

PEER REVIEW REPORT

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

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AUGUST 2015

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Swiss National Statistical System (NSS) is decentralised and complex and includes statistical offices or other production units at the federal, cantonal and communal (cities) level. Statistical cooperation, aimed at achieving fuller harmonisation of statistics between Switzerland and the EU, is founded on the „Agreement between the European Community and the Swiss Confederation on cooperation in the field of statistics”, which entered into force on 1 January 2007. The Swiss Confederation’s task of compiling statistics is stipulated in the Constitution and the Swiss Federal Council, being the supreme leading and executive authority, meets this obligation by commissioning statistical surveys from different administrative units. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office (SFSO) produces substantially the majority of the total statistical output in Switzerland and, according to the Federal Statistics Act (1992) (FStatA), it coordinates the statistical activities of federal statistical bodies. Producers of official statistics in the cantons and cities are not part of this peer review since these institutions are not producers of European statistics.

Some strengths in implementing the European statistics Code of Practice (CoP) were identified in the course of the peer review, namely highly qualified professionals, and the application of advanced methods for sampling, editing, imputation and statistical precision estimation. Data from enterprises (salaries data) are partly obtained directly from the information systems of the businesses with the help of specific business software (e.g. accounting). The practice of commenting publicly on statistical issues and displaying a significant amount of public statistical content in different languages were also considered strengths in making statistics more accessible.

The Peer Review team identified four broad issues in implementing the CoP, that are related to the legal and institutional set-up of the SFSO and the Other National Authorities producing European statistics (ONAs); quality management; methodology and quality of statistical production processes; and user orientation.

With regard to the legal and institutional set-up, Swiss law includes provisions permitting data collected for statistical purposes to be used for administrative purposes also. The respective provisions in the FStatA refer to “national interest” and planning purposes. This issue is related to the SFSO’s existing mandate and practice of operating administrative registers. The law also gives the Federal government a fairly extensive mandate to define some survey characteristics. Other areas for improvement concern the federal annual statistical work programme and defining professional responsibility and respective qualification requirements for the heads of authorities producing European statistics.

Although the SFSO’s quality commitment is laid down in the Quality Policy and the Quality Management Manual (QMM) and integration of statistics quality management has advanced in recent years, to a considerable extent the quality management system still consists of a set of individual systems for each statistical domain. Therefore, further focus on the integration, implementation and public availability of quality management procedures as well as the standardisation of quality assurance procedures and quality reporting is necessary. A systematic analysis of revisions to improve methodology and processes should be part of the overall quality management procedures.

The SFSO publishes detailed methodological reports elaborating on specific methodological matters but they vary between statistical domains. Standardisation and publication of methodological documentation and descriptions of statistical procedures should be improved. Methods used for statistical disclosure control vary between statistical areas within the SFSO

which is why a centralised procedure needs to be established and promoted across the SFSO and the ONAs. The processing of administrative data is also decentralised across statistical domains in the SFSO and should be further integrated and standardised. Many initiatives have been accomplished in the NSS with regard to measuring response burden, particularly in the area of business statistics in the SFSO. However, there is currently no systematisation or method clearly defined at the SFSO to measure the burden on respondents. In the context of the quality of statistical processes, this report also discusses the problems related to data sharing within the NSS and the integration of statistical production systems from an information technology (IT) strategy perspective. The SFSO has a human resources policy in place and continuous vocational training is systematically applied; however, development of a staff career management system should be considered.

In the context of user orientation, several areas for improvement were identified. These relate to implementing common dissemination policies, guidelines and practices among producers of European statistics, strengthening user consultation and involvement in priority setting and raising statistical awareness among existing and potential users of statistics. Other recommendations deal with the pre-release access to privileged users, measurement of the timeliness of statistics production, improvement of access to metadata and archived data, services to researchers, release calendars and other dissemination practices.

The Peer Reviewers found that the SFSO is largely compliant with the CoP, but there is still scope to achieve and enhance compliance. As regards the ONAs, there is more room for improvement in compliance with the CoP.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Institutional set-up of the Swiss National Statistical System

1. The Swiss legislative authorities should amend the relevant legal provisions to assign to the Director General of the Swiss Federal Statistical Office and the heads of the Other National Authorities producing European statistics the responsibility of deciding on statistical methods and standards and the content and timing of statistical releases. The Ordinance on the Conduct of Federal Statistical Surveys should include the list of statistical outputs without defining methodological characteristics. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 1.4, 6.1 and 6.2.)
2. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office and the Other National Authorities producing European statistics should ensure that confidential information collected for statistical purposes, whether from administrative sources or from surveys, should not be shared for administrative purposes. The current statistical regulation stipulating the use of statistical data for administrative purposes should be reviewed accordingly. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office should operate administrative and statistical registers separately. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 5.)
3. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office should regularly compile and publish an annual statistical work programme covering statistical surveys and other statistical activities of the Swiss Federal Statistical Office and Other National Authorities producing European statistics. Annual progress reports should also be published. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 1.5, Coordination.)

4. The Swiss Federal Department for Home Affairs and other institutions governing the Other National Authorities producing European statistics should review the instruments defining the responsibilities of the heads of statistical authorities to ensure that they specifically stipulate the responsibility of deciding on statistical methods, standards and procedures. The criteria for the appointment of heads of statistical authorities producing European statistics should include requirements for professional competence and experience. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 1.4 and 1.8.)

Enhancement of the quality management system

5. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office should update its Quality Management Manual ensuring its completeness with regard to the European statistics Code of Practice and its uniform application across the organisation. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 4.1 and 4.2.)
6. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office and the Other National Authorities producing European statistics should make their quality policies publicly available. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 4.1.)
7. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office and the Other National Authorities producing European statistics should systematise and standardise their quality assurance procedures, including regular quality reviews, and also use external experts, where appropriate. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 4.2 and 4.4.)
8. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office should set a standard for statistics quality reports consistent with the European Statistical System Standard for Quality Reports Structure and promote their consistent application across all the domains of official statistics produced by the Swiss Federal Statistical Office and the Other National Authorities producing European statistics. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office and the Other National Authorities producing European statistics should produce and publish detailed and user-orientated quality reports. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 4.3, 12.2 and 15.7.)
9. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office and the Other National Authorities producing European statistics should systematically analyse revisions of statistics to help improve methods and processes and publish the results of revision analyses. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 12.3.)

Methodology and quality of statistical production processes

10. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office should set a standard for methodological documentation and ensure its office-wide application. It should also systematically document and publish key aspects of statistical production processes in its quality reports. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 6.4 and 7.1.)
11. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office should develop and apply consistent techniques and tools for statistical disclosure protection in published statistics, ensuring that the risk of identification of individuals is minimised, and promote use of such tools among all Swiss producers of European statistics. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office should also systematically record access logs and update application access rights. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 5.4 and 5.5.)

12. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office should further integrate and standardise administrative data processing, ensuring the use of common tools, non-duplication of tasks and wider reuse of administrative data. Feedback about data quality should be delivered while respecting statistical confidentiality. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 8.1, 8.9 and 9.4.)
13. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office and the Other National Authorities producing European statistics should introduce regular response burden measurement across statistical domains. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 9.2.)
14. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office and the Other National Authorities producing European statistics should facilitate data sharing between producers of statistics, by developing technical tools and improving documentation of repositories for production and archived data. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office and the Other National Authorities producing European statistics should assess existing legal provisions, which restrict data sharing for European statistics and initiate respective amendments in the law. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 9.5.)
15. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office should speed up further integration of its Statistical Information System, aiming to reduce the variety of information technology tools and to secure necessary resources. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 10.2.)
16. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office and the Other National Authorities producing European statistics should further strengthen continuous vocational training of their staff by supporting individual employee career plans. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 7.6.)

Strengthening user orientation

17. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office should extend its arrangements for user consultation and feedback by considering the establishment of a user advisory body and by establishing regular, effective, user-satisfaction surveys. These arrangements should take into account, in respect of Swiss official statistics, lessons learnt from international best practice. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 4.3, 11.1 and 11.3.)
18. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office should increase activities to raise statistical awareness and ensure more widespread use of official statistics at local, regional and national level, working with partners such as the Swiss Statistical Society and academic institutions. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 11.)
19. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office and the Other National Authorities producing European statistics should re-examine the pre-release access arrangements, and define and publish the names of specific persons or their positions in organisations with pre-release access rights. They should also publicly explain the purpose of those pre-release accesses. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 6.7.)
20. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office and the Other National Authorities producing European statistics should establish arrangements to monitor the timeliness of European statistics, and develop quality indicators on timeliness for major statistical outputs. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 13.1.)
21. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office and the Other National Authorities producing European statistics should make public information on requests for custom-designed analysis which have been met and make the results available, either through publication or on request. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 15.3.)

22. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office and the Other National Authorities producing European statistics should provide users with standardised metadata according to the Euro-SDMX Metadata Structure Standard and make these metadata publicly available in user-friendly formats. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 6.2 and 15.5.)
23. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office and the Other National Authorities producing European statistics should make arrangements for routine archiving of statistics and metadata, and improve online accessibility of the archives (European statistics Code of Practice indicator 15.1.)
24. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office and the Other National Authorities producing European statistics should improve the arrangements for safe access to microdata for research purposes, including remote access facilities, and clarify the arrangements for charges and discounts that are applicable to different types of users. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 15.4.)
25. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office should publish its dissemination policy and the policy on error treatment and revisions. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office and the Other National Authorities producing European statistics should harmonise their dissemination policies. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 6.6, 13.2, 15.1, Coordination.)
26. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office, in collaboration with the Other National Authorities producing European statistics, should use the release calendar facility on the Swiss Statistics website (the “Agenda”) to provide information on the release of all European statistics. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office should include major revisions in its pre-announced release calendar. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 6.5 and 6.6.)
27. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office and the Other National Authorities producing European statistics should communicate changes in release calendars in a transparent manner, with reasons for the changes. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office should introduce mechanisms for monitoring and assessing the dissemination schedules of Swiss statistical authorities producing European statistics. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 13.4, Coordination.)
28. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office should make consistent the different language versions of the Swiss Statistics website, ensuring that users of any language version are aware of all the content available on the website. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 15.)
29. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office should include all data produced by the Other National Authorities producing European statistics into the Swiss Statistics website. It should also include these data in the self-tabulation tool (STAT-TAB). (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 15.1, Coordination.)

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 assessed; and the way in which statistical authorities coordinate the production and dissemination of European statistics within their statistical systems is 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, the 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).

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

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

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

The peer review of Switzerland was conducted by Priit Potisepp (chair), Jagdev Singh Virdee and Rimantas Juozas Vaicenavičius, who conducted a peer review visit to Neuchâtel on 1–5 June 2015. The programme of the visit is in Annex A and the list of participants in Annex B.

This report focuses on compliance with the CoP and the coordination of European statistics within the Swiss National Statistical System (NSS). The report highlights some of the strengths of the Swiss NSS in these contexts and contains recommendations for improvement. Improvement actions developed by the Swiss Federal Statistical Office (SFSO) 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

General structure and coordination of the NSS

The Swiss National Statistical System (NSS) is decentralised and complex with federal, cantonal and communal levels. Some 40 federal agencies and independent institutions (including the Swiss National Bank (SNB)) collect and analyse statistical data at federal level. In addition, most cantons and some large cities have their own statistical offices or units, but they do not collect and process European statistics and are therefore beyond the scope of this report. Statistics produced and disseminated by all these institutions are referred to as Swiss official statistics. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office (SFSO) is responsible for a substantial majority of the official statistical output and according to Article 10(2) of the Federal Statistics Act 1992 (FStatA), it coordinates the activities of federal statistical bodies, i.e. Other National Authorities (ONAs). However, the FStatA gives power to the Federal Council to designate other bodies in the Swiss Confederation to compile official statistical surveys. Altogether 10 institutions, including the SFSO, deliver data to Eurostat pursuant to the “Agreement between the European Community and the Swiss Confederation on cooperation in the field of statistics”; the SFSO is a central coordinating body for cooperation with Eurostat.

The SFSO is in charge of setting up principles and standards in the interests of national and international comparability. It is also mandated to coordinate the harmonisation of cantonal registers. The ONAs are obliged to consult the SFSO on survey design and data collection and compilation. In order to institutionalise this, a variety of coordination bodies are in place. FEDESTAT consists of producers of statistics at federal level. REGIOSTAT brings together representatives from the SFSO, cantonal and communal statistical services. The Director General (DG) of the SFSO chairs both bodies. Additionally, seven permanent expert groups and numerous networks of data providers advise the producers of statistics on issues related to specific subject areas.

The Federal Council, being a supreme leading and executive authority (the government, in fact) has an important role with regard to the Swiss NSS. According to the FStatA, it commissions statistical surveys from administrative units, and formally makes decisions on the main characteristics of a statistical inquiry, survey or census (e.g. decisions like whether direct data collection should be applied, whether data submission is mandatory or voluntary for legal entities and to what extent the cantons and communes participate in conducting a survey). The Federal Statistics Committee, which consists of representatives of cantons and communes, academia, private sector, civil society as well as the SFSO and the SNB, was established to advise the Federal Council in statistical matters.

Main legal acts and underlying principles

The Swiss Confederation’s task of compiling necessary statistical data is stipulated in Article 65 of the Swiss Federal Constitution. In legal terms, this task is executed by the Federal Administration consisting of the seven departments which are divided into offices. The SFSO belongs to the branch of governance of the Federal Department of Home Affairs (FDHA). The legal basis for Swiss official statistics is established by various laws and ordinances, principally by the FStatA, the Ordinance on the Conduct of Federal Statistical Surveys and the Ordinance on the Organisation of Federal Statistics. The SNB compiles official statistics according to the Swiss National Bank Act.

The FStatA regulates statistical activities at federal level irrespective of the institution producing official statistics. It provides a general legal framework; stipulates fundamental principles for data collection, publication and statistical services; makes rules for the establishment of multi-annual

statistical programmes; and describes the organisation and coordination function of the SFSO. It does not establish specific requirements for individual statistical surveys, which are listed in the Annex of the Ordinance on the Conduct of Federal Statistical Surveys.

Other ordinances provide more detailed instructions for implementing the FStatA concerning, for example, the organisation of federal statistics, fees for statistical services, data linking modalities, the Business and Enterprise Register (BER) and the Federal Buildings and Dwellings Register (BDR). Additionally, the federal acts on the federal census, data protection, unique business identification number and harmonisation of the registers of persons regulate production of official statistics in Switzerland.

Considering the legal and institutional complexity of the Swiss NSS due to the federal structure of the country, initiatives have been taken to adopt and apply common principles among producers of Swiss official statistics. One important instrument is the Charter of Swiss Official Statistics, which was adopted in 2002 and revised in 2007 to better align with the CoP. Twenty-three principles are allocated under six broader categories: official statistics as public good, independence, privacy and data protection, cost effectiveness, quality and dissemination.

The statistical work programme

The SFSO leads the preparation of the multi-annual programme for each legislative period of four years. It includes the statistical activities carried out by the ONAs and constitutes the main coordinating and planning instrument for the Swiss Confederation's statistical activity across departments. The current programme covers the period from 2011 to 2015.

In the Annex of the Ordinance on the Conduct of Federal Statistical Surveys, a detailed list of statistical surveys is accompanied by essential attributes (e.g. institution compiling the survey, its objective, the type and method, the target respondents, whether response is obligatory and periodicity). The list is updated annually and adopted by the Federal Council, but it does not constitute an annual statistical work programme.

The SFSO

The SFSO was located in Bern until 1998; it was completely transferred to Neuchâtel by 2004. There were 772 employees (643 full-time equivalents (FTEs)) working for the SFSO in Neuchâtel in 2014. The total SFSO annual budget was €145.7million in 2014. Its organisation consists of the DG's office including the head of the Resources and International Affairs Division (currently vacant) comprising sections and services responsible for statistical methods, quality and processes, information technology (IT), dissemination and administration; and those in charge of communication, strategy and planning. Five main divisions account for population and education statistics, economic statistics, health and social statistics, territorial and environment statistics (and the registers) and are subsequently divided into sections and sub-units (services, groups or areas).

Statistical publications

The main source of statistical information is the Swiss Statistics website <http://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/portal/en/index.html>, which is run by the SFSO and contains data from some other producers of federal statistics. The SFSO publishes approx. 400 publications per year. Supplementary to statistical data production, it focuses strategically on comprehensive analysis by producing scenarios and forecasts on population, employed persons and the education system. It also maintains a historical database.

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

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

Undoubtedly, the main strength of the SFSO lies in its cohort of highly qualified professionals, which is the basis of various domain-specific strengths. The SFSO has a very good reputation, due in large part to the professional and committed people working there. About two-thirds of the staff have an academic background, with the SFSO placing high importance on the recruitment of suitably qualified staff. In particular, all staff members of the Statistical Methods Section have a mathematical and statistical background as a condition of employment, providing a valuable resource for the development and implementation of sound statistical methodologies (CoP, indicator 3.1).

Building on high-level expertise, the SFSO focuses on developing and providing advanced mathematical statistics methods for sampling, editing, imputation and estimation.

Since 2009, the SFSO has used a coordinated sampling system to select its business sample surveys. The same system has been used in household surveys since 2010. Active sample coordination ensures that the response burden is as fairly distributed across the frame population as possible. Its effect is particularly powerful in household surveys. Indeed, without coordination, hundreds of thousands of Swiss inhabitants would have received several questionnaires over the last five years, mostly due to the large structural household survey introduced with the new census system. The coordinated sampling system offers the best possible protection against unnecessary repeated selections, and smaller and medium-sized units particularly benefit from this (CoP, indicators 8.3 and 9.2).

Another strength in relation to the quality of statistical processes and outputs at the SFSO is the estimation of sampling errors for key variables, which is regularly used to enable correct interpretation of the results. The office supplies statistical precision estimates for most statistics and documents estimation methods systematically in the methodology reports, including non-response modelling and the use of calibration. As part of the new census system, coverage errors are estimated with a specific coverage survey. Particular attention is paid to non-response. Looking ahead, the SFSO also plans to develop variance estimation for imputed data (CoP, indicators 8.3 and 12.2).

The SFSO is among the NSIs retrieving data directly from businesses own accounts. The project called “Lohnstandard” (Salary standard) has enabled participants to standardise and greatly simplify the preparation and transfer of salary data from companies to various administrative units. By entering salary data into a certified salary programme, various salary reports can be carried out quickly by the company in a coordinated way for all salary data recipients. By this, the administrative burden on companies for periodic salary reporting is significantly reduced. The data recipients receive good quality data in electronic form, greatly reducing the burden of checking and correcting. Launched at the end of 2007, it is a joint project between the Swiss Accident Insurance Fund, the Old Age and Survivors Insurance/Invalidity Insurance Association, the Swiss Insurance Association, the Swiss Tax Conference and the SFSO (CoP indicator 9.3).

The SFSO has introduced a well-established practice of commenting publicly on statistical issues, including criticism, misuse and misinterpretation of statistics. There is a clearly dedicated section on the Swiss Statistics website under the main section “Aktuell” (CoP, indicator 1.7).

Displaying a significant amount of content in all the national languages of Switzerland (German, French, Italian and Romansh) and in English on the Swiss Statistics website deserves appreciation (CoP, Principle 15). Not all of the content, however, is available in every language, and this aspect is discussed further under Section 4.2.4.10.

4.2 ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.2.1 INSTITUTIONAL SET-UP OF THE SWISS NATIONAL STATISTICAL SYSTEM

The main issue in Switzerland with regard to the institutional set-up of the Swiss statistical authorities producing European statistics is related to the diffuse boundaries between administrative and statistical activities. According to the FStatA, the SFSO is obliged, based on the Federal Council's decision, to disclose Business and Enterprise Register (BER) data. According to the same law, the Federal Register of Buildings and Dwellings (RBD) is open to the Swiss Confederation for statistical, research and planning purposes. Both registers are operated by the SFSO.

Although the professional independence of the SFSO and the ONAs was not questioned during the peer review, the law in force contains some provisions, which have been addressed earlier and which contradict both the CoP and the Charter.

Another area where the Peer Reviewers have identified issues that warrant improvement is related to the annual statistical programme. Although multi-annual statistical work programmes are regularly compiled and the list of surveys in the Annex of the Ordinance on the Conduct of Federal Statistical Surveys is updated annually, there is no published annual statistical work programme containing all major statistical activities at Swiss federal level.

Professional responsibility and qualification requirements of the DG and the heads of the ONA statistical units are also discussed in this chapter.

4.2.1.1 THE FEDERAL COUNCIL'S ROLE IN OFFICIAL STATISTICS

When analysing the legal provisions related to the professional independence of producers of official statistics in Switzerland, certain contradictions appear. On a general level, this principle is well defined in Article 3 of the FStatA, which says that the federal statistical bodies shall prepare statistical results in a professionally independent way. Additionally, Article 3a of the Ordinance on the Conduct of Federal Statistical Surveys underlines the principles of independence, objectivity and confidentiality.

Notwithstanding defining the general principle, rather extensive power is assigned to the Federal Council. According to Article 6(4) of the FStatA, it is mandated to require natural persons and legal entities to disclose information if this is absolutely necessary for the completeness, representativity, comparability and timeliness of statistics. In other words, the producers of Swiss official statistics at the federal level have to seek the Federal Council's consent to make a survey response mandatory. The Annex of the Ordinance on the Conduct of Federal Statistical Surveys contains an annually updated list of statistical surveys. For each survey, this list provides information on which institution is responsible for the survey; the definition, objective, periodicity of the survey; the data collection method; the target population; and whether response is obligatory or voluntary. The Peer Reviewers were told that the SFSO makes proposals on these survey characteristics and in general the proposals are adopted by the Federal Council. The Peer Reviewers were also assured that the aforementioned Annex has not been used for intervening in statistical methods and procedures. A national statistical work programme, being mandated by a

state government, should be output-oriented, i.e., define desirable results and avoid stipulating characteristics of inputs.

The Peer Reviewers also analysed Article 18(4) of the FStatA, which was discussed in the Ivan P. Fellegi and Jacob Ryten (2000) report and the ESS CoP peer review (2007) report. This article gives the Federal Council very extensive powers to restrict access to statistical data “for other important reasons”. This provision is formulated in a rather general manner without stipulating more specific reasons. The Peer Reviewers had the impression that this clause comes very close to conflicting with the principle of professional independence, but were assured that it has not been applied in practice so far. After investigating the explanatory text to this Article, it became clear that the restriction can be applied by the Federal Council when important national interests (“wichtige Landesinteressen”) exist. It is also clearly stated that this right cannot be exercised for political considerations, and a policy of openness clearly applies in practice. The Peer Reviewers are of the opinion that this particular legal provision and its explanatory text are lacking in clarity and may infringe the principle of professional independence.

All in all, the Peer Reviewers conclude that the Federal Council has considerable legal power to potentially influence methodological and technical choices and consider it necessary to amend the existing legal provisions to more clearly define the professional independence of all producers of Swiss official statistics.

In order to enhance compliance with the CoP, the **Peer Reviewers recommend that:**

- 1. The Swiss legislative authorities should amend the relevant legal provisions to assign to the Director General of the Swiss Federal Statistical Office and the heads of the Other National Authorities producing European statistics the responsibility of deciding on statistical methods and standards and the content and timing of statistical releases. The Ordinance on the Conduct of Federal Statistical Surveys should include the list of statistical outputs without defining methodological characteristics. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 1.4, 6.1 and 6.2.)**

4.2.1.2 USE OF STATISTICAL DATA FOR NON-STATISTICAL PURPOSES

Article 14(1) of the FStatA stipulates that data collected or transferred for statistical purposes may not be used for other purposes unless a Federal Act expressly orders another application or those concerned provide their written consent.

According to the Article 10(3) of the FStatA, the Federal Council may request that specific data from the BER are also used for purposes related to specific persons in the public interest. Article 1 of the Ordinance on the BER (1993) establishes that the register serves both statistical and personal-administrative (*personenbezogene*) purposes and that it obtains data from different administrative sources (Article 4). The ordinance also stipulates the SFSO’s right to complement register data with survey data and sets the rules for statistical and administrative disclosure of BER data.

According to Article 10(3bis) of the FStatA, the RBD is open to the Swiss Confederation for statistical, research and planning purposes. The detailed legal basis for this is founded in the Ordinance on the RBD (1992). Similarly to the BER, the RBD serves for statistical and non-statistical (research and planning) purposes and contains data from different sources and different levels (federal, cantonal and communal). The Peer Reviewers understand that there is no separated data flow and databases in terms of operating administrative and statistical registers.

Additionally, according to the Health Act (1993), the SFSO collects data from hospitals and after separating data for further administrative and statistical processing submits them to the Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH). It was explained during the peer review visit that this set-up has been implemented to avoid multiple data collection from hospitals.

It can be concluded that the SFSO performs administrative functions to a considerable extent and the borderline between administrative and statistical tasks is rather vague considering that all register work is performed in one organisational division responsible for the registers. It is the opinion of the Peer Review team that SFSO activities should be restricted to the statistical mandate. This view has also been expressed by the Swiss Ethics Council for Official Statistics.

In order to achieve compliance with the CoP, the **Peer Reviewers recommend that:**

- 2. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office and the Other National Authorities producing European statistics should ensure that confidential information collected for statistical purposes, whether from administrative sources or from surveys, should not be shared for administrative purposes. The current statistical regulation stipulating the use of statistical data for administrative purposes should be reviewed accordingly. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office should operate administrative and statistical registers separately. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 5.)**

4.2.1.3 ANNUAL NATIONAL STATISTICAL WORK PROGRAMME

The Multi-annual Programme for Federal Statistics 2011–2015 constitutes an important central tool for work planning, coordinating and reporting on the Swiss Confederation’s statistical activity across the departments. This document is established for each legislative period of four years and adopted by the Federal Council. The SFSO leads the drafting of the multi-annual programme for the coming period while cooperating with the other producers and with various important user groups from politics, administration, economy, social partners and institutions. The multi-annual programme 2011–2015 sets the strategic goals and describes the challenges facing federal statistics, emphasises the importance of international cooperation and defines statistics which are produced at different regional levels. The Annex to the programme contains a comprehensive list of statistical surveys and cross-cutting activities (e.g. registers, the SFSO’s Statistical Information System (SIS)). The document provides readers with an evaluation of the 2007–2011 programme period and has been made public.

For the upcoming multi-annual programme (2015–2019), the scope of planning has been extended: in addition to the general objectives, strategic objectives are being developed at thematic and content level in cooperation with the aforementioned stakeholders.

Based on the multi-annual programme, the SFSO regularly produces an internal annual work plan for its activities. This information is available on the SFSO intranet only and it does not cover statistical activities carried out by the ONAs. The SFSO also compiles and publishes an annual report, which contains details on the state of work, but does not constitute a complete reporting with a comprehensive overview of deliverables and results. The internal detailed reporting on the annual work plan is not available to the public.

The SFSO agrees that the linkage between the statistical activities and financial resources should be made clearer in the planning process. In order to achieve this and to adjust to the government-wide initiative called a “new management model”, the planning process is currently being revised. First, in 2013, a portfolio covering all federal statistics was created. The aim was to focus more on the needs of the main user groups and optimise the portfolio in the context of limited resources. It

is the opinion of the Peer Reviewers that within the revision of the planning and reporting process, more attention should be devoted to the annual dimension and the inclusion of statistical activities of the SFSO and the ONAs in one annual planning/programme document. This approach would clearly strengthen transparency, accountability and user-friendliness and facilitate coordination among producers of federal statistics.

In order to enhance compliance with the CoP and improve the overall coordination across the NSS, the **Peer Reviewers recommend that:**

- 3. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office should regularly compile and publish an annual statistical work programme covering statistical surveys and other statistical activities of the Swiss Federal Statistical Office and Other National Authorities producing European statistics. Annual progress reports should also be published. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 1.5, Coordination.)**

4.2.1.4 RESPONSIBILITIES AND APPOINTMENT OF HEADS OF STATISTICAL AUTHORITIES

There are no special regulations in the FStatA for the recruitment and appointment of the DG. This procedure is based on the Federal Personnel Act and its ordinances and is conducted by the Federal Department of Home Affairs (FDHA). Public competition is conducted when appointing the DG and the heads of statistical units in the ONAs. As a general rule, all of them have an unlimited term of office and contracts can be terminated by either party. The representatives of the ONAs stated during the peer review that the requirements for the candidates are defined and appointment is based on professional competence only. However, it has been stated that according to the law, the incumbency can be terminated at any time.

Indeed, Article 10(3) of the Federal Personnel Act stipulates the legal basis for dismissing federal government officials. The basis for this is defined in a rather general way referring to insufficient results, suitability and readiness to perform one's work and lack of skills. Professional qualifications for the appointment of the head of a statistical authority should also be clearly defined. In the job advertisement for the position of DG, knowledge of relations between the economy, policy and academia, and familiarity with political and administrative procedures are explicitly required. Necessary experience for performing statistical tasks is not mentioned.

The Peer Reviewers observed that the DG's job description is comprehensive, but it includes mainly general administrative and managerial duties with fairly indirect references to tasks related to the production of statistics. The document says that the DG makes decisions for internal matters and has the right to take positions in the name of the Office within the Swiss Confederation's administrative decision-making process ("die Amtsentseide"). The document refers in this context to decisions of "principal and politically relevant nature" and says that principal decisions should be consulted with FDHA management.

The job description stipulates that the DG manages activities carried out by direct subordinates from a technical point of view and enacts directives related to "ongoing production, quality norms, data security, and dissemination". These provisions refer to business-specific activities, but in a fairly implicit way.

It is the opinion of the Peer Review team that the job descriptions of heads of statistical authorities producing European statistics should be made more specific in referring to decisions on statistical methods, standards and procedures, and on the content and timing of statistical releases. The foundations of a professional, competence-based appointment procedure would be strengthened in this way.

In order to strengthen compliance with the CoP, the **Peer Reviewers recommend that:**

- 4. The Swiss Federal Department for Home Affairs and other institutions governing the Other National Authorities producing European statistics should review the instruments defining the responsibilities of the heads of statistical authorities to ensure that they specifically stipulate responsibility of deciding on statistical methods, standards and procedures. The criteria for the appointment of heads of statistical authorities producing European statistics should include requirements for professional competence and experience. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 1.4 and 1.8.)**

4.2.2 ENHANCEMENT OF THE QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Strategic goal No. 5 of the multi-annual programme 2011–2015 states that “the framework conditions for the production of statistical information are defined.” To achieve this goal, the second of three programme strategies determines that the SFSO firmly follows its quality assurance system and further advances it. The programme elaborates that the most important management, data processing and dissemination procedures meet strict and verifiable quality criteria. This statement relates very closely to Principle 4 of the CoP, which requires that statistical authorities systematically and regularly identify strengths and weaknesses to continuously improve process and product quality.

In the SFSO, statistics quality management is determined in two central documents: the Quality Policy and the Quality Management Manual (QMM). Though integration of statistics quality management has gradually advanced in recent years, the SFSO's quality management system still largely consists of a set of quality management systems for each statistical domain. At present, there are no mechanisms that enable centralised and standardised evaluation of quality at the SFSO. To support more systematic quality management, a revision project for the SFSO's quality management system, processes and risks is in progress. In the medium term, this revised system will make it possible to obtain cross-sectional information in relation to quality management and will facilitate the identification of potential information.

This section, dedicated to the enhancement of the quality management system, focuses on integration, completeness and public availability of quality procedures, as well as on the improvement of quality assurance procedures, the standardisation of quality reporting and the contribution of revision analysis to quality improvement.

4.2.2.1 INTEGRATION OF QUALITY MANAGEMENT

Coordinated efforts to integrate the quality management in the SFSO came into special focus with the QMM, which was approved in 2003. Since then, it has been used in various statistical domains, although with varying intensity. Each production division of the SFSO has its own quality management system in place; therefore the quality control tools and quality monitoring are production-division specific. In 2012, a revision project for the quality management system, processes and risks was launched. According to the stated project objectives, the QMM will be adapted, notably aligning itself with the CoP. In mid-2015, this important project is in its active development phase and is expected to continue until the end of 2015. In future, the SFSO should update its QMM more frequently. With the 2003 version still in use, it might not be possible to sufficiently enable the integration of quality management, especially when some statistical domains are seeking to apply newer quality management features. For example, the currently used statistical process model at the SFSO is a simplification of the Generic Statistical Business Process Model (GSBPM) where the first three GSBPM phases are merged into one, and the next four

GSBPM phases are transferred into national concepts, while the last GSBPM phase of evaluation is missing.

Though organisational structure supporting integrated quality management is established in the SFSO, quality management needs further integration and quality management documentation needs to be updated and improved. In relation to this, indicator 4.1 of the CoP requires that an organisational structure and tools are in place to deal with quality management. With regard to organisational structure, two structural units of the SFSO play a central role in coordinating the implementation of these quality requirements: the Quality and Processes Service which is in charge of quality and processes management and is directly accountable to the DG, and the Statistical Methods Section (within the Resources and International Affairs Division) which supports production units in matters of statistical methodology. According to indicator 4.2 of the CoP, procedures have to be in place to plan and monitor the quality of the statistical production process. The QMM is central to planning of statistical production at the SFSO.

In order to enhance compliance with the CoP, the **Peer Reviewers recommend that:**

- 5. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office should update its Quality Management Manual ensuring its completeness with regard to the European statistics Code of Practice and its uniform application across the organisation. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 4.1 and 4.2.)**

4.2.2.2 PUBLIC AVAILABILITY OF QUALITY POLICIES

The SFSO has approved an institutional quality policy which has not yet been shared with the general public. Its current mission statement asserts as its first principle that “we ensure that the information we provide is reliable.” In this regard, the closely related indicator 4.1 of the CoP requires that quality policy should be defined and made available to the public. Hence, the SFSO should support the aforementioned mission statement by making the quality policy of the SFSO public. By this, all users would be better informed and assured about the current quality policies.

Moreover, the Charter of Swiss Official Statistics is very explicit and demanding with regard to the publicity requirement. In its indicator 15.4, related to the principle of quality standard, it states that “the quality guidelines are documented and provided to staff. These guidelines are set out in writing and made known to the public.” Hence, the requirement of the public availability of quality policies is supported by national quality assurance initiatives, which apply to both European and national statistics.

In order to achieve compliance with the CoP, the **Peer Reviewers recommend that:**

- 6. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office and the Other National Authorities producing European statistics should make their quality policies publicly available. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 4.1.)**

4.2.2.3 STANDARDISATION OF THE QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCEDURES

Although different quality aspects are at the centre of each statistical domain in Swiss official statistics, the current quality management system of the SFSO is not consistently based on the systematisation or standardisation of the quality assurance procedures. The quality of statistical production processes is monitored for most surveys, but not in a fully systematic way. With regard to monitoring and reviewing statistics quality, Principle 4 of the CoP is very specific. In particular, indicator 4.2 of the CoP requires putting in place procedures to monitor the quality of the statistical production process. The commonly used quality assurance tool across the ESS is to

arrange regular, standardised quality reviews of statistical processes. In addition, indicator 4.4 demands a regular and thorough review of the key statistical outputs using external experts where appropriate. In Switzerland, however, the review of key statistical outputs by external experts is not a regular practice and the current plans or policies are not explicit with regard to regular internal reviews.

To date, there has been no centralised quality review process of statistical domains at the SFSO. Notably, no planning for statistics quality review has been done, although this weakness was observed in the previous peer review of 2007. Due to past and current planning constraints in this domain, the SFSO is not yet organisationally prepared for quality reviews. At present, there are no internal auditors at the SFSO, and other staff members have not been directly prepared for such statistics quality reviews.

In order to achieve compliance with the CoP, the **Peer Reviewers recommend that:**

- 7. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office and the Other National Authorities producing European statistics should systematise and standardise their quality assurance procedures, including regular quality reviews, and also use external experts, where appropriate. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 4.2 and 4.4.)**

4.2.2.4 PRODUCING AND PUBLISHING QUALITY REPORTS

At present, there is no standard, systematic and regular requirement at the SFSO for establishing quality reports for all statistical products. Only the reports required by Eurostat or other international organisations are compiled, but not necessarily published. Disseminating readily available quality reports should be a first step to making quality reports public. By and large, there are no office-wide standards for quality reporting, neither user nor producer oriented. Moreover, publishing quality reports by ONAs is also not a regular practice. This situation does not fulfil the requirements of indicator 4.3 of the CoP which demands that product quality has to be regularly monitored, assessed with regard to possible trade-offs and reported according to the quality criteria for European statistics.

In respect of many statistical outputs, the SFSO thoroughly measures sampling errors for surveys and coverage errors (e.g. for the population census). Attention is also paid to non-response errors. Some of this information is published in detailed methodological reports, but this is not systematic. There is less scrutiny of the timeliness aspect of quality, and this is discussed later in this report. However, it is important that users of Swiss official statistics are aware of the methodologies underlying statistics compilation, and the quality standards that have been applied in producing the final statistics. Quality reports provide a useful tool for this purpose, particularly user-orientated quality reports. Users should be able to access such quality reports easily through producers' websites alongside the statistics. Indicator 12.2 of the CoP also requires the systematic measurement and documentation of sampling and non-sampling errors according to European standards. Furthermore, indicator 15.7 requires users to be kept informed about the quality of statistical outputs with respect to the quality criteria for European statistics.

In order to enhance compliance with the CoP, the **Peer Reviewers recommend that:**

- 8. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office should set a standard for statistics quality reports consistent with the European Statistical System Standard for Quality Reports Structure and promote their consistent application across all the domains of official statistics produced by the Swiss Federal Statistical Office and the Other National Authorities producing European statistics. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office and the Other National Authorities producing European statistics should produce and publish detailed and user-orientated quality reports. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 4.3, 12.2 and 15.7.)**

4.2.2.5 ANALYSING REVISIONS TO IMPROVE QUALITY

An important method of improving the accuracy and reliability of statistics is to examine and analyse how published statistics are subsequently revised. This can include studying whether any biases exist in early estimates, and using the results of such analyses to improve methods. The Peer Reviewers found that there is no systematic analysis of revisions in this context in either the SFSO or the ONAs, although there are examples in some statistical areas. Indicator 12.3 of the CoP requires that revisions are regularly analysed in order to improve statistical processes.

In order to achieve compliance with the CoP, the **Peer Reviewers recommend that:**

- 9. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office and the Other National Authorities producing European statistics should systematically analyse revisions of statistics to help improve methods and processes and publish the results of revision analyses. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 12.3.)**

4.2.3 METHODOLOGY AND QUALITY OF STATISTICAL PRODUCTION PROCESSES

This part of the report concentrates on specific methodological issues of Swiss statistical production where compliance with the CoP should be enhanced. Particular attention is given to the standardisation of the documentation of methodology and statistical procedures, and improvement of statistical confidentiality management. Later, this part of the report deals with use of administrative data, measurement of the response burden and data sharing between producers of European statistics. It also emphasises the need to speed up the development of an integrated IT system. With regard to statistical processes, the CoP requires that European and other international standards, guidelines and good practices are fully observed in the processes used by statistical authorities to organise, collect, process and disseminate European statistics. Pursuant to the CoP, the relevant aspects are sound methodology, appropriate statistical procedures, a non-excessive burden on respondents and cost effectiveness.

4.2.3.1 DOCUMENTATION OF METHODOLOGY AND STATISTICAL PROCEDURES

The SFSO has a dedicated page on its website where all methodological documents are provided for users. Though disseminated methodological documents are rather detailed and elaborate on difficult or technical methodological matters, they do not follow the same standard in each domain. A standard structure is not yet required and the documentation of statistical production procedures is not fully consistent across statistical domains of the SFSO. The regularity of methodological updates is also not determined, and to some extent there is no systematic follow-up of statistical methods. The statistical methods are usually reviewed together with a revision of the statistics concerned.

The public availability of production processes documentation has shortcomings. Although statistical production processes are documented internally, this information is not systematically made publicly available. However, indicator 6.4 of the CoP requires that information on the methods and procedures used is publicly available. It is appropriate to mention that availability of methodological documents is closely related to availability of metadata. Only 30% of metadata is currently available in the SFSO's Statistical Metadata System (SMS) and this is addressed in Section 4.2.4.5 of this report.

In order to further enhance compliance with the CoP, the **Peer Reviewers recommend that:**

- 10. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office should set a standard for methodological documentation and ensure its office-wide application. It should also systematically document and publish key aspects of statistical production processes in its quality reports. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 6.4 and 7.1.)**

4.2.3.2 STATISTICAL CONFIDENTIALITY

The various statistical production areas of the SFSO and ONAs have well-established mechanisms for protecting statistical confidentiality in their particular areas. All staff members sign a confidentiality agreement when they join the organisation. Outputs from each survey or other statistical output are checked against disclosure before publication. However, the methods used for disclosure control and the thresholds for the minimum number of individuals in a table cell can vary between statistical output areas. Also, if there are different outputs based on the same survey, such as two customised tables, these are not systematically checked to see whether there is any possibility of disclosure by "differencing" between tables. The Peer Reviewers believe that a centralised procedure for statistical disclosure control needs to be established and promoted across the SFSO and ONAs. The SFSO's Methodology Division should take the lead on this, taking note of international best practice in this field.

Similarly, encryption of data is the responsibility of each production area, with no centralised procedure being promoted across the SFSO.

The Peer Review team also noted that there is a need within the SFSO to strengthen organisational measures for the physical protection of data security and integrity of databases. In particular, there is an insufficient logging record of access to databases and insufficient systematic updating of application access rights for individuals. New developments are underway which will improve the logging of access to systems and databases.

In order to strengthen compliance with the CoP, the **Peer Reviewers recommend that:**

- 11. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office should develop and apply consistent techniques and tools for statistical disclosure protection in published statistics, ensuring that the risk of identification of individuals is minimised, and promote use of such tools among all Swiss producers of European statistics. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office should also systematically record access logs and update application access rights. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 5.4 and 5.5.)**

4.2.3.3 USE OF ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

The Registers Division of the SFSO is responsible for administrative data collection, but the processing of administrative data is decentralised across statistical domains. Moreover, the Registers Division checks to what extent existing data collections can be replaced by administrative and register data. With regard to administrative data use, the functions of the SFSO

units are shared between the Statistical Methods Section and specific statistics sections. In this setting, it is to some extent difficult to have a complete overview of the use of administrative data at the SFSO level, in particular for non-business statistics. However, the SFSO has a register strategy, which is implemented across statistical domains according to the action plan, in order to develop potential uses of administrative data for statistical purposes.

In the environment of ever growing administrative data use, the available administrative data do not completely cover all current statistical needs. Positively in this context, the use and reuse of administrative data have been reinforced through the overall automation of data processing at the SFSO. In terms of indicator 8.1 of the CoP, when European statistics are based on administrative data, the definitions and concepts used for administrative purposes should be good approximations to those required for statistical purposes.

Although the Peer Review team was assured that the procedures and appropriate validation rules are in place for assessing and checking the quality of administrative data, without a complete overview, some latent or potential risks related to administrative data quality might not be easily observable. For instance, in the case of the BDR, there are about 500 validation rules implemented at micro-level. At macro-level there are only ad hoc tests, but consolidation in terms of a documented, integral system is being developed. Importantly in this context, indicator 8.9 of the CoP recommends that statistical authorities co-operate with owners of administrative data in assuring data quality. To improve co-operation on data quality, an automatic feedback system has been established for the various SFSO registers, while in other cases there is scope for improving quality feedback to administrative data owners. According to the SFSO's self-assessment, feedback is given to data suppliers for only the data they own. However, statistical confidentiality has to be respected irrespectively of a statistical data source. The SFSO should effectively ensure that no confidential statistical data is used when generating feedback about data quality to administrative data owners.

The SFSO itself is a producer of some administrative data. As mentioned in Section 4.2.1.2, it operates the BER and the BDR and collects and produces administrative data from hospitals. In addition, the Peer Reviewers were informed that current plans foresee the expansion of administrative data production at the SFSO with the collection of data from doctors.

Finally, it is appropriate to observe that the use of administrative data is far more streamlined in the ONAs due to the high dependency on administrative data. However, with regard to foreign trade statistics, compiled by the Foreign Trade Statistics Division of the Federal Customs Administration, the quality of statistical data is not fully considered in customs controls.

In order to further enhance compliance with the CoP, the **Peer Reviewers recommend that:**

- 12. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office should further integrate and standardise administrative data processing, ensuring the use of common tools, non-duplication of tasks and wider reuse of administrative data. Feedback about data quality should be delivered while respecting statistical confidentiality. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 8.1, 8.9 and 9.4.)**

4.2.3.4 MEASUREMENT OF RESPONSE BURDEN

Reduction of the response burden is one of the objectives of the multi-annual programme 2011–2015. To this aim, the existing reporting redundancies are addressed. There are currently no regulations at the SFSO on how and when response burden indicators should be systematically measured. The way in which this indicator is applied within the production units varies in terms of

form and intensity. With regard to this measure, Principle 9 of the CoP demands that the statistical authorities monitor the response burden and set targets for its reduction over time.

With reduction of the response burden being a strategic goal, many initiatives have been accomplished in different statistical domains. Some statistical domains in the SFSO, particularly in the area of enterprise statistics, measure response burden and identify improvement measures. A report on the costs of the regulation and the possibilities for simplification in the statistical domain was produced in 2013 by the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO). However, there is currently no systematisation or method clearly defined at the SFSO to measure the burden on respondents. The Methodology Section of the SFSO is currently developing an indicator on measurement of response burden for both business and household surveys which should be based on automated information from the SFSO's sample management system. According to the plan, this project will provide information for both business and household surveys for previous periods and will report by the end of 2016.

To get a better view of the response burden both in monetary terms and in terms of time consumed, the SFSO commissioned a report to estimate the response burden for eight statistics domains. The research was conducted by the University of St. Gallen and the Swiss Institute for Small and Medium Enterprises and published in 2013.

In order to enhance compliance with the CoP, the **Peer Reviewers recommend that:**

- 13. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office and the Other National Authorities producing European statistics should introduce regular response burden measurement across statistical domains. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 9.2.)**

4.2.3.5 DATA SHARING

Statistical data transmissions within the NSS rely on the Secure Data Exchange (SEDEX) platform, which is the SFSO's IT platform for secure data exchange. According to indicator 9.5 of the CoP, data sharing within statistical authorities has to be generalised in order to avoid multiplication of surveys. SEDEX enables effective statistical data exchange and transfer with the ONAs (as well for the SFSO statistics website for dissemination). This mechanism enables data exchange but not sharing, i.e., there is no technical tool for data sharing for multiple users from one database within the NSS. In relation to that, the SFSO has been discussing possibilities for setting up remote access options.

At present, the documentation of repositories for production and archived data does not exist in the SFSO, though data archives are shared partially within the institution. Existing descriptions of datasets and data depositories (including archives) are not systematically documented in the SFSO.

In some cases, the ONAs (the SNB in particular) cannot get data from the SFSO due to legal constraints. For instance, the use of value added tax statistics by the SNB in the balance of payments is not possible, since data protection law prohibits the SNB from accessing the relevant data at the SFSO, which has direct negative implications.

In order to enhance compliance with the CoP, the **Peer Reviewers recommend that:**

- 14. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office and the Other National Authorities producing European statistics should facilitate data sharing between producers of statistics, by developing technical tools and improving documentation of repositories for production and archived data. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office and the Other National Authorities producing European statistics should assess existing legal provisions, which restrict data sharing for European statistics and initiate respective amendments in the law. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 9.5.)**

4.2.3.6 FURTHER IT INTEGRATION

The multi-annual programme 2011–2015 states that “the SFSO implements completely the applications and systems aimed at integrated production of statistics within the SIS”. Due to long preparatory work on the SFSO’s IT strategy, the IT Strategy 2014–2015 was only recently approved in January 2015. Therefore, an updated document for the next strategic period will be elaborated soon, starting in August 2015.

Over the past few years, the institution has built a strong consensus on IT services standardisation. However, several statistics domains have not yet been integrated into the SFSO’s Statistical Information System (SIS). Some parts of the IT system have been devised specifically for individual tasks. Therefore, some IT infrastructure elements appear as incidental without further integration. In 2014 and 2015, projects have been conducted building a complete inventory of the SFSO’s IT landscape. The institution is carefully monitoring the variety of IT tools: the IT service catalogue was updated ten times over the last twelve months up to mid-2015. Notably, the SFSO has several tools for data collection. This clearly relates to indicator 10.2 of the CoP, which requires that the productivity potential of information and communications technology is being optimised for data collection, processing and dissemination.

In order to strengthen compliance with the CoP, the **Peer Reviewers recommend that:**

- 15. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office should speed up further integration of its Statistical Information System, aiming to reduce the variety of information technology tools and to secure necessary resources. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 10.2.)**

4.2.3.7 CAREER PLANNING

The SFSO follows the institutional Human Resource Policy, approved in 2007. In Section 5.3 of this document, which is dedicated to staff development and training, it is emphasised that both on-the-job and off-the-job education and training activities are especially important. This closely relates to indicator 7.6 of the CoP, which states that statistical authorities have to implement a policy of continuous vocational training for their staff.

Although the advancement and development of employees is actively pursued at the SFSO, it does not currently have an integrated, systematic procedure with regard to an employee's career. A project addressing this issue was started in 2014. The SFSO conducts a policy supporting the further education aspirations of its employees financially and also in terms of working hours. Nevertheless, a more systematic and individualised approach could contribute to better motivation of staff. Usefulness of this action was reinforced by the meeting of the Peer Review team with young statisticians. In ONAs, the vocational training of statisticians and supporting their professional career plans is even more challenging than at the SFSO.

In order to strengthen compliance with the CoP, the **Peer Reviewers recommend that:**

- 16. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office and the Other National Authorities producing European statistics should further strengthen continuous vocational training of their staff by supporting individual employee career plans. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 7.6.)**

4.2.4 STRENGTHENING USER ORIENTATION

Statistics are of increasing importance in supporting the development, implementation and monitoring of policies and actions by governments and other organisations. The needs of users of statistics therefore have to be central to the development of Swiss official statistics programmes. There are many aspects of user orientation that need to be observed and acted upon in order to achieve and maintain an effective official statistics system.

The SFSO and other national authorities have good mechanisms for involving key users and stakeholders in developing their multi-annual programmes, through the committees and groups described in Section 4.2.4.1. However, there are areas in which greater engagement would help to improve compliance with the CoP.

The main areas where the Peer Reviewers have identified issues that warrant improvement are: greater user consultation and involvement in priority setting; raising statistical awareness among existing and potential users of statistics; equal access for all users; monitoring of punctuality and timeliness of statistics; providing customers with information on custom-designed analyses and sharing the results with all users whenever possible; providing metadata that meet international standards to users; enabling access to archives of previously published statistics and metadata; website improvements, including different language versions; improving access to microdata for researchers; coordinating and publishing overarching dissemination policies; and improving the prior notification of forthcoming statistical publications. These areas are discussed further in this chapter, with associated recommendations for action.

4.2.4.1 SYSTEMATIC USER ORIENTATION AND PRIORITY SETTING

The NSS is overseen by committees that help to decide on priorities. Key users are included in these bodies, as follows:

- The Federal Statistics Committee (KB Stat) – a committee outside of the Parliament – that advises on all matters relating to federal statistics. It includes representatives from the cantons/communes, scientific circles, private business, social partners and the SNB.
- FEDESTAT is appointed at federal level by the SFSO. Its purpose is cooperation, planning and coordination of statistics at federal level. It is composed of representatives from the statistic-producing agencies of the Swiss Confederation.
- REGIOSTAT is appointed by the SFSO. Its purpose is cooperation in planning and coordination of statistics between the Confederation, the cantons and the communes. It includes representatives of the cantonal statistical agencies and statistical agencies of Switzerland's cities.
- Statistical expert groups advise the federal statistics producers on issues related to specific subject areas. Their purpose is to advise on the schedule for work planned in the multi-annual statistical programme as well as on their specialist area.

Key users of statistics are primarily involved in the Federal Statistics Committee, which endorses the multi-annual programme. The other two committees are composed of producers of statistics.

Information on the use of official statistics is mainly based on analysis of website usage (page views, downloads), media monitoring, call centre feedback and SFSO Communications Section discussions with experts. The SFSO does not use any formal customer relationship management (CRM) tools. A stakeholder management project is underway, which will produce its first report in September 2015.

User satisfaction surveys were carried out in 2007 and 2009, whereas the design of the survey and the results were not considered to be very helpful. Most respondents said that they were satisfied with the overall level, but the SFSO mentioned that there was a lack of user information at the detailed level. Ideas for better identification of target groups are due to be discussed in the context of the project for a new Swiss Statistics website in the near future. The target groups will be based on different types of service users, product users and output concepts. Ideas also include the possibility of running workshops with users.

The Peer Review team considers the ideas to be helpful in improving compliance with the CoP, in increasing the level of effective engagement with existing users, and in raising statistical awareness among existing and potential users of statistics. However, we believe that more should be done to provide targeted training for particular audiences, and these activities need to be kept as a high priority in spite of the expected resource constraints over the coming years.

In order to enhance compliance with the CoP, the **Peer Reviewers recommend that:**

- 17. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office should extend its arrangements for user consultation and feedback by considering the establishment of a user advisory body and by establishing regular, effective, user-satisfaction surveys. These arrangements should take into account, in respect of Swiss official statistics, lessons learnt from international best practice. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 4.3, 11.1 and 11.3.)**
- 18. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office should increase activities to raise statistical awareness and ensure more widespread use of official statistics at local, regional and national level, working with partners such as the Swiss Statistical Society and academic institutions. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 11.)**

4.2.4.2 PRIVILEGED ACCESS

The SFSO gives pre-release access and, for each statistical output, publishes the names of organisations accessing in advance information and the period of pre-release access.

The privileged organisations are the Federal departments and offices, the SNB and some business associations. The periods vary to a great extent: annual national accounts data is made available for the SNB and SECO two weeks before the official release date, whereas the press agencies get the press releases on price and short-term statistics 15 minutes before the official release time. The SFSO argues that the information is pre-released under strict embargo to prepare communications that the users may have to issue. Nevertheless, the Peer Reviewers do not understand why pre-release access is given for three or seven days before releasing the Swiss Consumer Price Index (CPI) or employment data, respectively. Considering the fairly long list of privileged institutions and the lengthy periods of privileged access, the Peer Reviewers are not convinced that the existing practice is fully compliant with the CoP. It is certainly not in line with the overall principle of equitable treatment of users.

The Peer Reviewers consider problematic the existing practice of referring to provision of access to an institution rather than to a clearly identified person in a specific position. This does not demonstrate that pre-release access is limited and controlled as CoP indicator 6.7 requires.

The Peer Reviewers were informed that, in some cases, pre-release access is granted by the ONAs.

In order to achieve compliance with the CoP, the **Peer Reviewers recommend that:**

19. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office and the Other National Authorities producing European statistics should re-examine the pre-release access arrangements, and define and publish the names of specific persons or their positions in organisations with pre-release access rights. They should also publicly explain the purpose of those pre-release accesses. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 6.7.)

4.2.4.3 MEASUREMENT OF TIMELINESS

The SFSO and several ONAs are responsible for producing European statistics. However, there is no central mechanism for monitoring the timeliness of outputs, and there are no indicators of quality in terms of timeliness. For statistics that need to be supplied to Eurostat and other international organisations, it is known that deadlines and timetables are respected, except for those cases where derogations have been agreed in advance.

The Peer Reviewers believe that quality indicators on timeliness should be developed to show whether the lag between reference period and publication is improving over time.

In order to enhance compliance with the CoP, the **Peer Reviewers recommend that:**

20. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office and the Other National Authorities producing European statistics should establish arrangements to monitor the timeliness of European statistics, and develop quality indicators on timeliness for major statistical outputs. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 13.1.)

4.2.4.4 CUSTOM-DESIGNED ANALYSES

The SFSO and the ONAs regularly carry out customised analysis to satisfy specific user requests. Depending on the size of the task and the level of resources required, some of these analyses are charged for, and others are carried out free of charge. Indicator 15.3 of the CoP states that “Custom-designed analyses are provided when feasible and the public is informed.” Publication of customised analyses helps to maintain the ethos of equal access to statistics for all users.

In Switzerland, the practice of publishing such analyses is not carried out consistently. While production units in the SFSO are encouraged to publish, there is not a single practice. In some domains, if the same request arises frequently, then the analyses are developed into regular outputs and published on the Internet. However, if the request appears to be a one-off, then it is not likely to be published. Making data available in data cubes on the Internet is also satisfying an increasing number of requests. Analyses based on requests from journalists and politicians are normally published.

In order to achieve compliance with the CoP, the **Peer Reviewers recommend that:**

21. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office and the Other National Authorities producing European statistics should make public information on requests for custom-designed analysis which have been met and make the results available, either through publication or on request. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 15.3.)

4.2.4.5 STANDARDISED METADATA

Some parts of the SFSO and some ONAs produce metadata, and only some of these currently use the Euro-SDMX Metadata Structure Standard (ESMS). Good quality metadata helps users make much more effective use of official statistics and should be seen as an integral part of statistical outputs. Indicator 15.5 of the CoP requires that “Metadata are documented according to standardised metadata systems.”

A new central Statistical Metadata System (SMS) has been developed within the SFSO, and about 30% of metadata is currently available in the SFSO’s SMS. However, there are no direct links between the metadata and the related statistics yet. Also, not all of the metadata available internally are published yet, and there is no definite timescale for completing the loading of metadata to the SMS.

In order to further enhance compliance with the CoP, the **Peer Reviewers recommend that:**

- 22. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office and the Other National Authorities producing European statistics should provide users with standardised metadata according to the Euro-SDMX Metadata Structure Standard and make these metadata publicly available in user-friendly formats. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 6.2 and 15.5.)**

4.2.4.6 ACCESSIBILITY TO ARCHIVED DATA AND METADATA

The latest statistics are presented through press releases and databases on the SFSO and ONA websites. It is also important to make available statistics that were published earlier, which may now have been replaced by revised data. The previous statistics and metadata should be made readily available through archives, for example to enable scrutiny of the extent and impact of the revisions.

Indicator 15.1 of the CoP requires that “statistics and the corresponding metadata are presented, and archived, in a form that facilitates proper interpretation and meaningful comparisons.”

The Peer Reviewers met with users who expressed the view that archived statistics were not available on the SFSO website, and that they were difficult to obtain. They had a keen interest in accessing statistics from different “vintages” that show how the statistical view of a particular time period had changed as later data became available. Moreover, if data vintages were available, the revision analysis dealt under Section 4.2.2.5 could be conducted by external experts without constraints. During the peer review visit, the SFSO showed how archived statistics were made available through zipped files on the website, but it was recognised that they may be difficult to find and were not well signposted for users. The SFSO specified that this difficulty will be resolved with the project to create a new Swiss Statistics website.

In order to strengthen compliance with the CoP, the **Peer Reviewers recommend that:**

- 23. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office and the Other National Authorities producing European statistics should make arrangements for routine archiving of statistics and metadata, and improve online accessibility of the archives (European statistics Code of Practice indicator 15.1.)**

4.2.4.7 MICRODATA ACCESS

Statistical institutes hold microdata from surveys and administrative sources that provide a valuable resource for researchers. Usually, access to microdata is accompanied by safeguards to protect confidentiality and safe use. Indicator 15.4 of the CoP states that “access to microdata is allowed for research purposes and is subject to specific rules or protocols.”

The SFSO allows researchers access to microdata subject to detailed contracts on conditions of use, destruction of data after use, where and how results are to be published and financial charges for the access. Fines are applicable for breaches of contract. Discounts are allowed, up to 100%, for researchers who are working on projects in “the public interest”, for the public sector or in partnership with the SFSO. There are about 200 contracts in place for business BER data, and another 400 contracts for other data.

The Peer Reviewers met with researchers from both the public and private sector. They appreciated the availability of microdata, but had various concerns. The time taken to agree contracts is considered to be too long, and the requirement to destroy data after they had added considerable value to them was considered to be unhelpful. Some researchers were also unaware of the possibility of price discounts, and had been deterred from requesting access due to the perceived cost. Researchers were also concerned that the contracts were too rigid in specifying in advance exactly where their research should be published. A general view was that they felt they were “competing” with SFSO researchers and analysts, rather than working as partners.

The SFSO is currently considering establishing facilities for safe remote access to data for researchers. Such access should improve the accessibility of microdata for researchers, and may reduce the requirement for destroying data.

In order to strengthen compliance with the CoP, the **Peer Reviewers recommend that:**

- 24. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office and the Other National Authorities producing European statistics should improve the arrangements for safe access to microdata for research purposes, including remote access facilities, and clarify the arrangements for charges and discounts that are applicable to different types of users. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 15.4.)**

4.2.4.8 DISSEMINATION POLICIES

The SFSO has a dissemination policy (2010), which is available on the SFSO intranet. It makes reference to general principles and practices of dissemination (publicity, access and copyright; objectivity and impartiality; time of publication; and equal treatment, error treatment and archiving). The policy document defines the target groups with product focus, the types of statistical products and dissemination channels and provides general guidelines for dissemination processes and tools. It highlights the importance of access to research microdata and metadata documentation. The procedures for error treatment and revisions are regulated in a separate detailed document. This document is available to staff on the intranet, described as “Guidelines on the amendment of statistical results”. During the peer review visit, the development of a new revisions policy document was described covering economic statistics, which would include a “Nomenclature of Revisions”. This document is still at a draft stage and has not yet been submitted to SFSO directors for their approval. The SFSO’s dissemination policy and the revisions policy are not published.

The Peer Reviewers were informed during the visit that there is no coordination of dissemination policies among the producers of European statistics and no common guidelines for the dissemination of European statistics.

In order to enhance compliance with the CoP and improve the overall coordination across the Swiss NSS, the **Peer Reviewers recommend that:**

- 25. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office should publish its dissemination policy and the policy on error treatment and revisions. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office and the Other National Authorities producing European statistics should harmonise their dissemination policies. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 6.6, 13.2, 15.1, Coordination.)**

4.2.4.9 RELEASE CALENDAR, CHANGING AND MONITORING THE DISSEMINATION SCHEDULES

According to the existing practice, the SFSO prepares and publishes its release calendar for the next year by the end of November. The calendar, as an IT tool, is modern and user-friendly from a functional point of view. It provides users with a convenient filter application, which allows the selection of statistical domains, institutions (the SFSO, federal offices and institutions, cantonal offices and institutions, international institutions, universities) and type of event (press conference, press release, new publication, new results). The Peer Reviewers discovered that out of all eight categories of the institutions, only the SFSO's events are included in the calendar.

It has been stated by representatives of the ONAs that the users tend usually to use the calendars placed on the ONAs' websites. Different functionalities, various information structures and formats are used for release calendars by some ONAs. The Peer Reviewers still encourage the inclusion of ONA release dates by types of event in the existing release calendar on the Swiss Statistics website and the placing of links to this calendar on the ONAs' websites.

The SFSO communicates upcoming revisions systematically. As an example, with regard to the revision on the national accounts data series in 2014, pre-announcements were included in relevant press releases and several user meetings were organised. However, there is no pre-announced calendar for the revisions. This problem should be solved by including the revisions undertaken by the SFSO and the ONAs in the existing calendar on the Swiss Statistics website.

In order to strengthen compliance with the CoP, the **Peer Reviewers recommend that:**

- 26. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office, in collaboration with the Other National Authorities producing European statistics, should use the release calendar facility on the Swiss Statistics website (the "Agenda") to provide information on the release of all European statistics. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office should include major revisions in its pre-announced release calendar. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 6.5 and 6.6.)**

In the case of a change in the dissemination schedule, the original date is indicated in the SFSO's news mail but the reason for postponing is rarely indicated. On the main release calendar date changes are indicated by the remark "new date".

It was also noted by the Peer Reviewers that according to the SFSO's dissemination policy, information can be released as soon as the data production is completed.

With regard to monitoring and assessing compliance with the pre-announced calendars, there is no central monitoring in place in the NSS. This has consistency costs and negative implications for users. For instance, during the peer review visit, the Special Data Dissemination release calendar (according to the International Monetary Fund standard), administered by the SFSO, provided

release dates of the SFSO's statistics that were absent on the main release calendar. In fact, during the peer review visit, the SFSO's release calendar provided information on population statistics releases just a month ahead, while the Special Data Dissemination release calendar showed publication dates for the current month and three months ahead.

In order to strengthen compliance with the CoP and improve the overall coordination across the NSS, the **Peer Reviewers recommend that:**

- 27. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office and the Other National Authorities producing European statistics should communicate changes in release calendars in a transparent manner, with reasons for the changes. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office should introduce mechanisms for monitoring and assessing the dissemination schedules of Swiss statistical authorities producing European statistics. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 13.4, Coordination.)**

4.2.4.10 CONSISTENCY IN SWISS STATISTICS WEBSITE LANGUAGE CONTENT

It is an advantage of the NSS that websites of the SFSO and the ONAs support versions in five languages. Almost all content is available in French and German, a lot of content is also provided in Italian, a lesser amount in English, and general information is provided in Romansh. During the peer review visit, it was explained that press releases are generally issued in all three national languages German, French and Italian. However, the Peer Reviewers were able to confirm that some content is only available in particular languages, primarily in German and French. Therefore, a website user who looks at the Italian or English versions may not be aware of the content that is available in French or German only. Currently, there is no systematic signposting that a statistical output is only available in another language. The Peer Reviewers believe that it should be possible to show at least the titles of all outputs in every language, and if an output is only available in one or two languages, then the other language versions of the website should provide links to the available output. In the absence of such a facility, effective access is denied to someone who looks at a language version with missing outputs.

In order to strengthen compliance with the CoP, the **Peer Reviewers recommend that:**

- 28. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office should make consistent the different language versions of the Swiss Statistics website, ensuring that users of any language version are aware of all the content available on the website. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 15.)**

4.2.4.11 COMMON INFORMATION REPOSITORY

Article 18(1) of the FStatA requires that the SFSO provides other national producers with dissemination facilities. This provision is fully relevant in a decentralised statistical system since a consistent and user-friendly presentation of statistical information is of great importance for users. The name of the portal – Swiss Statistics – virtually refers to a common portal for official statistics produced in the country. In practice, the Swiss Statistics website functions largely as the SFSO's public website, predominantly providing data produced by this institution. In some cases, the portal provides links to other producers, for example to the balance of payments statistics produced by the SNB. It also provides static pre-defined data tables produced by some ONAs (e.g. international trade data compiled by the Foreign Trade Statistics Division of the Federal Customs Administration).

A particular example of not "joining up" between statistical producers relates to the presentation of national accounts statistics. Quarterly GDP data are compiled and published by State

Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) and the annual figures by the SFSO. The section of “National Accounts” on the Swiss Statistics website contains only annual GDP data, i.e., statistics compiled by the SFSO, and does not provide any link to quarterly data, which is hard to find on the SECO website. Users, however, expect to find data on the same phenomenon in one place. Moreover, SECO’s quarterly press releases of national accounts statistics refer to “estimates” and do not use the word “statistics” anywhere, which may be confusing for some users.

STAT-TAB is a new and user-friendly application on the Swiss Statistics website. Data are presented in data cubes in variables that can be combined and its range is being continuously extended. Although statistics on unemployment, public finance, energy and transport produced by the ONAs are included in the STAT-TAB, for the time being, macroeconomic statistics (national accounts and price statistics) are not included in the self-tabulation service. Foreign trade statistics are also not included in this facility, and the Peer Review team concluded that data produced by several ONAs are not yet included in the STAT-TAB service.

In order to strengthen compliance with the CoP and improve the overall coordination across the NSS, the **Peer Reviewers recommend that:**

- 29. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office should include all data produced by the Other National Authorities producing European statistics into the Swiss Statistics website. It should also include these data in the self-tabulation tool (STAT-TAB). (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 15.1, Coordination.)**

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

The Swiss Federal Statistical Office (SFSO) thanks the Peer Review Team for their thorough and professional work, constructive engagement and the care they have taken throughout the review process. The SFSO welcomes the report and recommendations.

The SFSO has a diverging view on two specific recommendations.

Recommendation 1:

The Swiss legislative authorities should amend the relevant legal provisions to assign to the Director General of the Swiss Federal Statistical Office and the heads of the Other National Authorities producing European statistics the responsibility of deciding on statistical methods and standards and the content and timing of statistical releases. The Ordinance on the Conduct of Federal Statistical Surveys should include the list of statistical outputs without defining methodological characteristics. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 1.4, 6.1 and 6.2.)

The Federal Statistics Act of 9 October 1992 (FStatA), art. 2 and 3, states clearly that all parties involved in federal statistics shall produce representative results on the status and development of the population, economy, society, education, research, territory and environment in Switzerland in an independent, professional manner. Furthermore, article 45 of the Government and Administration Organisation Act of 21 March 1997 (GAOA) stipulates that the directors of groups and offices are responsible to their superiors for the management of the administrative units of which they are placed in charge and for the completion of the tasks entrusted to them. Firstly these provisions define the responsibilities of directors and secondly they guarantee the latter's professional independence in determining methods.

The newly integrated statistics production is not yet properly described in the Ordinance on Federal Statistics. An improved representation is planned by the FSO in the context of a total revision of the Ordinance.

Recommendation 2:

The Swiss Federal Statistical Office and the Other National Authorities producing European statistics should ensure that confidential information collected for statistical purposes, whether from administrative sources or from surveys, should not be shared for administrative purposes. The current statistical regulation stipulating the use of statistical data for administrative purposes should be reviewed accordingly. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office should operate administrative and statistical registers separately. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 5.)

Pursuant to Art. 14 para. 1 FStatA, data collected or passed on for statistical purposes may not be used for other purposes, unless a Federal Law otherwise expressly requests another usage or the concerned party agrees to such usage in writing.

The Act must stipulate exceptions. These exceptions are applied in order to keep the burden on respondents to a minimum and to enable the administration to function efficiently. The FSO keeps registers in close cooperation with the cantons, primarily as an aid for statistical purposes and for research and planning. The FSO makes data from the registers available for administrative purposes only on the strength of a legal basis.

The FSO and other producers of federal statistics are bound by very strict regulations on data protection. Furthermore they are subject to monitoring by the Federal Data Protection and Information Commissioner. Every measure has been taken, therefore, to ensure use of data in compliance with data protection.

ANNEX A: PROGRAMME OF THE VISIT

AGENDA

Peer review visit to Switzerland (01 June 2015 – 05 June 2015)

Day 1 – Monday 1 June 2015			
Time	Programme	Organisation	Participants
9.00– 10.45	Peer Review team discussion to finalise the preparation of the visit; in particular to share views on the information received (self-assessment questionnaires and other documents).		
10.45– 11.00	Coffee break.		
11.00– 12.30	Preparatory meeting with the SFSO coordination team.	Swiss Federal Statistical Office (SFSO)	Georges-Simon Ulrich Ruth Meier, Rolf Escher Markus Baumann, Milos Schaer
12.30– 13.15	Lunch		
13.15– 13.45	Welcome and introduction of the programme, organisational matters.	SFSO	Georges-Simon Ulrich Ruth Meier, Markus Baumann. Milos Schaer
13.45– 14.45	General information session with a description of how the national statistical system is organised (bodies, distribution of responsibilities, relations between authorities). A presentation on the Swiss National Statistical System.	SFSO	Georges-Simon Ulrich, Ruth Meier, Catherine Duttweiler, Markus Schwyn, Livio Lugano, Marc Gindraux, Thomas Priester, Jean-Pierre Renfer, Florian Montandon, Louis Belle Rolf Escher, Anne Balzli Markus Baumann, Milos Schaer
14.45– 15.00	Coffee break	SFSO	
15.00 – 16.30	- Coordination role of the SFSO.	SFSO	Ruth Meier, Livio Lugano Samuel Schütz, Markus Baumann, Milos Schaer Lukas Bruhin
16.30 – 17.30	- Cooperation/level of integration of the Swiss National Statistical System within the ESS.	SFSO	Rolf Escher, Markus Schwyn, Philippe Stauffer Markus Baumann, Milos Schaer
17.30	Stock-taking meeting	SFSO	

Day 2 – Tuesday 2 June 2015

Time	Programme	Organisation	Participants
9.00– 11.00	The statistical law, related legislation and statistical work programme (CoP Principles 1, 2, 5 and 6).	SFSO	Ruth Meier, Anne Balzli Jean-Pierre Renfer, Marius Widmer, Markus Baumann, Milos Schaer Marco D'Angelo, Livio Lugano
11.00– 11.15	Coffee break		
11.15– 13.00	Resources and cost-effectiveness (CoP Principles 3 and 10).	SFSO	Ruth Meier, Jean-Pierre Renfer, Markus Baumann, Milos Schaer
13.00– 13.45	Lunch		
13.45– 15.15	Meeting with main users – ministries and other public/private institutions (including the Central Bank as a user).	SFSO	Guido Boller, Bruno Parnisari, Wolfram Kägi Michael Graff, Edith Lang Sylvie Rochat
15.15– 15.30	Coffee break		
15.30– 16.30	Meeting with main users – scientific community.	SFSO	Peter Farago, Denise Efionayi, Philippe Wanner Stefan Wolter, Beatrice Brunner, Spyros Arvanitis
16.30 – 17.30	Meeting with main users – media.	SFSO	Bernard Wuthrich, Camilla Alabor, Daniel Droz, Daniela Meyer
17.30	Stock-taking meeting	SFSO	

Day 3 – Wednesday 3 June 2015

Time	Programme	Organisation	Participants
09.00– 10.00	Commitment to quality (organisational structure, tools, monitoring) and statistical processes. A presentation of the SFSO's quality management system (CoP Principle 4).	SFSO	Jean-Pierre Renfer Markus Baumann Milos Schaer Marius Widmer Thomas Schulz Markus Huber Rick Trap Fabio Tomasini
10.00– 10.15	Coffee break		
10.15– 12.15	Quality of statistical processes, reporting burden (CoP Principles 7–9).	SFSO	Jean-Pierre Renfer Markus Baumann Milos Schaer, Petko Yanev, Bertrand Loison, Daniel Kilchmann, Rick Trap

				acques Huguenin Thomas Giger Claude Macchi Yves Tillé Diego Kuonen
12.15–		Lunch		
13.00– 14.30		Quality of statistical output (CoP Principles 11–15).	SFSO	Jean-Pierre Renfer, Markus Baumann, Milos Schaer, Marius Widmer, Markus Huber, Rick Trap Fabio Tomasini, Petko Yanev
14.30 14.45	-	Coffee break		
14.45 15.45	-	Quality of statistical output (continued) (CoP Principles 11–15).	SFSO	Jean-Pierre Renfer Markus Baumann Milos Schaer Marius Widmer Markus Huber Rick Trap Fabio Tomasini Petko Yanev
15.45 16.45	-	Statistical confidentiality (CoP Principle 5).	SFSO	Anne Balzli, Jean-Pierre Renfer, Markus Baumann, Milos Schaer, Marius Widmer, Thomas Schulz, Markus Huber, Claude Macchi, Jacques Huguenin, Petko Yanev, Baptiste Berger
16.45		Stock-taking meeting	SFSO	
Day 4 – Thursday 4 June 2015				
Time		Programme	Organisation	Participants
9.00 10.30	-	Meeting with Ethics Council for Official Statistics.	SFSO	Heinrich Brüngger, Jürg Furrer
10.30 10.45	-	Coffee break		
10.45 12.15	-	Meeting with other national authorities: Federal Finance Administration; State Secretariat for Economic Affairs.	SFSO	André Schwaller Bruno Parnisari
12.15 13.00	-	Lunch		
13.00 14.00	-	Meeting with junior staff.	SFSO	Ferenc Biedermann, Stéphane Henriod Desislava Nedyalkova, Jean-Marc Nicoletti, Marc Dubach, Camille Gonseth Sam Banatte, Antonella Simonetti, Michael Koscevic, Frederik Udry,

					Sarah Gerhard Ortega	
14.00 14.15	-	Coffee break				
14.15 15.45	-	Meeting with main data providers.	SFSO	Fabian Josef Daniel Henrique Jérôme Magnin	Schnell Troxler Gruber Schneider	
15.45 17.00	-	Meeting with other national authorities: Swiss National Bank; Swiss Customs Administration.	SFSO	Guido Jean-Claude Wagnon	Boller	
17.00		Stock-taking meeting	SFSO			
Day 5 – Friday 5 June 2015						
Time		Programme	Organisation	Participants		
9.00 10.30	-	Peer Review team discussion.	SFSO			
10.30 10.45	-	Coffee break				
10.45 12.15	-	Clarifications, remaining or additional issues and focus areas.	SFSO	Luis Belle, Ruth Meier, Jean-Pierre Renfer, Anne Balzli, Rolf Escher, Marius Widmer, Markus Baumann, Milos Schaer		
12.15 13.00	-	Lunch				With the participants of the meeting with senior management
13.00 15.00	-	Meeting with senior management: conclusions and recommendations.	SFSO	Georges-Simon Ulrich Ruth Meier, Catherine Duttweiler, Markus Schwyn, Livio Lugano, Marco D'Angelo, Marc Gindraux, Bertrand Loison, Jean-Pierre Renfer, Florian Montandon, Louis Belle, Rolf Escher, Anne Balzli Markus Baumann, Milos Schaer		
15.00 16.00	-	Preparation of the report: task sharing.	SFSO			

ANNEX B: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

	Peer Review Team
1	Priit Potisepp, Chair
2	Jagdev Singh Virdee, Peer Reviewer
3	Rimantas Juozas Vaicenavičius, Peer Reviewer
	Eurostat observer
4	Antonio Consoli, Task Force Peer Reviews, Eurostat
	SFSO management
5	Baptiste Berger, Head of Service IT Architecture and Security
6	Marco D'Angelo, Head of Health and Social Affairs Division
7	Catherine Duttweiler, Head of Communication Division
8	Marc Gindraux, Head of Territory and Environment Division
9	Bertrand Loison, Head of Registers Division
10	Livio Lugano, Head of Economy Division
11	Ruth Meier, Head of Strategy and Staff Division – Vice-Director
12	Markus Schwyn, Head of Population and Education Division
13	Georges-Simon Ulrich, Director General
14	Anne Balzli Pysi, Head of Legal Service
15	Louis Belle, Head of Information Technology Section
16	Marc Dubach, Head of Social Welfare Section
17	Rolf Escher, Head of International Affairs Service
18	Jacques Huguenin, Head of Health Section a.i.
19	Claude Macchi, Head of Business Registers Data Section
20	Florian Montandon, Head of Finance and Controlling Section
21	Jean-Pierre Renfer, Head of Statistical Methods Section
22	Thomas Schulz, Head of Dissemination and Publications Section
23	Philippe Stauffer, Head of Economic Structure and Analyses Section
24	Fabio Tomasini, Head of Business Register Section

25	Rick Trap, Head of Economic Surveys Section
26	Thomas Priester, Head of Social Analysis Section
27	Marius Widmer, Deputy Head of Communication Section
	National coordinator team
28	Markus Baumann, SFSO Peer Review Coordinator, Head of Quality and Processes Service
29	Milos Schaer, SFSO Peer Review Coordination Team, Research Associate, Quality and Processes Service
	Other SFSO staff members
30	Sam Banatte, Scientific Research Associate, Economic Structure and Analyses
31	Ferenc Biedermann, Research Associate, Mobility
32	Sarah Gerhard Ortega, Research Associate, Education System
33	Thomas Giger, Research Associate, Mobility
34	Camille Gonseth, Research Associate, National Accounts
35	Stéphane Henriod, Research Associate, Geoinformation
36	Daniel Kilchmann, Research Associate, Statistical Methods
37	Michael Koscevic, Research Associate, Business Register
38	Desislava Nedyalkova, Research Associate, Statistical Methods
39	Jean-Marc Nicoletti, Research Associate, Statistical Methods
40	Samuel Schütz, Research Associate, Strategy and Staff
41	Antonella Simonetti, Research Associate, International Affairs
42	Frederik Udry, Research Associate, Business Registers Data
43	Petko Yanev, Research Associate, Information Technology
	Representatives of the ONAs
44	Jean-Claude Wagnon, Head of the Foreign Trade Statistics and Economic Issues Division, Swiss Customs Administration
45	Guido Boller, Director Statistics, Swiss National Bank
46	Bruno Parnisari, Board Member, Economic Policy Directorate, State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO
47	André Schwaller, Deputy Head of Financial Statistics, Federal Finance Administration

	Representatives of main users
	Guido Boller, Director Statistics, Swiss National Bank
	Bruno Parnisari Board Member, Economic Policy Directorate, State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO
48	Wolfram Kägi, Managing Director, B.S.S. Economic Consultants, Basel
49	Michael Graff, Professor, KOF Swiss Economic Institute at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich
50	Edith Lang, Deputy of Director Statistics Luzerne
51	Sylvie Rochat, Deputy Head of Division, State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation
52	Lukas Bruhin, General Secretary, Federal Department of Home Affairs
	Representatives of media
53	Bernard Wuthrich, Journalist, <i>Le Temps</i>
54	Camilla Alabor, Journalist, Swiss Radio and Television
55	Daniel Droz, Journalist, Agency : <i>Agence Romande de Presse</i>
56	Daniela Meyer, Research desk, Swiss Radio and Television
	Representatives of main data providers/respondents
57	Fabian Schnell, Project manager Economic policy and Education, Swiss Business Federation
58	Josef Troxler, Deputy Director Statistics Zurich, Representative of the Swiss Conference of Regional Statistical Offices
59	Daniel Gruber, Vice-Director, Head of Central Services Division, Federal Office of Justice
60	Henrique Schneider, Head of Division Economic policy, Energy and Environment, Swiss Chamber of Commerce
61	Jérôme Magnin, Head of Statistics & Central Registers, Central Compensation Office
	Representatives of the scientific community
62	Peter Farago, Director, Swiss Centre of Expertise in the Social Sciences FORS
63	Denise Efonayi, Deputy Director, SFM – Swiss Forum for Migration and Population Studies, University of Neuchâtel
64	Philippe Wanner, Professor, I-Demo, University of Geneva, Demography
65	Stefan Wolter, Professor, Centre for Research in Economics of Education, University of Bern
66	Beatrice Brunner, Professor, Winterthur Institute of Health Economics, School for Management and Law of Zurich

67	Spyros Arvanitis Professor, KOF Swiss Economic Institute at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich
68	Yves Tillé, Professor, Methodology, University of Neuchâtel
69	Diego Kuonen, Research Center for Statistics, University of Geneva, Representative of the Swiss Statistical Society
	Representatives of Ethics Council for Official Statistics
70	Heinrich Brüngger, President
71	Jürg Furrer, Member