

PEER REVIEWERS' RECOMMENDATIONS AND OFFICE OF STATISTICS LIECHTENSTEIN IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS IN RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS

Peer reviewer's recommendations and improvement actions in response to the recommendations

Resources and efficiency considerations

- 1. The Office of Statistics Liechtenstein and the national authorities should consider providing additional human resources to strengthen professional capacity in methodology, quality, confidentiality and use of information technology. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 3, indicator 3.1.)**

Current situation:

The Office of Statistics Liechtenstein has a staff of 10 persons. This corresponds to one statistician per 3,700 inhabitants. The personnel situation in the Office of Statistics is better than five years ago, but worse than two years ago.

Improvement action 1: Provision of additional human resources to strengthen professional capacity in several areas

The Office of Statistics Liechtenstein will discuss with the Office of Human Resources and Organization and the Ministry for General Government Affairs and Finance the problems that arise from the limited human resources, especially in the area of methodology, and it will clarify options to increase human resources in this area.

Timeline:

2015 IV Q

2. The Office of Statistics Liechtenstein should create a separate position responsible for general methodological questions. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 7, indicator 7.2.)

Current situation:

Given the size of the Office of Statistics Liechtenstein, there is no separate division for general methodological questions. The Director General and the Heads of Division are responsible for clarifying methodological questions. Important methodological questions are discussed and decided in the weekly management meetings. Where necessary, methodological questions are clarified in cooperation with Eurostat and other statistical offices.

Improvement action 2: Creating a separate position responsible for methodological questions

The Office of Statistics Liechtenstein will discuss with the Office of Human Resources and Organization and the Ministry for General Government Affairs and Finance the difficulties that arise from the lack of a separate position for methodological questions, and it will clarify options to create such a position in the Office of Statistics.

Timeline:

2015 IV Q

3. The Office of Statistics Liechtenstein should finish its ongoing project on the implementation of electronic data transmission from business accounts to the statistical information system. It should also monitor the response burden systematically. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principles 9 and 10, indicators 9.1, 9.3 and 10.2.)

Current situation:

In cooperation with the Office of Information Technology, the Office of Statistics Liechtenstein is undertaking a project to implement improved electronic transmission of employment data to the Business Register. The concept has already been approved by the Government.

When developing new questionnaires and reviewing existing questionnaires, attention is paid so that the reporting burden on respondents is as low as possible. The Statistics Act requires the Office of Statistics to ensure this. The Office of Statistics is also required by law to refrain from a survey if the required statistical data are available in the form of administrative data that meet the required quality standards. When testing the questionnaires used for the Population and Housing Census, the time burden is also measured.

Improvement action 3.1: Implementation of electronic data transmission from business accounts

The Office of Statistics will inform the Office of Information Technology about the recommendations of the Peer Review and it will continue to participate actively in the project group so that the improved electronic data transmission can become operational at the latest by the end of 2016.

Timeline:

2016 IV Q

Improvement action 3.2: Monitoring the response burden systematically

For questionnaires requiring more than 5 minutes for completion, the Office of Statistics will henceforth measure the time burden as part of questionnaire tests or will assess the time burden as part of the survey itself. This time burden will be documented in the internal manual for each publication.

For questionnaires requiring less than 5 minutes for completion, the Office of Statistics will estimate the time burden on the basis of respondents' feedback. This time burden will be documented in the internal manual for each publication.

Timeline:

2016 II Q

Strengthening relevance and user orientation

4. The Office of Statistics Liechtenstein should diligently address unmet user needs (e.g. European and regional comparisons and deeper interpretations) by consulting actively the national Statistical Commission. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 11, indicators 11.1 and 11.2.)

Current situation:

Different user groups are represented in the Statistical Commission. As part of the annual discussion of the Statistical Programme, the Statistical Commission makes new proposals for additional statistical information in order to satisfy unmet user needs in the future. Currently unmet user needs on statistical topics are documented by the Office of Statistics in each statistical publication's Chapter C on Methodology and Quality.

Improvement action 4: Addressing unmet user needs

The Office of Statistics will actively solicit unmet user needs from the Statistical Commission each year by including a separate agenda item for that purpose. The Office of Statistics documents these user needs and considers how to satisfy these user needs.

Timeline:

Annually from 2016 II Q

5. The Office of Statistics Liechtenstein should introduce a more periodic user satisfaction survey and analyse downloads of data from its website in an appropriate way. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 11, indicator 11.3.)

Current situation:

Until now, the user surveys have been conducted in the context of the Peer Reviews. The last user survey took place in October 2014. The results of the user survey were discussed with the Statistical Commission and the Ministry. They are also publicly available on the website of the Office of Statistics. The analysis of the downloads from the website of the Office of Statistics is in principle conducted each year. Due to the creation of the new website, however, there are currently technical problems in evaluating the downloads.

Improvement action 5.1: Introducing a more periodic user satisfaction survey

In the future, the Office of Statistics will conduct a user survey every four years and will continue to publish the results on its website.

Timeline:

Next user survey: 2018 IV Q and repeated every four years

Improvement action 5.2: Analysing downloads of data from the website

In cooperation with the Office of Information Technology, the Office of Statistics will introduce a new evaluation tool so that the downloads from the website of the Office of Statistics can again be analysed in an appropriate manner each year.

Timeline:

Annually from 2016 II Q

6. After elaborating and adopting the new corporate strategy, the Office of Statistics Liechtenstein should publish it. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 11, indicator 11.2.)

Current situation:

The current strategy of the Office of Statistics was elaborated in 2009 and runs through the end of 2015. The strategy was discussed with all employees of the Office of Statistics and with the Ministry. It serves as an internal guideline for the annual planning process and has not been published.

Improvement action 6: Publishing the new corporate strategy

In 2016, the Office of Statistics will elaborate the new strategy for the coming years. This new strategy will then be discussed with the stakeholders and published on the website of the Office of Statistics.

Timeline:

2016 IV Q

7. The Office of Statistics Liechtenstein should provide users with a release calendar that includes exact release dates. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principles 6 and 13, indicators 13.1 and 13.4.)

Current situation:

The Office of Statistics publishes the release calendar on its website. The release calendar lists all statistical publications of the Office of Statistics, indicates the current issue, and announces the approximate publication date of the next issue (beginning/middle of the month). The release calendar also indicates the standard time of day of the releases (9 a.m.).

Improvement action 7: Release calendar with exact release dates

The Office of Statistics will enhance the release calendar to include exact release dates.

Timeline:

2016 I Q

8. The Office of Statistics Liechtenstein should, where feasible, gradually reduce the time lag between the reference period and the publication date. It should also introduce a systematic monitoring of data timeliness. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 13, indicator 13.1.)

Current situation:

The Office of Statistics endeavours to publish statistical information in as timely a manner as possible. For this purpose, preliminary results in various topic areas are published on as early a date as possible. The timeliness of the statistical information is documented in Chapter C on Methodology and Quality of most statistical publications. That chapter contains a standard section on "Timeliness and Punctuality".

Improvement action 8: Improving and monitoring of timeliness

The Office of Statistics will continue to strive to reduce the time lag between the reference period and the publication date. For this purpose, systematic annual monitoring of timeliness will be introduced and discussed with the employees of the Office of Statistics each year.

Timeline:

Annually from 2017 I Q

9. The Office of Statistics Liechtenstein should introduce systematic and regular monitoring and publish information on punctuality concerning all statistical releases. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 13, indicator 13.4.)

Current situation:

The Office of Statistics endeavours to publish statistical information on the announced release date. The punctuality of the statistical information is documented in Chapter C on Methodology and Quality of most statistical publications. That chapter contains a standard section on "Timeliness and Punctuality".

Improvement action 9: Systematic monitoring of punctuality and publishing of the results

Using daily data, the Office of Statistics will introduce systematic, annual monitoring of the punctuality of all statistical publications, and it will publish the monitoring results on its website.

Timeline:

Annually from 2017 I Q

10. The Office of Statistics Liechtenstein should consider introducing interactive tools for data dissemination, such as interactive maps, info-graphics and other modern tools (e.g. mobile applications) for statistical data dissemination. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 15, indicator 15.2.)

Current situation:

The website of the Office of Statistics www.as.llv.li can also be accessed using mobile devices. The eTab Portal is available as an interactive tool, allowing statistics users to create self-defined statistical tables.

Improvement action 10: Interactive tools for data dissemination

The Office of Statistics will observe and analyse the development of the use of interactive tools for the dissemination of statistical information by other statistical offices. This analysis will be discussed with the Statistical Commission so that user needs can be taken into account. Together with the Office of Information Technology, the Office of Statistics will then consider introducing new interactive tools.

Timeline:

2019 II Q

11. The Office of Statistics Liechtenstein should gradually expand the data available in the self-tabulation application on its website. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 15, indicator 15.2.)

Current situation:

The Office of Statistics launched the new eTab Portal self-tabulation application on its website at the beginning of 2015. At the press conference for the launch of the eTab Portal, the Office of Statistics announced that the eTab Portal will gradually be expanded with new topics over the course of the next two years.

Improvement action 11: Expanding the data available in the self-tabulation application

Over the course of the next two years, the Office of Statistics will gradually expand the eTab Portal. The additional topics for the expansion of the eTab Portal will be included in the Statistical Programme and made public.

Timeline:

2016 IV Q

12. The Office of Statistics Liechtenstein should improve access to definitions, descriptions of the statistical terms and concepts, and classifications in a searchable way on its website. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principles 14 and 15, indicators 14.3, 15.1 and 15.2.)

Current situation:

On a standardized basis, the statistical publications of the Office of Statistics contain a Chapter D – Glossary with definitions and classifications and a Chapter C on Methodology and Quality, in which key statistical concepts of the publication in question are discussed. The statistical publications are available for download as PDF documents on the website of the Office of Statistics.

Improvement action 12: Improving access to metadata

The Office of Statistics will introduce a separate area on its website containing definitions, descriptions of the statistical terms and concepts, and classifications that can be easily searched.

Timeline:

2017 IV Q

13. The Office of Statistics Liechtenstein should adapt and publish its pricing policy on custom-designed analyses and use of microdata for scientific purposes. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 15, indicators 15.3 and 15.4.)

Current situation:

The Office of Statistics has defined a standard hourly rate for the preparation of custom-designed analyses, and it applies that rate uniformly. The use of microdata for scientific purposes has so far been free of charge.

Improvement action 13: Pricing policy on custom-designed analyses and use of microdata

The Office of Statistics will set out its pricing policy for custom-designed analyses and use of microdata for scientific purposes in writing and publish the policy on its website.

Timeline:

2015 IV Q

Use of administrative data, statistical confidentiality

14. The legislative authorities of Liechtenstein should amend the Statistics Act to grant the Office of Statistics Liechtenstein access to administrative data for statistical purposes without requiring a government decision. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 2, indicator 2.2.)

Current situation:

The Statistics Act specifies that the Office of Statistics may use administrative data for the production of statistical publications. Other administrative authorities must, upon request, inform the Office of Statistics about their data capture. By decision of the Government, such administrative authorities must make the required administrative data available to the Office of Statistics. In practice, the Office of Statistics receives the administrative data from other administrative authorities without a Government decision. The phrase "by decision of the Government" sets out the procedure if a conflict arises. In such a conflict scenario, the Government would formally have to order the administrative authority to make the required administrative data available to the Office of Statistics.

Improvement action 14: Access to administrative data for statistical purposes

The Office of Statistics will discuss with the Statistical Commission and the Ministry whether the phrase "by decision of the Government" can be deleted from Article 14 of the Statistics Act and what the consequences of such deletion are.

Timeline:

2015 IV Q

15. The Office of Statistics Liechtenstein should conclude written agreements for the use of administrative data for statistical purposes with the owners of administrative data. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 8, indicator 8.8.)

Current situation:

The Office of Statistics has written or implicit arrangements with the offices of the National Administration concerning the use of administrative data for statistical purposes. Such arrangements, however, are not always designed in the form of a conventional document.

Improvement action 15: Written agreements for the use of administrative data

The Office of Statistics will conclude written arrangements with the owners of administrative data. These arrangements will set out in particular which data must be delivered by what time and what quality controls might have to be carried out beforehand.

Timeline:

2017 II Q

16. The National Public Authorities of Liechtenstein should automatically give information on changes in administrative data and information on changes to existing databases to the Office of Statistics Liechtenstein. The Office of Statistics Liechtenstein should establish formal procedures of informing about changes in data collection. The draft laws changing administrative data should be reviewed and commented on by the Office of Statistics Liechtenstein prior to their adoption. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principles 2 and 8, indicators 2.2 and 8.7.)

Current situation:

Based on the Statistics Act, the owners of administrative data have to inform the Office of Statistics in advance about the set-up and expansion of their information systems, as well as about changes in data collection and classifications that are already used for statistical purposes. The Statistics Act also stipulates that the owners of administrative data have to inform the Office of Statistics about their data capture upon request.

Improvement action 16.1: Provision of information regarding changes in administrative data

The Office of Statistics will discuss with the Office of Information Technology how to establish a formal procedure governing the automatic provision of information to the Office of Statistics regarding changes in administrative data and changes to existing databases.

Timeline:

2016 II Q

Improvement action 16.2: Reviewing and commenting on draft laws changing administrative data

The Office of Statistics will systematically review the draft laws and comment on those draft laws if they affect administrative data of interest for statistical use.

Timeline:

2015 IV Q

17. The Office of Statistics Liechtenstein should give regular and systematic feedback to the owners of administrative data while respecting the principle of statistical confidentiality. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 8, indicator 8.9.)

Current situation:

According to the Quality Guidelines of the Office of Statistics, delivered administrative data are regularly reviewed for errors before they are further processed in the Office of Statistics. If necessary, errors identified are corrected in consultation with the data provider. The data provider is informed of the identified errors.

Improvement action 17: Systematic feedback to the owners of administrative data respecting statistical confidentiality

The Office of Statistics will modify the Quality Guidelines. The section on the plausibility check will be modified explicitly in regard to administrative data so that statistical confidentiality must be respected also when feedback about identified errors is given to the data providers.

Timeline:

2015 IV Q

18. The legislative authorities of Liechtenstein should amend the Statistics Act and the Statistics Ordinance so that data collected for statistical purposes shall not be used for administrative purposes. Also, use of the Statistical Business Register data in the public interest should be made fully transparent, i.e. data which is meant to be public should be stipulated in the Statistics Act and should be equally accessible to all users. The data providers should be informed about this when data are collected. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 5, indicator 5.1.)

Diverging view

The Statistics Act specifies that the Liechtenstein Office of Statistics is guided by the statistical principles of the European Statistical System in the fulfilment of its duties. The principle of statistical confidentiality is expressly mentioned in the Statistics Act. The Statistics Act also specifies that the Government issues an ordinance governing the content and disclosure of data of the Statistical Business Register. In Liechtenstein, the implementing provisions required to execute a law adopted by Parliament are set out in Government ordinances.

The Statistics Ordinance exhaustively enumerates what data the Office of Statistics may disclose from the Statistical Business Register. Both authorities governed by public law and private individuals have equal access to this data, insofar as this serves the public interest. Like the Statistics Act, the Statistics Ordinance is published in the Liechtenstein Law Gazette and is thus part of the official compilation of laws. The Statistics Act and the Statistics Ordinance are also available on the website of the Office of Statistics. It is thus fully transparent what data in the Statistical Business Register are public.

Improvement action: -

The Office of Statistics Liechtenstein has a diverging view on this recommendation and therefore no improvement action is foreseen.

Timeline:

N.A.

19. The Office of Information Technology Liechtenstein should conduct penetration tests of the statistical information system at least once a year. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 5, indicator 5.5.)

Current situation:

The Office of Information Technology provides periodical vulnerability scans of all the IT systems performed by an IT security officer. More sophisticated tests are done with external specialised IT companies once in two years. These tests include also penetration tests simulating threats to the IT system from outside intruders and identifying security weaknesses.

Improvement action 19: Penetration tests of the statistical information system

The Office of Statistics will propose that the Office of Information Technology conduct the penetration tests of the statistical information system once a year.

Timeline:

2015 IV Q

Methodology and quality of statistical production processes

20. Process quality should be monitored in the Office of Statistics Liechtenstein by documented procedures. A strategy for the extended use of “end-of-process reports” should be elaborated and implemented. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 4, indicator 4.1.)

Current situation:

The Office of Statistics describes the production processes of each statistical publication in internal manuals. Additionally, annual end-of-process reports are prepared for the National Accounts and the Business Register.

Improvement action 20: Monitoring process quality

The Office of Statistics will elaborate a strategy to expand process monitoring with end-of-process reports or other instruments to include additional statistical domains. This strategy is to be implemented step by step.

Timeline:

2016 III Q Elaboration of strategy,

2018 IV Q Implementation of strategy

21. The Office of Statistics Liechtenstein should improve the process of updating the methodology and its monitoring. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 7, indicator 7.3.)

Current situation:

On a standardized basis, the Office of Statistics describes the methodology of a statistical publication in Chapter C on Methodology and Quality, which is published together with the analysis and the statistical tables. This Chapter C is verified by a second person before publication (dual-control principle).

Additionally, the Office of Statistics describes in detail the technical production processes of the statistical publications in the internal manuals. These manuals are updated by the statisticians responsible for the publication in question when the production processes change.

Improvement action 21: Updating internal manuals and its monitoring

The Office of Statistics will define in writing how the internal manuals should be updated and archived on a regular basis. Additionally, one person will be mandated to monitor the internal manuals.

Timeline:

2016 II Q

22. The Office of Statistics Liechtenstein should always test questionnaires for new or amended statistical surveys. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 8, indicator 8.2.)

Current situation:

The Office of Statistics tests longer questionnaires if they are new or have been amended, e.g. for the Population and Housing Census. The test results are documented, and the questionnaires are modified according to the test results. Simple questionnaires with only a few questions are generally not tested.

Improvement action 22: Testing questionnaires

The Office of Statistics will henceforth test all questionnaires in advance if they are new or have been amended. The Office of Statistics will include this in the Quality Guidelines.

Timeline:

2015 IV Q