as statements about deviations from the European statistics Code of Practice. (Coordination)**

4.2.1.3 COOPERATION WITH SCIENTISTS

Facing the increasing demands for scientific methods

The meeting with the scientific community has revealed a good cooperation between Statistics Austria and a variety of scientific institutions. This cooperation includes many dimensions: the development of new methods, the continuous exchange of knowledge, joint projects and the reuse of official statistics for content-related scientific projects. Statistics Austria promotes analytical activities within the institution and has recently set up an analysis unit. The Peer Review team was told that several members of Statistics Austria staff hold lectures at universities and professors are invited to the office to give lectures. These activities could be intensified with the implementation of the programme of European Master of Official Statistics (EMOS). The staff members publish articles in reviewed scientific journals.

Part of the cooperation with the scientific community lacks a formal framework and is therefore perhaps not as visible and involving as it could be. For example, if a research committee were established as a sub-committee of the Statistics Council, besides others, it could bring together the requirements of the scientists to their mutual benefit. In addition, while appointing members of the Statistics Council, the institutions could follow a more scientifically oriented strategy. This may help to enhance the visibility of the Statistics Council to the general public and strengthen the effect of the Council recommendations with regard to the approached ministries.

Statistics Austria faces increasing demands by the scientific community and other users with regard to the access to microdata. Currently, access to household data is possible, while business microdata are only accessible by remote calculation. These calculations are performed in Statistics Austria without the direct contact of a researcher to an anonymised data set. Currently, the scientific community emphasises that business microdata from other countries (e.g. Sweden or the USA) is easier to access for Austrian researchers than national data. Remote access is a difficult and rather ineffective way of limited access, which does not encourage scientists for greater involvement and requires human resources in Statistics Austria. Statistics Austria confirmed that it has for some time sought to find a more efficient solution. Nonetheless, the Data Protection Unit of the Federal Chancellery has concluded that Article 31 of the Statistics Law in its current form does not allow access to business microdata. Therefore it would be a benefit for all parties involved if a legal basis for granting access to business microdata would be created.

To further enhance compliance with the CoP, the Peer Reviewers recommend that:

10. **Statistics Austria should consider facilitating the establishment of a research committee to initiate a formal consultation process with researchers and to enhance cooperation with the scientific community. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 4.4, 5.6 and 7.7.)**

11. The Statistics Law should be amended to grant access to business microdata for scientific purposes in a safe, central environment (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 4.4, 5.6 and 7.7.)
12. Responsible Austrian authorities should consider funding a safe, central environment in which microdata are accessible. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 4.4, 5.6 and 7.7.)

4.2.2 PLANNING THE FUTURE IMPACT OF STATISTICS AUSTRIA ON STATISTICS

A stronger Statistics Council

Articles 44 - 47 of the Austrian Statistics Law give a detailed account of the composition, meetings, formal decisions and duties of the Statistics Council. Among other duties, the Council has to report on the compliance with Article 24 of the law (basic quality principles of Austrian official statistics, implicitly a similar set of requirements as in the CoP). This report is submitted to the management of Statistics Austria and the Federal Chancellor, as well as to the federal ministries and the Economic Council. Also, the Statistics Council has duties stipulated by law to issue recommendations and statements on the design of administrative data sources, coordination issues between Statistics Austria and the ministries, on draft regulations and on the work programme and budget of Statistics Austria.

The position of the Statistics Council and its impact on the statistical system was approached and analysed from several sides during the preparatory document analysis and also during the interviews of the Peer Review visit. Having all this in mind, based on the origins and experience of its members, it can be clearly stated that the Statistics Council is a more user-profiled body. It can react independently, but because of its background it is usually more inclined to represent a user perspective.

The Statistics Council noted that their opinion in Statistics Austria is taken into account. It was also confirmed that during the past years the Council did not have very serious concerns, and its reactions to proposals or legal drafts were rather modest. However, the Statistics Council mentioned that, in their work directed to the outside, in several cases institutions like the Federal Economic Chamber or other lobbying groups seemed to be stronger and have more weight in consultation procedures. This impression was also supported by the interviews with stakeholders who are not members of the Statistics Council. The Council could and should be more visible in the public administration, use its rights to more advantage in raising confrontational statistical issues, and take a more proactive role in order to make its voice heard.

Overall, the Peer Review team thought that the powers of the Council are not used efficiently beyond Statistics Austria, although the basis to operate more actively is sufficiently provided by the law. Currently the Statistics Council is more a reporting body rather than an increasingly active and proactive consultative and coordinating body of official statistics. The Peer Review team is well aware that increasing assertiveness and institutional standing is a long, time-consuming process. Council members should have the time and possibilities to improve the current situation. Based on the information the Peer Review team has collected, the development of an action plan for the Statistics Council could be supported by Statistics Austria. This is a timely task, keeping in mind that Statistics Austria must prepare its next five-year strategy within one year. Looking beyond the profiles of the members and plans, it is important to observe that since the year 2000 the Statistics Council secretariat function has been safeguarded by the budget of Statistics Austria, but resources for other professional purposes (e.g. expert invitations, translations, etc.) are not available. This is addressed in other recommendations. (CoP indicators 1.4, 1.5, 2.2, 3.3, 3.4, 8.7, 10.3).

Therefore, in order to strengthen the development of official statistics, and to further enhance compliance with the CoP of the entire Austrian statistical system, **the Peer Reviewers recommend that:**

- 13. Institutions nominating members to the Statistics Council should balance academic, scientific and other competencies in the Council. The ministry responsible for the Statistics Council should consider securing an adequate budget for the work of the Statistics Council. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 1.4, 1.5, 2.2, 3.3, 3.4, 8.7 and 10.3.)**

Outlook to the future

The strategy of Statistics Austria is driven by a conscious and pragmatic management approach. Long-term goals and planning have always played an important role in its overall operations. This is obviously a cumulative institutional asset built over decades.

The office is preparing its next five-year strategic programme for the years 2016 to 2020, which must be completed by next year. This action aligns the strategic plans of Statistics Austria in periodicity to Eurostat's five-year programming cycle. When implementing such a mid-term planning exercise, further overarching development tasks may also arise. To address this, the Peer Review team stresses the importance of integrating a more long-term approach, going beyond the strategy's 2020 timeline. Certainly, the strategic programme can only be more specific in a shorter term and cannot be as detailed in the longer term. But a longer perspective would give a clear advantage to retaining the advanced position of Statistics Austria in the European statistical community. Though financial planning cannot go as far as 2025, the expression of further plans in a long term vision, based on a wide range of stakeholder consultations by Statistics Austria and the Statistics Council could stress the deliberate and unambiguous intention of Statistics Austria to ensure its meaningful place in international cooperation and national activities.

To further enhance compliance with the CoP, **the Peer Reviewers recommend that:**

- 14. Statistics Austria should include a long-term vision up to 2025 in its next strategic programme. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principles 3 and 11.)**

Keeping up the cooperation by participating in ESS projects

The decisions on participating in European projects are based on the strategic importance of tasks for Statistics Austria. Being an active member of the European statistical family, strategic goals on the EU level are always considered. Statistics Austria actively participates in European Statistical System Network projects (ESSnet), supports the single market statistics project on European anonymised microdata exchange (SIMSTAT), and among others, was an active participant in the Sponsorship Group based on the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Report. The office also participates very actively in the preparation of the Framework Regulation on Integrating Business Statistics (FRIBS) and is a proven supporter of open source software usage in the R-Package development circles. These actions rely on the strong interconnection between European long-term goals and long term goals of Statistics Austria.

All these achievements require a financial component. The Peer Review team was told that with the current financing solutions this activity may be at risk. Keeping the proactive outlook of the management, the current involvement should preferably continue. Statistics Austria has an elaborated system of accounting by the activities of each cost centre. In this context, some extremely important horizontal activities, which affect all areas of European statistics and relate to cooperation and coordination, might become unfocused without a specific budget allocation. This in turn might raise risks of inadequate financing. (CoP principle 3).

On the basis of their current positive assessment, with a look at possible risks, **the Peer Reviewers recommend that:**

- 15. Statistics Austria should continue to participate in those European Statistical System projects that are strategically important for its tasks, and consider assigning a dedicated budget reserve line for forthcoming issues. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principles 3 and 11.)**

Capacity building: human resources

Statistics Austria has gone through a dynamic change in obtaining the suitable financial, IT and human resources needed for effective operation. Focusing on the issue of human resources, the amount and composition of staff has significantly changed over the last 15 years. There was a major staff reduction during the last decade. The data provided for the year 2000 demonstrated that the restructuring of the institutional environment in Statistics Austria was accompanied by a cut from about 1200 to 900 members of staff. Until 2014, further 115 posts were cut. Currently (30.06.2014.) there are 787 employees working at Statistics Austria – one third of which with a master degree or higher. With regard to the budget, the financing is predominantly based on a lump sum of €50 million, without changes since the year 2000. Efficiency gains have been researched, applying up to date IT technology where previously human labour was needed.

While the number of staff has decreased, the educational level of the staff has increased. As a result, the ratio of master degree or above educational levels among staff has increased to almost one third, compared to only fifteen per cent in the year 2002. This ongoing transformation needs continued attention. Statistics Austria requires an appropriate academic level of training from newcomers. New staff members with adequate academic degrees usually feel well prepared after a short preparatory period. This view of the Peer Review team was confirmed again during the meeting with junior staff. To accelerate preparation and integration of new staff, a specific compulsory staff training programme is provided for every new employee. Later throughout the career, optional training courses are offered.

In 2013, approximately 2000 man-days were spent on course attendance, resulting in about 2.5 days of average training time per employee. The information gained from the interviews with staff led the Peer Review team to form the opinion that the bottom-up approach, where employees more freely select from the trainings they need for their duties generally works well, but this could also be better driven by the management. It was also confirmed by the interviews with junior staff that the employees find the catalogue of training opportunities very broad, because trainings offered by Eurostat and the Public Administration Academy are also accessible.

To further enhance compliance with the CoP, **the Peer Reviewers recommend that:**

- 16. Statistics Austria should more actively enable and encourage staff participation in training programmes, including the elaboration and implementation of personalised, individual training schemes throughout the office. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 7.6.)**

Staff motivation

Statistics Austria considers staff mobility in-house and between statistical institutes as an important instrument for staff qualification and motivation. The staff mobility and a system of matching mobility among member states and Eurostat, especially among experienced staff, would be useful and well accepted, but it is clearly constrained by some external factors. In 2014, a total of one person-year was allocated to exchange with other institutions. Certainly, several staff members can participate in mobility by dividing a year into shorter terms of two or three months. With regard to inward exchange, staff from other NSIs is only occasionally received. There is no budget foreseen for this purpose, however, a question of lacking language skills sometimes comes up.

In 2011, an employee survey examined motivational tools, taking into account that there are rather few opportunities to be promoted to management levels in Statistics Austria. This is a natural effect of a flat organisational structure. This severely limits vertical career opportunities. Employees have suggested several ways to mitigate this rigidity. First, the mobility to other institutions (on the basis of mutual interest) was raised as a solution; second, a suggestion was made to introduce more flexible working conditions like teleworking. Statistics Austria has begun reflecting upon an "expert career" scheme, introducing a title and higher remuneration, without promotion to a management position. The internal staff rotation is an important element in the current strategy; regrettably Statistics Austria has not been able to implement it yet as planned in its strategy. Encouragement to attend conferences, other meetings and to write scientific papers is also raised as an important component in addressing staff motivation and it could facilitate mitigating this issue.

To further enhance compliance with the CoP, the **Peer Reviewers recommend that:**

- 17. Statistics Austria should explore the further usability of additional human resource development tools during the elaboration of individual development plans (e.g. increased internal rotation, international staff exchange, internships). (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 3.1 and 7.6.)**

4.2.3 STATISTICAL PRODUCTION

4.2.3.1.1 STATISTICAL PRODUCTION IN STATISTICS AUSTRIA

The Austrian Statistics Law provides Statistics Austria with a clear and widely respected general mandate to collect official statistics data in the country. The legal provisions, especially Articles 4, 6 and 9 of the Statistics Law underline that carrying out surveys is only possible in the case that administrative registers or other administrative sources are not sufficient.

Moreover mandatory surveys are only possible if the voluntary response is "unlikely to be achieved". Primary data collection might appear rather challenging under such regulations; the Peer Review team, however, was convinced that response rates are usually good but need great efforts by Statistics Austria. Most business data collections rely on an obligatory basis by law and only in some cases Statistics Austria would need to compel response through legal actions. Statistics Austria confirms that warning the respondent with the threat of a possible fine for non-response usually is enough to receive the requested data. However, it was also mentioned that there is a perceived risk of increasing non-response in the case of wholesale trade statistics in the near future. Even in the case of compulsory surveys some companies would rather choose to pay fines than to provide data. In such yet rare cases where response is refused, the current legislation allows the launching of an administrative procedure where the administrative penal authority responsible for public administration offences may issue a fine for the respondent. Current practice tends to issue small fines of around €100, while the upper limit of the fine could reach up to €2,180 according to Article 66 of the Statistics Act. Low fines do not convince noncompliant respondents to respect their respondent role. Statistics Austria is concerned that increasing response rates by issuing higher fines is not a fit-for-purpose action to enhance the motivation of non-responding units.

Having in mind the importance of response rates and the limits of administrative procedures, the Peer Review team examined which other tools could enhance the respondent relations of Statistics Austria - how Statistics Austria could improve its generally very good public acceptance and reputation further. Part of the respondents could be better motivated with tailor made statistical data on the relevant economic sector or geographic area provided free of charge. The E-Quest internet application that is used by respondents to deliver the data to Statistics Austria has a feature that allows direct, free of charge access to aggregated data after respondent data are

submitted. Detailed disaggregation and richer breakdowns are available in the dissemination warehouse StatCube database, but it is only accessible to paid subscribers.

The periodic journal of Statistics Austria “Statistische Nachrichten” could also be made available free of charge in electronic form (.pdf) as it is one of the channels that transmits valuable information on European statistics.

Reduction of the response burden is usually addressed by respondents as an area for further improvement. However, in many cases responding is rather a subjectively perceived large burden compared to the size of other administrative tasks of enterprises. The Response Burden Barometer provides information in order to get an accurate view. The response burden could be reduced by a common accounting interface that would translate business accounting data to statistical data. Some attempts in this direction have had rather limited results so far, as Statistics Austria had no sufficient resources to implement such a task on its own. The diversity of accounting software in use by companies as well as different accounting rules are additional obstacles.

Enterprises also often complain via the Federal Economic Chamber that they sometimes have to report twice on some issues: to a ministry and to Statistics Austria as well. The perceived unequal spread of the response burden in sample-based surveys is also a frequently raised but not intensively treated issue.

Any progress in decreasing double reporting relies mostly on amending the sectorial legislation related to the administrative task, since the access for statistical purposes must be granted by those specific legal acts. Such issues of further cooperation and improvement of administrative sources for statistical purposes are not exclusively to be addressed by Statistics Austria, since the complexity of the current status quo would require joint efforts from ministries, the chambers, Statistics Austria, the Statistics Council and other bodies. However, succeeding in this area with other partners would further increase the trust in official statistics. In reducing the response burden, small results often require substantial efforts in a rigid legal environment, as the most difficult step is to progress from an advanced status to a very advanced one.

Therefore, to further enhance the currently good level of compliance with the CoP, **the Peer Reviewers recommend that:**

- 18. Statistics Austria and Other National Authorities, in close cooperation with the Federal Economic Chamber and other relevant institutions, should consider further motivating data providers to respond to surveys by maximising their benefits in the system, while minimising their response burden. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 2.1, 2.3, 9.2, 9.3 and 9.4.)**

Quality audit procedures

Statistics Austria implements its tasks accompanied by an increasing level of quality monitoring and quality management actions. The systematic approach to quality helps Statistics Austria to implement an integrated vision on quality, starting from a unified application of definitions, to detailed quality audits of procedures and products. The complex system of quality assurance of Statistics Austria is under permanent elaboration.

Quality improvement by Statistics Austria relies on four basic fundamentals. These are the Feedback Talks accompanied by the standard documentation on each statistical area, the general quality guidelines on methods, quality trainings within the office and the committed work of those units involved in quality issues. Due to relatively recent organisational reforms, the specific areas of quality management and methods were brought together into one unit, reporting directly to the Director General as well as to risk management, analysis and internal audit.

The department responsible for quality management and methods received several challenging tasks. It is responsible for the update procedure of the standard documentation and the Feedback Talks, for the quality guidelines and the guidelines on revision policy, and participates in several

stages of the statistical data production procedure (e.g. planning, sampling, data editing or confidentiality) from both methodological and quality management standpoints.

The Peer Review team investigated whether the tasks of the Quality Management and Methods Department are clearly distinguished from risk management tasks (process assessment) and internal audit tasks (financial assessment). The heads of the involved units clarified that the quality guidelines and their own procedures specify which activities require mutual cooperation and which tasks are under their sole responsibility. Quality assurance components are also applied at highly decentralised levels in the respective departments. Though tasks are shared in a complex way the assignment of responsibilities is clear for all participants.

The internal mechanism of regular quality audit processes has not yet been systematically introduced and requires more attention. However, the units involved have clearly defined roles in the procedure. The Risk Management Unit defines the framework, Quality Management defines the content of internal quality audits and the Internal Audit team takes a closer look at financing issues. Such an approach is basically welcome but currently under discussion by the respective units, as it seems to be a burdensome exercise. The complex system of quality audits throughout the entire statistical production needs to be elaborated in detail.

To assure the sustainability of compliance with the CoP, **the Peer Reviewers recommend that:**

- 19. Statistics Austria should introduce internal, systematic quality audits of statistics. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 4.1, 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4.)**

More accessible documentation of definitions, concepts, methods

Feedback Talks, a series of standard documentation, work in the technical subgroups and other instruments all contribute to the quality of statistics. In this respect, all documentation presented for users of statistics by Statistics Austria stand out.

The Peer Review team examined the issue of documentation as evidence of quality commitment, among other matters. Referring to information for external users, the first level of general information on quality is laid down according to the basic principles in Article 24 of the Statistics Law. This legal content is widely accepted as a fundamental guiding rule. An annual report is also produced to the Statistics Council in compliance with Article 24. It is publicly available on the internet and is sent to the Parliament for information.

The next, more sophisticated level of quality information for users is contained in the Quality Guidelines document, where the basic principles are applied to specific steps of the processes. Statistics Austria emphasised throughout the Peer Review visit that the standard documentation plays the most important role in transmitting specific methodology and quality aspects to the users.

The standard documentation on statistical areas simultaneously serves users who are more and less advanced. The existing resources can give a wide overview of methodological issues, the meta-level of statistics. However, the depth and detail of the standard documentation essentially varies depending on the complexity of the statistical area. The Peer Review team had the impression that there could be more harmonisation, but this does not significantly affect accessibility and clarity. More attention could be paid to one missing component related to metadata. The descriptions of concepts, definitions and methods are kept and updated in the standard documentation, serving rather as subject matter reading material, instead of a repository where users could easily look at keywords and reuse them.

The statistical notions and definitions are not as easily accessible as could be hoped. A publicly available repository of these notions could be a significant improvement for users, especially addressing the historic validity of the concepts, indicating the starting and ending points of validity.

To increase the accessibility in a wider context, it would be desirable that during update procedures of documentation Statistics Austria would gradually increase the number of English

translations, or at least extracts in English on methods, concepts and definitions. However, this should not take up too many resources from elsewhere. Currently, standard documentation is available only in German.

To further enhance compliance with the CoP, the Peer Reviewers recommend that:

- 20. Statistics Austria should create a public, searchable repository of its statistical concepts, definitions and methods. Statistics Austria should provide English translations of standard documentation or its executive summaries on its website. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 6.4, 7.1, 7.2, 15.1 and 15.6.)**

Serving user needs during dissemination in a modern, information-based society

Statistics Austria addresses user needs in committees and bilateral communication. Technical sub-committees operated by Statistics Austria have been established for this purpose, and there is also an Analysis Unit monitoring user needs. Through all these communication channels, Statistics Austria receives feedback, additional questions and requests on specific projects and, after their evaluation, may adjust data collection and dissemination according to user needs.

As the internet homepage of the NSI is by far the most important communication channel with the widest range of users, its maintenance and production of information using the most contemporary presentation techniques gains special importance. The Media Unit monitors the public activity and assesses which issues should be covered. Statistics Austria is also actively using Twitter since the spring of 2014 for tweeting on press releases. Rather than other tools, Twitter was chosen because journalists are mostly present there, and tweeting is a quick and easy way of reaching them. So far, the reactions on tweets usually reflect satisfaction with the data.

The second phase is to enforce the development of visualisation tools. There are already some interactive maps on the website. Besides the currently accessible interactive graphics, the majority of visualisations are only available by copy/paste from the PDF files of press releases. Statistics Austria faces a growing need for interactive graphs, infographics, and pictures on the website and in tweets. Enhanced data visualisation raises the interest of the users for more detailed press releases and databases, while infographics for free reuse, even for commercial purposes (creative commons licensing), would also raise the interest of other websites and media to provide weblinks to Statistics Austria.

As the use of 4-5" screen smartphones and 7-10" tablets is rapidly emerging, a more proper presentation and tailor-made services to these devices could quickly improve the access and popularity of the website and the service of Statistics Austria. It should be taken into account that presenting the statistical data on these devices would serve a wide range of mostly "average" or common users ranging from students to interested citizens or from businessmen to journalists, but the limits of screen size define the sufficiently presentable content. Several international websites already offer different content presentation based on the information detected from the incoming query of the device being used. These opportunities should be examined and to some extent improved by Statistics Austria.

To further enhance compliance with the CoP, the Peer Reviewers recommend that:

- 21. Statistics Austria should explore new visualisation techniques (e.g. infographics) and further modernise its dissemination techniques (e.g. consider developing an app and optimising the website format for mobile devices; make advances in communication techniques via Twitter). (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 13.3, 15.1 and 15.2.)**

Integrated solutions throughout the production pipeline

Statistics Austria puts substantial efforts into developing advanced IT solutions, supported by appropriate methodology. During the process the variety of tools used in each production step is being decreased. Beginning with the most significant result, the collection of primary data in business statistics was shifted almost exclusively to the so-called E-Quest web-based system, covering approximately 99 per cent of the business statistics primary surveys. Large enterprises even receive an offline application for this purpose. The remaining few data collection activities in business statistics use paper questionnaires in combination with optical character recognition (OCR) data capture, but the number is rapidly decreasing. The reception and primary validation of a large majority of administrative data also uses a single IT solution.

During the processing of primary data (editing, imputation, seasonal adjustment, further calculations, etc.) there are various parallel, tailor-made solutions for several statistics or statistical areas. The implementation is carried out in close cooperation with the Methods Unit. All processing steps are monitored and a rollback of data versions is always assured. The IT Department also plays a key role in preparing different calculation tools for the statisticians. These statistical procedures currently require close contact between methodology, IT and related units at an expert level since each area has unique applications to a smaller or greater degree.

A more advanced operation could be achieved by moving in a direction where the most frequently used tools and methods would be centrally managed in a data processing framework (or “toolbox”) and statisticians in the units could apply them more independently. The same process steps in different statistical areas are drawing increasing attention to internal harmonisation. These integration plans have a high effect on further coherence and data quality, and are considered a possible part of current and mid-term development actions in Statistics Austria. At the ESS level, Statistics Austria actively participates in standardisation projects and frequently examines the possibility of using harmonised tools, methods and applications. Currently Statistics Austria is assessing if, at the end of the production process, a standardised data warehouse solution is possible that could be used for internal production purposes and could support external dissemination procedures.

To further enhance compliance with the CoP, **the Peer Reviewers recommend that:**

- 22. Statistics Austria should further promote (both in-house and within the European Statistical System) the development and use of integrated, harmonised information technology solutions, especially a single framework for data processing actions. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 7.2, 8.4, 8.5, 8.6, 14.1 and 14.3.)**

On data access rules

Though the peer review focused on European statistics, the overall statistical activities of a reviewed statistical institution were of inevitable interest because the external perception of the institutional reputation seldom distinguishes between different working areas. Originating from the financing model of the institution, Statistics Austria is also entitled to compile non-European statistics for Other National Authorities or “clients” on a contract basis. For these statistics, the Statistical Law introduces a dissemination regulation (Statistical Law Article 30 (1a)) that entitles Statistics Austria to publish the results in case the client does not publish them within two months. Hence, Statistics Austria might act in different ways with regard to this sensitive issue of dissemination.

The Peer Review team was told that such events occur very rarely, and this option was never raised as a critical issue. However, the Peer Review team is not certain whether these differences in dissemination practice can be communicated to the public in an adequate way. There may be a risk that the public could interpret these differences as an exclusion from equal access.

To diminish the possible issues rising from this distinguished handling of results, **the Peer Review team recommends that:**

- 23. The responsible ministries should review Article 30(1a) of the Statistics Law to enable Statistics Austria to apply equal dissemination guidelines to all products. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 6.7; Principle 15.)**

4.2.3.2 STATISTICAL PRODUCTION OF OTHER NATIONAL AUTHORITIES

Most European statistics in Austria are produced by Statistics Austria; however, there are seven Other National Authorities (ONAs) producing European statistics. All ONAs are primarily established for non-statistical purposes. Therefore, the production of statistics and their dissemination plays an additional role, which complements the primary duties of the ONAs. During the session with the ONAs the Peer Review team met Energy Control Austria (E-Control) and Environment Agency Austria (UBA), which completed a Light Self-Assessment Questionnaire (LSAQ). Further ONAs are the Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection, the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management, the Austrian Institute of Economic Research (WIFO), the Allgemeine Unfallversicherungsanstalt (AUVA) - the Austrian Workers' Compensation Board and the Austrian National Bank.

The Peer Review team was informed that Statistics Austria produces more than 95 per cent of Austrian official statistics, if the statistical production of the Austrian National Bank is not taken into account. Therefore, the remaining six ONAs are responsible for a relatively small, though important share of European statistics produced in Austria.

Usually the staff of Statistics Austria represents Austria in Eurostat meetings, while the ONAs appoint additional participants if needed.

Compliance with the CoP by ONAs

A particular feature of Austrian official statistics is the full legal independence of the ONAs, while the legal power of Statistics Austria in coordinating statistical activities is rather limited to “moral suasion” – as Statistics Austria calls it (see recommendation no. 8). The Federal Statistics Act equips Statistics Austria with no legal instruments to approve the quality of statistics produced by the ONAs or to impose any corrective measures or sanctions in the event that the CoP principles are disrespected. The weak level of coordination exercised by Statistics Austria may provide an explanation of why the level of implementation of the CoP and the progress in the ONAs is mixed and limited. Up to this date, bilateral agreements of Statistics Austria with E-Control or the Environment Agency Austria which could advance the harmonisation of statistical processes in the ONAs up to the standards of Statistics Austria are under negotiation.

The business process models in the ONAs differ from each other and from the business process model of Statistics Austria. Moreover, all ONAs, except the Austrian Central Bank, do not have dedicated statistical departments. The statistical staff, as a rule, is disbursed across different functions. Therefore, each ONA follows its own business model according to which it produces and disseminates statistics. The Peer Review team gathered evidence that the ONAs do not conduct any audits related to statistical production and its quality (with the exception of the Austrian Central Bank).

The Austrian Central Bank, being a part of the European System of Central Banks, enjoys a parallel independence. The technical cooperation and sharing of knowledge are functioning well.

E-Control does not use administrative data for statistical inputs. As the Peer Review team was told, they follow a multi-purpose data collection strategy that clearly describes the different uses to the respondent. E-Control representatives assured that confidentiality is thoroughly followed: the statistical staff has no access to regulatory data, while non-statistical staff has no access to statistical data. At the same time, it was explained that during several years the statistical burden on respondents has increased due to new European requirements and due to an increasing

number of respondents; consequently, the issue of the response burden has gained more public importance.

The Peer Review team was informed that the Environment Agency Austria started to implement the requirements of the CoP in March 2008. The response burden reduction was addressed in water statistics where the same data are used for administrative and statistical purposes. The Agency took this decision for reasons of cost-effectiveness.

Though the output quality procedures in both E-Control and the Environment Agency Austria are not well documented, the practices show a very well established attitude towards the quality of statistical output. Despite the fact that E-Control does not have an approved revision policy, the data are revised as far as possible (up to 10 years) if a reason for revision appears. During the meeting with ONAs a specific episode was addressed which points to the strength of output quality management procedures. In 2002, when E-Control found that data on gas statistics was not of appropriate quality, they did not disseminate the data for half a year until the quality issue was resolved. In the meantime, the flagged data was sent to Eurostat, respecting the deadlines.

To further enhance compliance with the CoP, **the Peer Reviewers recommend that:**

- 24. Statistics Austria should facilitate the compliance of Other National Authorities producing statistics with the European statistics Code of Practice, especially by requiring regular quality reports on their data production, examining their dissemination guidelines and mandating a release calendar. (Precondition: implementation of Recommendation 8) (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 4.1-4.4, 11.2, 13.2-13.5, 15.2, 15.3 and 15.5-15.7.)**

Improving the dissemination of European statistics

The dissemination of statistics in the ONAs, as one aspect covered by the CoP, is substantially less advanced than in Statistics Austria. Different gaps might be found in different institutions, but ONAs, as a rule, do not have advance data release calendars, do not produce statistical press releases concerning European statistics, metadata information falls behind the standard of Statistics Austria, standard documentation is not provided in a common format on their websites, European statistics are difficult to find and the provision of the data to scientists, if any, is not clearly defined. An overview of all European statistics produced by all ONAs and Statistics Austria is available.

E-Control, for instance, defines the internet as a medium for the dissemination of all statistics. Even though statistical data are released according to a predefined time schedule, there is no established advance release calendar, neither for preliminary (monthly) statistics nor for annual statistics. Their statistical dissemination is defined by a relevant legal act and Eurostat deadlines. Even though these requirements are meticulously adhered to, the statistical data are disseminated regularly and earlier than requested by the legal acts, without a preannouncement of an advance dissemination date. The institution notifies the users only about important delays.

The preferred way of releasing statistical information is quite varied across different ONAs. E-Control, as many other ONAs, does not produce statistical press releases. E-Control disseminates statistical information in the form of Excel files, which points to an area of further improvement in dissemination. The Environment Agency Austria has a web site dedicated to environmental issues. There are a lot of data, information, and visualisation tools on the website. Remarkably, there is a tool for providing feedback on quality.

Summing up, the Peer Review team thought that many improvements could be made for a more user-friendly access to all European statistics produced by the ONAs, and that Statistics Austria should take care of this issue. However, a precondition is that the necessary legal power exists and that adequate resources are available.

This shows that both the Statistics Council and Statistics Austria should take action towards improving the dissemination of European statistics by the ONAs and establish a portal where complete information on institutional advance release calendars is provided.

To further enhance compliance with the CoP, the Peer Reviewers recommend that:

- 25. Statistics Austria should facilitate a reasonable presentation on the statistics activities of Other National Authorities in order to provide a full overview of European statistics for the public, for example a single web portal for European statistics. (Precondition: implementation of Recommendation 8). (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 1.5 and 15.1-15.7.)**

4.2.4 BUDGET

European statistics produced by Statistics Austria is financed from two major sources: a fixed annual lump sum defined in the law, and gradually growing net sales, which comprise both state budget financing secured by relevant ministries and contracts for providing statistics to other relevant parties. The legal status of Statistics Austria, as a federal institution under public law, defines the budgeting requirements for Statistics Austria set out in the national legislation. Starting from 2000, the main part of the budget of Statistics Austria was provided by an annual fixed lump sum of €50.391 million guaranteed by the law. In addition, for the items of the annual work programme that were begun after 2002 and for which financing was not secured by the lump sum, a separate budget revenue line (net sales) provides the needed funding. In 2013, the net sales amounted to €17 million.

Principles 3 and 10 of the CoP are directly related to budgetary issues, by addressing the adequacy of resources and cost effectiveness. In addition, the implementation of these principles should not come at the cost of any other indicator, for example, at the cost of availability and accessibility of European statistics.

Funding of European statistics in the long run

After examining the recent annual budgets and reviewing the budgeting procedures, according to which the annual work programmes were funded, the Peer Review team found that the resources available to Statistics Austria have generally been sufficient to meet European statistics requirements. Though this statement is true for the past, its validity in the future cannot be guaranteed if current budgeting limits or practices are not adjusted.

During the past 14 years the effects of overall price increases have been offset by the efficiency gains of Statistics Austria, which are related to the reduction in the numbers of staff, greater use of IT technology, as well as a gradual move from statistical surveys to administrative data sources.

The lump sum for Statistics Austria is defined by the law in nominal terms and is not indexed by any measure which poses risks for adequate future financing of European statistics. These risks arise from the fact that the real value of any nominally fixed amount constantly decreases in real terms over the years, because of both inflation and economic growth. These risks have had somewhat less influence in the recent few years due to moderate economic growth and extremely low inflation in Austria. Nevertheless, this risk might significantly increase as the economic growth and inflation accelerate. This risk is addressed by Statistics Austria in conducting its risk management activities, which have been substantially strengthened by establishing a unit responsible for risk management.

The rapid reduction of staff demonstrates visibly how these risks were managed over the last decade. The numbers of staff were reduced from about 900 in the year 2000 to 787 in the year 2014 (754 in full time equivalents). Needless to say, there are natural limits to this reduction process. In contrast, the budgetary amounts for wages and salaries of Statistics Austria were gradually growing over the years, as higher staff qualifications were needed. The meeting with

junior staff showed that Statistics Austria is currently a competitive employer able to hire young statisticians with the qualifications needed. For most of the young statisticians at the meeting Statistics Austria was their second employer, while their first employers were both from the public and private sectors.

The advanced financial management practices in Statistics Austria facilitate better management of the above mentioned long-term budgetary risks. These budgetary risks are handled by running very complex analytical accounting and financial planning practices. The unit responsible for finance plans the resources and monitors them by splitting the budget into around 500 products (expenditure items) produced by Statistics Austria. It is important to mention in this context that the principle of cost-effectiveness is laid down in the Statistics Law (Articles 4(3), 14(1)) and that the Economic Council plays an important role in ensuring cost-effectiveness.

The Peer Review team was told that during the 5-year financial planning exercise for 2016-2020 Statistics Austria ascertained that the lump sum will provide adequate financing of European statistics in 2015 and 2016. However, during the peer review visit, Statistics Austria and the Economic Council were not in a position to confirm that the lump sum of €50.391 million will provide adequate financing beyond 2016. As the share of statistics financed from net sales is constantly growing, the 5-year planning has to rely increasingly on the accuracy of planning and forecasting of ever growing net sales. It is far more secure if the net sales revenue planning relies on a binding financial basis (contracts), rather than on forecasts of potential financial inflows.

Having in mind that the revenue structure of Statistics Austria is increasingly dependent on net sales and the subsequent effects of charging for statistical data and the costs evolution of hiring staff in Statistics Austria, a wider national debate is needed on the sustainability of current budgeting arrangements. The key parties in this debate are the Economic Council, the Ministry of Finance, and the Federal Chancellery.

To further enhance compliance with the CoP, **the Peer Reviewers recommend that:**

- 26. Responsible national authorities should reconsider the budgetary arrangements for Statistics Austria with a view to securing the sustainability of funding for European statistics. The planning of the five-year strategy programme should be more securely based on a binding financial basis. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principles 3 and 10.)**

Budgeting should not interfere with the implementation of other principles

The tight budgeting environment, relying on a gradually diminishing (in real terms) lump sum and yearly negotiated and renegotiated net sales, have been raising the pressure to secure additional resources for Statistics Austria over the years. The revenue items that attracted particular attention of the Peer Review team are related to revenues for disseminated publications and charging for access to data, some of which are readily available in Statistics Austria.

Statistics Austria has made efforts to secure budget revenues from users of statistics if the law does allow charging users for specific services. As a result “Statistische Nachrichten”, a flagship publication of Statistics Austria, where articles on European statistics are published, is not available free of charge. Even the electronic versions of articles in PDF format are not free. The free of charge availability of articles on European statistics is highly desirable. In contrast, all other statistical publications produced by Statistics Austria are free of charge in electronic form, and only publications in paper form are charged for. The revenues for the dissemination of Statistics Austria paper publications are gradually decreasing each year. The Peer Review team was informed that annual revenues from the sales of the “Statistische Nachrichten” were around €40,000 on average in the past three years.

While Statistics Austria grants public access to the main statistical results, it provides public access to the detailed results of the statistics in return for an appropriate fee to cover its costs. This arrangement is defined in Article 30 of the Statistics Law. The Peer Review team found that the current pricing policies could be made more transparent by providing relevant information on

the website of Statistics Austria. The current Statistics Austria website statement that “if you would like to purchase publications or tables in formats other than those offered under ‘Statistics’ (HTML, PDF, XLS), please contact the General information service” is not sufficient with regard to pricing transparency. In particular, without an adequate pricing transparency, it is impossible to assess whether prices, although adequate, may be prohibitive for some user groups, especially for scientists or small businesses. It should be kept in mind that the access to statistical data for scientists, as a rule, is free of charge in the European System of Central Banks, which constitutes another branch of European statistics. Moreover, the access of scientists to European statistics is easier in other NSIs within the ESS than in Austria. During the meeting with the scientific community, the Peer Review team was informed that scientists conduct research using the data disseminated by the NSIs of other countries (Sweden), because the Austrian data were and are not available to them. The scientific research using European statistics has many positive external effects; thus, if financial obstacles are too high, they might negatively affect the use of European statistics in Austria.

The annual work programme of Statistics Austria is rich in statistical and technical details, but it lacks the financial dimension, at least at an aggregated level. Enriching this programme with relevant information on the costs of statistics could benefit the general public and contribute to plan quality and transparency of Austrian Statistics.

To further enhance compliance with the CoP, the Peer Reviewers recommend that:

- 27. Statistics Austria should enrich its annual work programme with relevant financial information of public interest on the costs of statistics. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 1.5; Principles 3 and 15.)**

- 28. Statistics Austria should make its pricing policy publicly available (tariffs document). Statistics Austria should re-examine its pricing policy to ensure that prices are not prohibitive, including data access for researchers, and provide articles on European statistics published in the periodic journal of Statistics Austria *Statistische Nachrichten* free of charge. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 1.5; Principles 3 and 15.)**

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

Divergent views to recommendations 14, 15 and 27:

Recommendation 14

Statistics Austria should include a long-term vision up to 2025 in its next strategic programme. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principles 3 and 11.)

According to the Federal Statistics Act Statistics Austria is held to develop a strategic concept for period of five years. In 2015 the concept for 2016 to 2020 will be elaborated. The concept extending to 2020 will include strategic goals also valid beyond this time frame. However, also due to the Vision 2020 horizon of the ESS, it is not considered feasible to embark on a strategy exercise going beyond this time frame.

Recommendation 15

Statistics Austria should continue to participate in those European Statistical System projects that are strategically important for its tasks, and consider assigning a dedicated budget reserve line for forthcoming issues. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principles 3 and 11.)

In its midterm financial planning Statistics Austria is considering all ESS-projects relevant for strategic development. This includes international activities like the participation in important forthcoming projects as far as they are known for the envisaged planning period of five years. The relevant budgetary resources are part of the planning process and already included in the budget envelope.

Recommendation 27

Statistics Austria should enrich its annual work programme with relevant financial information of public interest on the costs of statistics. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 1.5; Principles 3 and 15.)

The annual work programme of Statistics Austria consists of two parts. The first one includes a textual description of the main projects assigned to responsible subject matter areas the second one lists all projects characterised by administrative items. The financing background of each individual project is highlighted by using different colours in the attached table (lump sum (grey background) or not (white background)). This is explained in the foreword of the annual's programme textual part.

Statistics Austria would like to thank the peer review team for the comprehensive work and the insightful discussions during the visit. Statistics Austria does have no diverging views related to the other conclusions or recommendations.

ANNEX A: PROGRAMME OF THE VISIT

Programme for the Peer Review visit to Austria, 13 – 17 October 2014

Peer Review team (PR team):

Chair: Ms Ulrike Rockmann
Mr József Kárpáti
Mr Rimantas Vaicenavicius

Statistics Austria delegation (STAT delegation):

Mr Konrad Pesendorfer, Director General-Statistics
Ms Gabriela Petrovic, Director General-Finance
Mr Thomas Burg, Head of Quality Management and Methods
Ms Brigitte Grandits, Head of International Relations
Mr Werner Holzer, Head of Risk Management

Eurostat observer

Mr. James Whitworth, Head of Unit,
Statistics for administrative purposes

Time	Programme	Participants
Day 1 – Monday 13 October 2014		
09.00 – 10.30	PR team discussion to finalise the preparation of the visit.	PR team
10.30 – 10.45	<i>Coffee break</i>	
10.45 – 12.15	Preparatory meeting with the NSI coordinator team to discuss practical aspects of the visit	Thomas Burg, Brigitte Grandits, Werner Holzer
12.15 – 13.30	<i>Lunch</i>	
13.30 – 14.00	Welcome and introduction of programme, organisational matters	STAT delegation
14.00 – 15.00	General information session with a description on how the national statistical system is organised (bodies, distribution of responsibilities, relations between authorities).	STAT delegation
15.00 – 15.15	<i>Coffee break</i>	
15.15 – 16.15	Coordination role of the NSI	STAT delegation
16.15 – 17.15	Cooperation / level of integration of the ESS	STAT delegation, Norbert Rainer, Alexander Bertsch
Day 2 – Tuesday 14 October 2014		
09.00 – 10.30	Meeting with Statistics Council and Economic Council	STAT delegation, Richard Bock, Manfred Matzka, Heinz Handler, Marcus Hudec, Ernst Fürst, Ulrike Oschischnig
10.30 – 10.45	<i>Coffee break</i>	
10.45 – 12.15	Meeting with main users – Ministries and other public/private institutions (including Central Bank as a user)	STAT delegation, Josef Kytir, Waltraud Pecksteiner Beate Schmidt Ursula Havel, Norbert Rainer, Gregor Eibl, Renate Spring, Kamran Kazemzadeh, Marc Pointecker, Christoph Grohsebner, Ernst Fürst, Matthias Schnetzer, Regina Tüchler, Johannes Fankhauser, Karin Wagner

Time	Programme	Participants
12.15 – 13.30	Lunch	
13.30 – 15.15	The statistical law and related legislation (CoP principles 1, 2, 5 and 6) and statistical work programme	STAT delegation, Christine Bienzle
15.15 – 15.30	Coffee break	
15.30 – 16.30	Meeting with main users – Scientific community	STAT delegation, Josef Kytir, Waltraud Pecksteiner, Peter Laimer, Ursula Havel, Norbert Rainer, Franz Eiffe, Helmut Hofer, Josef Baumgartner Werner Müller
16.30 – 17.30	Meeting with main users – Media	STAT delegation, Beatrix Tomaschek, Josef Kytir, Waltraud Pecksteiner, Peter Laimer, Ursula Havel, Norbert Rainer, Christian Haberhauer, Isabell Widek, Richard Wiens

Time	Programme	Participants
Day 3 – Wednesday 15 October 2014		
09.00 – 10.30	Programming, planning and resources, including training (CoP principles 3, 9 and 10)	STAT delegation, Gertrude List, Norbert Rainer, Werner Spitzer, Oskar Zimmermann-Meinzingen
10.30 – 10.45	Coffee break	
10.45 – 11.45	Quality (organisational structure, tools, monitoring, ...) (CoP principles 4 and 11 to 15)	STAT delegation, Alexander Kowarik, Manuela Lenk, Josef Kytir, Ursula Havel, Norbert Rainer, Beatrix Tomaschek, Walter Stübler, Markus Fröhlich
11.45 – 13.00	Implementation of Quality management: concrete example and discussion	STAT delegation, Alexander Kowarik, Manuela Lenk, Josef Kytir, Ursula Havel, Norbert Rainer, Beatrix Tomaschek, Walter Stübler, Markus Fröhlich
13.00 – 14.15	Lunch	
14.15 – 15.15	Dissemination, including user's consultation (CoP principles 6, 11 and 15)	STAT delegation, Beatrix Tomaschek, Christine Bienzle
15.15 – 15.30	Coffee break	
15.30 – 17.15	Methodology, data collection, data processing and administrative data (CoP principles 2, 7 and 8)	STAT delegation, Josef Kytir, Waltraud Pecksteiner, Beate Schmidt, Walter Stübler, Norbert Rainer, Peter Wesel, Richard Plasun, Franz Eiffe, Irene Baumgartner, Alexander Kowarik, Manuela Lenk

Time	Programme	Participants
Day 4 – Thursday 16 October 2014		
09.00 – 10.30	Methodology, data collection, data processing and administrative data (CoP principles 2, 7 and 8) (Cont'd)	STAT delegation, Josef Kytir, Waltraud Pecksteiner, Beate Schmidt, Walter Stübler, Norbert Rainer, Peter Wesel, Richard Plasun, Franz Eiffe, Irene Baumgartner, Alexander Kowarik, Manuela Lenk
10.30 – 10.45	Coffee break	
10.45 – 11.45	Meeting with Junior staff	Julia Fischer, Lukas Gach, Manfred Gollner, Nina Goltsch, Anneliese Oismüller, Marc Plate, Nora Prean, Kathrin Lais, Johanna Einfalt, , Nicole Gumprecht, Ana Djordjevic
11.45 – 12.30	Confidentiality (CoP principle 5)	STAT delegation , Christine Bienzle, Peter Wesel Richard Plasun, Alexander Kowarik, Josef Kytir, Waltraud Pecksteiner, Beate Schmidt, Walter Stübler, Norbert Rainer, Franz Eiffe, Irene Baumgartner, Manuela Lenk
12.30 – 13.45	Lunch	

Time	Programme	Participants
13.45 – 15.15	Meeting with the ONA's	STAT delegation, Beate Schmidt, Eva Milota, Wolfgang Bittermann, Esther Steiner, Hans Nischkauer, Rudolf Legat
15.15 – 15.30	<i>Coffee break</i>	
15.30 – 17.15	Meeting with main data providers/respondents	STAT delegation, Manuela Lenk, Josef Kytir, Waltraud Pecksteiner, Beate Schmidt, Walter Stübler, Norbert Rainer, Peter Wesel, Richard Preindl, Ulrike Oschischnig, Rainer Pilz
Time	Programme	Participants
Day 5 – Friday 17 October 2014		
09.00 – 10.30	PR team discussion	PR team
10.30 – 10.45	<i>Coffee break</i>	
10.45 – 12.45	Clarifications, remaining or additional issues and focus areas	STAT delegation
12.45 – 13.30	<i>Lunch</i>	
13.30 – 15.30	Meeting with senior management: conclusions and recommendations	STAT delegation, Josef Kytir, Waltraud Pecksteiner, Beate Schmidt, Ursula Havel, Norbert Rainer, Peter Wesel, Christine Bienzle, Manuela Lenk, Franz Eiffe, Beatrix Tomaschek
15.30 – 17.00	Preparation of the report: task sharing	PR team

ANNEX B. LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Peer Reviewers

1. Ms Ulrike Rockmann (Chair)
2. Mr József Kárpáti
3. Mr Rimantas Vaicenavičius

Eurostat observer

Mr. James Whitworth, Head of Unit, Statistics for administrative purposes

A. List of MANAGEMENT AND SENIOR STAFF of Statistics Austria to be involved in the meeting per principle

No	Name	Position
3,6,9,10	Gabriela Petrovic	Director General Finance
1 to 15	Konrad Pesendorfer	Director General Statistics
1 to 15	Thomas Burg	Head of Quality Management and Methods
1 to 15	Brigitte Grandits	Head of International Relations
1 to 15	Werner Holzer	Head of Risk Management
1,2,5,6,9,11,15	Christine Bienzle	Head of Legal Affairs, Data Protection Agent
3,9,10	Gertrude List	Head of Staff Administration
2,3,4,7,8,9,10,11 to 15	Norbert Rainer	Head of Dpt., Registers, Classifications and Geoinformation
3,9,10	Werner Spitzer	Head of Controlling
3,9,10	Oskar Zimmermann-Meinzigen	Head of Finance and Accounting
2,7,4,5,8,11 to 15	Alexander Kowarik	Head of Methods
4,7,8,11 to 15	Markus Fröhlich	Deputy Head of Methods
2,7,4,8,11 to 15	Manuela Lenk	Deputy Head of Dpt., Head of Business Register, Register based census, Coordinator for Administrative Data
2,7,4,8,11 to 15	Josef Kytir	Director, Social Statistics
4,11 to 15	Ursula Havel	Director, Macro-economic Statistics
6, 11 to 15	Beatrix Tomaschek	Head of Media and Information Policy
2,7,8	Waltraud Pecksteiner	Director, Business Statistics
2,7,8	Beate Schmidt	Director, Spatial Statistics
2,7,8	Walter Stübler	Deputy Director, Macro-economic Statistics
2,5,7,8	Peter Wesel	Head of IT-Dpt
2,5,7,8	Richard Plasun	Deputy Head of IT-Dpt., IT-Security
2,7,8	Franz Eiffe	Head of Analysis Unit
2,7,8	Irene Baumgartner	Directorate Social Statistics, Head of Survey Infrastructure

B. List of JUNIOR STAFF of Statistics Austria to be interviewed

Name	Position
Julia Fischer	Media and Information Policy
Lukas Gach	Spatial Statistics
Manfred Gollner	Spatial Statistics
Nina Goltsch	Business Statistics
Anneliese Oismüller	Social Statistics
Marc Plate	Social Statistics
Nora Prean	Macro-Economic Statistics
Kathrin Lais	Macro-Economic Statistics
Johanna Einfalt	Registers, Classifications and Geoinformation
Nicole Gumprecht	Registers, Classifications and Geoinformation
Ana Djordjevic	International Relations

C. List of EXPERTS IN EUROPEAN STATISTICS working in the ONAs to be reviewed.

Name	Position
Hans Nischkauer	e-Control, Head of Statistics
Esther Steiner	e-Control, Statistics
Rudolf Legat	Environment Agency Austria, Environmental Information Management Systems

D1. List of MAIN USERS (Ministries and other public/private institutions including Central Bank) to be included in the interviews.

Name	Position
Gregor Eibl	Austrian Federal Chancellery, E- Government
Renate Spring	Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy, Economic Policy
Kamran Kazemzadeh	Federal Ministry of Finance, General Economic Policy
Marc Pointecker	Federal Ministry of Education and Women's Affairs, Social Policy
Christoph Grohsebner	Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management, Agricultural Statistics
Ernst Fürst	Head of Statistics Office of Land Oberösterreich
Matthias Schnetzer	The Chamber of Labour, Statistics, Department of Economic Research
Regina Tüchler	Austrian Economic Chamber, Department of Statistics
Johannes Fankhauser	Austrian Chamber of Agriculture, Department for Regional Development
Karin Wagner	Oesterreichische Nationalbank, Macroeconomic Analysis

D2. List of MAIN USERS (media) to be included in the interviews

Name	Position
Christian Haberhauer	Austrian Press Agency (APA)
Isabell Widek	WirtschaftsBlatt
Richard Wiens	Salzburger Nachrichten

D3. List of MAIN USERS (representatives of scientific community-universities) to be included in the interviews.

Name	Position
Werner Müller	President of the Austrian Statistical Society, Johannes Kepler University Linz
Helmut Hofer	Institute for Advanced Studies, Researcher
Josef Baumgartner	Austrian Institute of Economic Research, Researcher

E. List of main representatives of RESPONDENTS - representatives of business associations and federations to be included in the interviews.

Name	Position
Ulrike Oschischnig	Austrian Economic Chamber, Head of Statistics Department
Richard Preindl	Austrian Social Security, IT-Department
Rainer Pilz	Federal Ministry of Finance, Head of Tax Estimation

F. List of representatives of the Economic and Statistics Council to be included in the interviews.

Name	Position
Richard Bock	Economic Council, Chair
Manfred Matzka	Economic Council, Vice Chair
Heinz Handler	Statistics Council, Chair
Ernst Fürst	Statistics Council, Chair of the Quality Assurance Subcommittee
Ulrike Oschischnig	Statistics Council