



**PEER REVIEWERS' RECOMMENDATIONS AND STATISTICAL OFFICE OF THE
REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA'S IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS IN RESPONSE TO THE
RECOMMENDATIONS**

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

Resources

1. ***In order to ensure the production of European statistics and the continued participation of Slovenia in the European statistical cooperation, adequate funding needs to be provided for the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia. This entails not only stopping further cuts in the budget of the Statistical Office but also providing some increases which reduce the current short and medium term risks of a deterioration in infrastructure and, in particular, in human resources (European statistics Code of Practice, 3.1).***

Current situation:

SURS's budget in 2014, excluding rents (no rents were paid before moving to a new building in 2012), was equivalent in nominal terms to 78% of the budget in 2007; or 68% if the figures are adjusted for inflation. Investments and expenditure on international cooperation have been reduced in real terms by 57% and 62%, respectively, and wages and salaries of permanent staff by 21%. The number of permanent staff has been reduced by 19% in this period.

The financial and human resource situation have reached a limit and, if crossing this red line, there is a high probability of affecting the quality and the scope of the statistical production, because of the difficulty of obtaining and making use of the modern and adequate technical infrastructure, because of the lack of knowledge, and because of the reduction of human resources. The effect on human resources does not only have a short-run dimension but also a medium-long term one due to the generation gap which is being created by the ban on hiring young people for a significant number of years.

SURS is part of Slovene public administration and a direct budgetary unit. Its budget is fully integrated into the state budget. The size of the budget and the hiring of staff are dependent on the decision of the Government.

Improvement action 1. Improvement of SURS's financial situation

SURS will inform all relevant authorities and decision-makers, and will place all emphasis on seeking the agreement of the Government to not only stop further cuts in SURS's budget but also to obtain some increases which reduce the current short and medium-term risks of a deterioration in infrastructure, knowledge and, in particular, human resources.

Timeline:

12/2015

2. *The accounting system of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia should be improved to allow full allocation of resources to statistical processes. Furthermore, ex ante cost calculation procedures should be fully available (European statistics Code of Practice, 10.1).*

Current situation:

SURS has a long established system of work recording which allows allocation of resources to statistical surveys and statistical processes. However, the classification of cost units and the classification of work activities are outdated and need to be modernized.

Improvement action 2. Improving the accounting system for allocating resources to statistical surveys and statistical processes.

SURS will modernize the classification of cost units and the classification of work activities, and will prepare an estimate of distribution of costs by statistical surveys and statistical processes.

Timeline:

03/2017

3. *The Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia should study all the possibilities available to improve the economic conditions of employees and to define professional careers within the Statistical Office (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 3).*

Current situation:

Financial and human resources are increasingly limited. The Fiscal Balance Act has made large cuts to the salaries and other benefits of civil servants. The basic salaries of civil servants were progressively reduced by 8%, and performance related pay for increased workload was reduced. The Act also restricts promotion to a higher pay grade and senior job title.

Improvement action 3.1. *Improvement of the economic conditions of employees*

SURS will study the possibilities for improving the economic conditions of employees. It will implement all solutions that prove to be feasible, reasonable and within its area of competence.

Timeline:

12/2017

Improvement action 3.2. *Implementing the competency model*

SURS will pursue work on developing and implementing the competency model and career guidance (focusing on key human resources).

Timeline:

12/2017

Coordination

4. The Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia and authorised producers of national statistics should increase their cooperation to strengthen the coordination of the production and the dissemination of European statistics within the national statistical system. The Peer Reviewers endorse the plan of the Director-General of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia to establish regular (yearly) joint meetings of heads of all authorised producers, building on the bilateral meetings already held between the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia and individual authorised producers. The high level meetings should also be reflected in joint meetings at working level, to explore possibilities and options for greater cooperation.

Current situation:

The role of SURS as a coordinating body of the national statistical system is primarily implemented through the process of preparing the programmes of statistical surveys. The current Medium-term Programme of Statistical Surveys 2013-2017 defines six other institutions in Slovenia authorized to produce national statistics. Diverse and efficient forms of cooperation between SURS and authorized producers are established, such as: joint implementation of surveys, preparation of cross-cutting publications, coordination of proposals for legislation, coordination of other statistical tasks, preparation of reports on the implementation of statistical programmes, improving and monitoring the compliance with the principles of the European Statistics Code of Practice, participation of authorized producers at meetings of the Methodological Council and the Statistical Council, cooperation in the field of the Internal Training Programme, workshops for authorized producers about individual methodological topics, SURS's infrastructure for remote access is available to the researchers if they wish to obtain data from authorized producers, etc.

Improvement action 4. *Establishment of annual joint meetings of the head of SURS and the heads of all authorized producers*

Starting in 2015, annual joint meetings of the head of SURS and the heads of all authorised producers will be established.

Timeline:

12/2015

5. The Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia and the authorised producers should press ahead with their efforts to organise and agree a coordinated release calendar and coordinated release practices (European statistics Code of Practice, 6.5 and 6.7).

Current situation:

SURS and the authorized producers each have their own release calendars which are different in form and content, and there is no joint release calendar for national statistics. Dissemination products of the national statistical system are not unified with the exception of an interactive geographical tool STAGE with a selection of variables across individual domains produced by SURS and the authorized producers.

Improvement action 5.1. Dissemination of a common release calendar of national statistics on SURS's web portal

SURS will coordinate with the authorized producers the implementation of a common release calendar and publish it on its web portal.

Timeline:

03/2015

Improvement action 5.2. Dissemination of a common release calendar of national statistics on web portals of authorized producers

SURS will discuss with the authorized producers the possibility of publishing the common release calendar of national statistics on their web portals.

Timeline:

12/2015

Improvement action 5.3. Broadening the content of STAGE

SURS and the authorized producers will review the content of STAGE and discuss its possible further broadening.

Timeline:

12/2016

Improvement action 5.4. *Standardization of press releases*

SURS and the authorized producers will discuss the possibility of preparing all the first releases of national statistics in a standardised way. .

Timeline:

12/2017

Training and research

- 6. The Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia should increase the presence of external teachers from the scientific community in the Internal Training Programme, particularly in courses devoted to illustrate the state of the art of methodological issues (European statistics Code of Practice, 7.6 and 7.7).**

Current situation:

SURS has continuous vocational training as an integral part of its human resource policy. The Internal Training Programme covers courses on statistics, information technology and the selection of general and specific expertise. The majority of courses are carried out by SURS's employees, but occasionally also professors from faculties lecture at SURS..

Improvement action 6. *Increasing the presence of external teachers in the Internal Training Programme*

SURS will complement the Internal Training Programme with courses that will be prepared in cooperation with the scientific community.

Timeline:

12/2016

7. The Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia should take initiatives as the budget situation allows, which boost the research collaboration between the office and the scientific community by developing joint projects in methodological issues. Such collaboration could even be extended to more detailed statistical analysis of the information produced by the Statistical Office (European statistics Code of Practice, 7.7).

Current situation:

SURS intensively cooperates with the scientific community in different ways, for example in methodological issues in individual statistical domains; access to microdata is available to researchers and the results are upon request available to SURS's employees; SURS is involved in several projects together with the scientific community at national and international level; SURS closely cooperates with the Social Science Data Archive, where some of SURS's data collections are stored and available for users; SURS closely cooperates with the University of Ljubljana in the Inter-disciplinary Doctoral Programme in Statistics; SURS's employees have in cooperation with members of the scientific community written and presented papers in the international conferences; SURS's employees occasionally lecture at different faculties and vice versa, professors from faculties occasionally lecture at SURS.

Improvement action 7. *Strengthening the collaboration with the scientific community*

SURS will investigate current practices regarding the collaboration with the scientific community, evaluate them and prepare recommendations for further potential cooperation. Special attention will be focused on detecting new potential domains for cooperation and finding necessary financial resources. .

Timeline:

12/2015

Impartiality and objectivity

8. The Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia should fully adopt the procedure of fixed-date release of official statistics and abolish the use of “no-later-than” release announcements (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 6).

Current situation:

At present SURS has “fixed-date” and “no-later-than” release announcements in its release calendar.

Improvement action 8.1. *Introducing only “fixed-date” release announcements in SURS’s release calendar*

SURS will abolish “no-later-than” announcements and use only “fixed-date” release announcements in its release calendar.

Timeline:

01/2015

Improvement action 8.2. *Introducing only “fixed-date” release announcements in the common release calendar of SURS and the authorized producers*

SURS and the authorized producers will study the possibility of using only “fixed-date” release announcements in the authorized producers’ part of the common release calendar.

Timeline:

12/2016

9. The Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia should compile and disseminate the release calendar for any year by November of the previous year at the latest, and preferably in October. Alternatively, the Statistical Office could consider publishing quarterly release calendars with the same prior notice period (European statistics Code of Practice, 6.5).

Current situation:

Due to the timing of the preparation of the annual work programme, SURS disseminates its release calendar for the following year at the end of December.

Improvement action 9. *Improving the timing of publishing the release calendar*

SURS will study the possibility of disseminating its release calendar for the following year by November of the previous year at the latest, and preferably in October.

Timeline:

10/2016

10. The Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia should adopt clear procedures for announcing any delays of statistical releases. Delays should be announced on the website at the earliest opportunity, together with the reason for the delay, and a new date fixed for release (European statistics Code of Practice, 6.7 and 13.4).

Current situation:

SURS currently announces delays of statistical releases with the reason for the delay, and a new fixed date for release to registered users only.

Improvement action 10. *Improving the transparency of release delays*

SURS will announce delays of statistical releases with the reason for a delay, and a new fixed date for release on its web portal.

Timeline:

01/2015

Accessibility and clarity

11. The Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia should publish on their website information about datasets and analyses that have been developed as a result of special requests, which are available but not currently published or disseminated beyond the original requesting organisation(s) (European statistics Code of Practice, 15.3).

Current situation:

SURS publishes information about datasets and analyses that have been developed as a result of special requests only when it assumes that there is a broader interest for such information.

Improvement action 11. *Reviewing the system of publishing datasets and analyses resulting from special requests*

SURS will review its system of publishing datasets and analyses that have been developed as a result of special requests and adjust it if necessary.

Timeline:

12/2016

12. The Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia should continue to improve accessibility and clarity using new and innovative methods of data presentation and collaborate with media and other external organisations (European statistics Code of Practice, 15.1 and 15.2).

Current situation:

SURS intensively cooperates with the media, as the content of its releases (text, tables, graphs and info graphics) has been produced in a way to be easily re-usable by the media; it organises monthly press conferences, frequently announces different information on Twitter, and provides information service, interviews with its staff and training for journalists.

Improvement action 12. *Improving communication with the media*

SURS will introduce at least one new form of cooperation with the media.

Timeline:

12/2015

13. The Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia and authorised producers, as custodians of microdata, should study the possibility of further improving accessibility to such data by authorised researchers, learning from successful arrangements that already exist in other countries (European statistics Code of Practice, 15.4).

Current situation:

Researchers are able to access microdata in SURS's secure room and via the remote access. Remotely, researchers can access microdata from their workstations 24 hours a day via the internet link to the HKOM network, which is provided by the IT and E-Services Directorate of the Ministry of Public Administration. There are also other forms of cooperation, for example in the field of providing data for micro-economic models to different institutions of public administration, with the Social Science Data Archive and with the University of Ljubljana (Faculty of Economics and Faculty of Social Science). The system of accessing microdata for research purposes was established in 2004 and significant improvements have already been put in place. However, there are still possibilities for improving the service for researchers, such as providing Public Use Files for a broader public, supplementing microdata with internationally harmonised metadata, providing remote access for researchers outside Slovenia, handling the administrative procedure of granting access within SURS, etc.

Improvement action 13.1. *Strengthening cooperation with research institutes*

SURS will further intensify already existing cooperation with the Social Science Data Archive in the field of creating Public Use Files and metadata for microdata available to researchers. Both parties will sign a new agreement, defining their roles and responsibilities.

SURS will strengthen the cooperation with the Institute for Economic Research in the field of providing, upgrading and maintaining micro-economic models. Responsibilities of both parties involved will be defined.

Timeline:

12/2015

Improvement action 13.2. *Enabling remote access to microdata for foreign researchers*

SURS will prepare a proposal for enabling remote access to microdata for foreign researchers. It will submit it for consideration to the Ministry of Public Administration as a custodian of technical infrastructure.

Timeline:

12/2015

Improvement action 13.3. *Preparation of guidelines dealing with statistical disclosure control for the work of researchers*

SURS will prepare guidelines for statistical disclosure control for the work of researchers. The guidelines will serve for internal purposes as well as for guiding the work of researchers.

Timeline:

12/2016

Improvement action 13.4. *Establishing a workflow tool for internal management of researchers' requests*

SURS will establish and implement a workflow tool for internal management of research applications, decisions, contracts, etc.

Timeline:

12/2018

Improvement action 13.5. *Establishment of a system for publishing results of the work of researchers on SURS's web portal*

SURS will establish a system for publishing on its web portal results of projects which researchers conduct using SURS's microdata.

Timeline:

12/2016

National Statistics Act (NSA)

14. The Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia should consider preparing a review of the National Statistics Act in order to modernise it and strengthen its provisions on coordination and relationship with European statistics. (Coordination)

Current situation:

The National Statistics Act was adopted in 1995 and amended in 2001. The Act lays a strong legal foundation for the operation of Slovene national statistics, specifically as concerns the mandate for data collection from all data sources, including registers. However, provisions regarding the coordination role of SURS are rather indirect, the National Statistics Act does not refer to European statistics at all and it also appears to be obsolete in its structure and provisions.

Improvement action 14. *Studying the possibilities for a new statistics act*

Aligned with the adoption of the amendments of Regulation 223/2009 on European Statistics, SURS will review the provisions of the National Statistics Act. Legal comparison of national statistics acts among members of the European Statistical System will be prepared. Based on these analyses, decision on a proposal for a new statistics act will be taken.

Timeline:

12/2017

Compliance with specific quality indicators

15. The Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia should undertake the following specific actions (European statistics Code of Practice, 4.3 and 4.4):

- **Improve systematic analysis of the results of quality reports (indicator 4.3).**
- **Establish an appropriate plan for implementing quality reviews (indicator 4.4)**
- **Introduce a regular review of key statistical outputs involving the following measures (indicator 4.4):**
 - **Putting in place appropriate structures for internal audits,**
 - **Training of internal auditors,**
 - **Drawing up standard templates for quality reviews in case of revisions,**
 - **Improving the organisation of reference documentation,**
 - **Making arrangements for letting quality reviews result in improvement action plans.**

Current situation:

A standardized system for quality reporting is in place. For all statistical surveys national quality reports are prepared on the basis of a standard template that is in line with the recent ESS standards for quality reporting. The standard quality indicators for all quality components are defined at the institutional level and are regularly calculated during the statistical process. These indicators are an integral part of the quality reports and hence publicly available to users. SURS, however, does not have a specific plan for quality reviews/auditing. Quality reviews are carried out ad hoc, whenever the need for revision of an individual survey is identified.

Improvement action 15.1. *Establishment of a new internal body in the field of quality*

SURS will establish a new interdepartmental body in the field of quality, which will take care of coordinated and systematic approach to identify and implement quality improvements.

Timeline:

12/2015

Improvement action 15.2. *Preparation of standard templates for revision*

A standard template for the report of quality reviews and a standard template for an action plan in the case of revision will be prepared.

Timeline:

12/2015

Improvement action 15.3. *Improving the documentation system*

Improved documentation system (STATDOK) will be put in place.

Timeline:

12/2016

Improvement action 15.4. *Systematic use of information from quality reports*

SURS will develop a system for more systematic use of information from quality reports in order to foster the improvements.

Timeline:

12/2017

Improvement action 15.5. *Regular review of key statistical outputs*

SURS will study possibilities to introduce a regular review of key statistical outputs.

Timeline:

12/2017

Performance indicators on reporting burden

16. The Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia should undertake the following measures (European statistics Code of Practice, principle 9):

- **Introduce the compilation of performance indicators of reporting burden at unit level,**
- **Arrange for periodic analysis by senior management of indicators of reporting burden.**

Current situation:

Currently, there are no performance indicators on reporting burden which would be systematically and regularly produced at the level of reporting unit. However, SURS systematically follows the number of reporting units and the number of units that filled in the survey questionnaires, and indicators showing in how many surveys individual reporting units are included are regularly produced. Performance indicators on reporting burden are not systematically analysed by senior management.

Improvement action 16. *Establishing a system for measuring and managing the reporting burden of enterprises*

SURS will further develop performance indicators, the system for systematic monitoring and analysing of the reporting burden of enterprises, as well as the system for periodic analysis by senior management.

Timeline:

12/2016

Compliance with the Code of Practice by authorised producers

17. The authorised producers should introduce a policy for and improve their treatment of errors and revisions and fully regularise their quality reporting.

Current situation:

Most of the authorized producers do not have a publicly available policy on the treatment of errors and revisions and they do not regularly publish quality reports.

Improvement action 17. *Standardization of the treatment of errors and revisions and regularization of quality reporting in the system of national statistics*

SURS and authorized producers will investigate the possibility to introduce standard procedures for the treatment of errors and revisions, and for full regularization of quality reporting by authorized producers.

Timeline:

12/2017