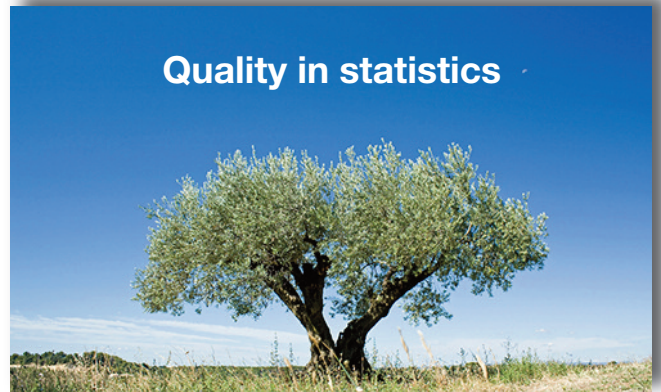




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focusing on...

Quality is an extremely wide topic ranging from the monitoring of a single error source, to the planning and implementation of control activity for a statistical production process, to the definition of a quality assurance framework for the National Statistical System.



Quality in statistics

Istat can boast a long tradition on international cooperation on quality issues covering most of the above mentioned topics, and tailoring the cooperation initiatives depending on the needs and priorities of the Institution asking for them.

Within the process of supporting Central and East European countries in the preparation to EU accession, the cooperation on quality has been oriented to strengthen confidence in the Statistical Systems of the Candidate Countries, by creating the conditions for the compliance with EU statistical norms and standards. This is the case, for example, of the Twinning project with the Romanian Statistical Office carried out at the beginning of 2000.

Different nature had the cooperation extensively carried out in South America (Cooperación Estadística UE-MERCOSUR y Chile I and II), aimed at sharing a model for quality management and building a common system of standard indicators for quality evaluation and reporting, in the wake of what was being developed in the European Union.

Finally, it should be noted that training on quality is a fundamental aspect for successful cooperation, in general. Thus, it should be part of any cooperation project since it creates the conditions for developing quality systems, for increasing

the quality culture and the awareness of its importance.

Indeed, in the cooperation project with Tunisia in 2009 (JUMELAGE TU07/AA/OT/02) aimed at the “Développement du Système d’Information pour la Statistique des Entreprises (SISE)”, training on quality represented an important component of the whole project, complementing with a theoretical framework the cooperation initiatives targeted to improving business statistics.

The most recent cooperation on quality carried out by Istat last autumn were the training courses “Measurement of the quality of statistics” within the framework of Medstat III (Statistical Cooperation in the Mediterranean Region - Training and Dissemination Sector) for the Mediterranean Countries.

In this occasion, in addition to providing a common and structured background for quality measurement, assessment and reporting, there was a shared interest in widening the knowledge concerning the definition and implementation of National Quality Assurance Frameworks resulting from the commitment of many National Institutes to start systematic quality work in order to underpin National Statistical Systems.

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Training on Quality: a Mediterranean experience



The training course “Measurement of the quality of statistics” was designed and carried out with the special purpose of achieving an overall improvement in the field of Quality Systems for the enhancement, monitoring and documentation of outputs and statistical processes in the Mediterranean partner countries in the framework of the MedStat III program. Two editions of the course were held in order to allow both English and French-speaking countries to benefit from the training initiative: the first edition took place in Rome, from 3 to 5 October 2012, in English; the second one, in French, took place in Rabat from 27 to 29 November 2012.

The main objectives of the courses, quite ambitious given the amount of subjects to be treated and the available time, were:

- to teach the principles of questionnaire development, evaluation of instruments, and methods to describe and control the quality of survey data;
- to discuss problems in developing quality systems for both data and processes, at the various levels of management;
- to provide participants with an overview of quality policies in the European Union and in the Italian National Statistical Institute;
- to increase the awareness of the importance of developing systems for quality assurance and management;
- to discuss common problems and possible methodological and organizational solutions.

The contents and structure of the training courses were defined to effectively communicate the importance of proper strategies for controlling the measurement process to reduce measurements errors and increase process and data quality. Training methodology consisted of a combination of theoretical and practical modules. As for theoretical aspects, the most important issues in the area of quality measurement and quality assurance were covered: starting from a general overview of the different types of non-sampling errors and methodologies for their prevention, monitoring and measurement, the course focused on the Quality Assurance Frameworks and European Statistics Code of Practice. A session was devoted to sharing experiences and tools developed as part of the Italian Quality Policy. Detailed references were provided in order to facilitate documentation retrieval for further in-depth analysis.

Participants were asked to report their experience on the different topics, to discuss common problems and to consider how to proceed with the implementation of the discussed issues in their countries. “Group work” sessions were performed to allow for a better understanding of the most important concepts covered in the theoretical modules, as well as to stimulate further discussion.

It is worth mentioning that the French edition of the training course presented some new features in the area of cooperation initiatives on quality. Indeed, cooperation activities and training courses are usually held in English and most of the bibliography is available only in English. The French edition of the training was the opportunity to prepare documentation on quality in French consisting in teaching material and in reference documents translated from English to French. This can be considered as a by-product of Medstat III program of a certain importance for the Mediterranean countries where French is more widely used than English.

Both editions were well received by participants in terms of problem discussion and information exchange. Participants showed lively interest in the course topics by asking questions, by sharing experiences and know-how, as well as by actively participating in the working groups and practical trainings.

Participants also highlighted the need for stronger efforts (in terms of allocated resources and management of the organizational changes) in their National Institutes to proceed towards the definition and set up of a quality assurance system and the establishment of more standardized quality work, thus ensuring a more efficient and highly developed statistical systems.

As a result of the training courses, need for future actions also emerged. They concerned both the need for deepening and tailoring quality topics presented during the two course editions and the need for a greater coordination among Mediterranean Countries in developing a supranational quality assurance system. Indeed, most of Mediterranean Countries are facing similar problems and in their aim at enhancing sounder and more efficient statistical systems. In that, adopting a common assurance framework, likewise the adoption of the European Statistics Code of Practice in 2005, would help the comparability of the quality of statistical outputs and the implementation of similar quality policies. As mentioned, it was also considered important that participants have the possibility to follow up with further training activities: missions of experts in their Statistical Institutes, training-on-the-job, ad hoc study visits in other Mediterranean Countries and in other European National Statistical Institutes were among the initiatives proposed as possible follow-ups. Indeed, these actions would allow for deepening several quality aspects, in particular quality measurement and quality standards, and they would facilitate sharing solutions for common organizational, operational, technological and methodological problems. As a first step, methodological training courses on specific quality measurement subjects were proposed, to further develop specific topics covered by the course: this would provide specific support and guidance for implementation or development of methodologies and tools for quality management and improvement on specific issues.



Orietta Luzi

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Marina Signore

Director of Research Chief, Division "Meta-data, Quality and R&D Projects"





interview with Pieter Everaers Claudia Junker



Pieter Everaers, Director of Directorate A "Cooperation in the European Statistical System; International cooperation; resources", Eurostat

Claudia Junker, Head of Unit A6 "Statistical cooperation", Eurostat



The new challenges of the international development frameworks combined with the severe budget constrains most of the donors are facing are affecting the statistical environment as well. How is the Commission coping with this situation?

The EU budget for "Global Europe" will possibly increase slightly in the 2014-2020 budget period, compared to the 2007-2013 period. Support to statistics constitutes a very small proportion of this budget line, approximately 1 pro mille of a total of 58.7 billion Euro (European Council agreement of 8 Feb 2013). Exactly how the support to statistics will evolve depends on the detailed country and sector strategies which are currently being drafted. In the EU, statistics has gained in visibility and political importance during the last few years and this higher recognition of statistics could affect the support positively. However, it is too early to judge that yet. What is clear is that whatever the level of support to statistics, the monitoring of the impact of support for all kinds of sectors will be strengthened and there will be a need for indicators to measure the impact of future support, not only support to statistics but in general.

QUALITY IN OFFICIAL STATISTICS: EUROSTAT POINT OF VIEW

by
Salvatore Favazza

Attention to the quality dimension represents one of the main investments of the ESS and of international statistical community: building on the principles of the EU Code of Practice, quality affects national statistical institutes' activities, vision and missions. How is this priority introduced in the EC cooperation programmes, and in particular for the ENP countries?

Quality is at the heart of our cooperation work, particularly in the ENP countries. For the Mediterranean National Statistical Institutes the 2010 European Conference on Quality in Statistics (Q2010) in Helsinki was a Eureka moment: it brought to light the full scope of quality assurance, showed that it is not a Sisyphian task, but something that can be tackled systematically, with concrete measureable results. But one Eureka moment is not enough; enthusiasm has to be backed up with action. Many of the Institutes returned home to set up a first attempt at systematizing quality management, and some of them presented posters at the Q2012 in Athens. Within the new Euro-Med strategy for statistical cooperation, Eurostat is leading a Working Group on Quality to provide this back up, to promote the principles of the EU Code of Practice, to explore the possibility of developing a code of practice for the region, as, for example, has been done in the ASEAN (Association of South-East Asian Nations) region, and to develop a quality assurance framework, based on the ESS QAF – Quality Assurance Framework, and the relevant Code of Practice (regional or European



“ Quality is the heart of Eurostat cooperation work...quality management has become a priority in statistical cooperation activities in recent years...

Steps to follow include user orientation, metadata, assessment of statistical processes, staff satisfaction and documentation of processes ”

one). The new strategy for statistical cooperation with the ENP East countries currently being drawn up together with the Eastern ENP (European Neighborhood Partnership) NSIs (National Statistical Institutes) will do the same for quality in statistics in the ENP-East region and specifically includes one objective on the implementation of the Code of Practice encompassing all possible activities related to quality. This will build on the base provided by a series of Eurostat seminars on quality issues aimed at the top management of the Eastern ENP NSIs. Moreover, as a general principle, we strongly encourage the NSIs that apply for Twinning to include quality management as a component.

The ESS Quality Assurance Framework focuses on statistical processes, products and outputs, and involves all the dimensions of a national statistical system: production, management and leadership, users, institutional environment, with proper documentation and evaluation procedures: how to prioritise, and clearly identify concrete steps to introduce it into official system of beneficiary countries?

Quality management has become a priority in statistical cooperation activities in recent years and as it is a relatively new cooperation topic the focus is on the introduction of a quality management system based on a strategy or policy for quality management. This decision is based on the fact that some quality assurance activities have always taken place in all countries but a systematic approach was missing, hence the focus on developing the framework. Steps to follow include user orientation, metadata, assessment of statistical processes, staff satisfaction and documentation of processes.

The International community has started discussions for the post 2015 development objectives and indicators, highlighting the need to increase the availability and quality of data especially in developing countries. How is the European commission planning to support this process?

In February 2013, the European Commission launched a policy document called "A decent life for all by 2030- Ending poverty and giving the world a sustainable future" which sets out the EC's position on the post 2015 development agenda. It proposes to bring together the review of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which come to an end in 2015 with future actions that have arisen from the Rio+20 conference, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In parallel to the policy discussions, Eurostat is participating actively in the statistical debates on this topic in the international arena, for example at the recent United Nations Statistical Commission that took place in New York in February 2013. At the same time, Eurostat has an on-going programme of cooperation with statistical organisations in developing countries, particularly in Africa, to support capacity building efforts at regional level and to share European know-how and approaches.

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**Quality**



Albania
Support for the alignment
of Albanian Statistics
with EU standards

Implemented by: Istat (main contractor), Statistics Sweden, MIPA

Financed by: European Commission

Duration: March 2010 -
December 2013

The objective of the project is the reinforcement of INSTAT capacities in National Accounts, the implementation of the economic census of non-agricultural enterprises and the census of agricultural holdings. After the completion of activities for the economic census in January 2012, and for the National Accounts component in November 2012, the project activities are focused on the Census of Agricultural Holdings and the design of a strategy for agriculture statistics in the country. Provisional results of the Census of Agricultural Holdings were released by INSTAT on 21 March 2013.



Bosnia Herzegovina
EU Twinning: Support
to the State and Entity Statistical Institutions,
phase V

Implemented by: Statistics Denmark (main contractor), Destatis, Istat, Statistics Finland and Statistics Lithuania

Financed by: European Commission

Duration: September 2011 - September 2013

The project on business statistics, analysis of the Extended Household Budget Survey and institutional capacity building started its activities in September 2011. Istat recent activities within the Project are focused on building permits, in particular, the follow up of the pilot survey on building permits-statistics following the presentation of the results of the pilot survey carried out in BiH in September

2012, and the support for regular compilation of Index of Production in Construction. Other activities were dedicated on the support for regular compilation of Index of Production in Construction (IPC) and discussion on method for Construction Cost Index (CoCI).



Cape Verde
Project:
Assistance

au renforcement et modernisation
du système de statistiques agricoles
et préparation du recensement général
de l'agriculture

Istat continues to collaborate with FAO in a technical cooperation project for the reinforcement of the agricultural statistical system of Cape Verde and the preparation of next agricultural census.



Mediterranean
Statistical cooperation
in the Mediterranean Region (MedStat -
Phase III)

Implemented by: Adetef (main contractor), INSEE (France), ISTAT (Italy), ONS (UK), INE (Spain), INE (Portugal) KSH (Hungary), Statistics Lithuania, InWent (Germany), ICON-Institut (Germany), Sogeti (Luxembourg) DOS (Jordan), HCP-DS (Morocco)

Financed by: European Commission

Duration: April 2010 -
December 2013

The project builds its objectives on the achievements of the two previous phases of the Euro-Mediterranean statistical cooperation to further strengthen national statistical systems of beneficiary countries and to promote harmonisation with EU and international standards in the six thematic sectors: agriculture, energy, migration, social statistics, transport, trade and balance of payments, plus two horizontal sectors, training and dissemination. Istat is mainly active in the following components: agriculture, migration, quality and business statistics.



2 - 7 December: visit of a delegation from Kosovo Agency for Statistics (ASK) and Ministry of Trade and Industry of Kosovo on **“Trade statistics” in the framework of the “Technical Assistance to Further Development of Kosovo’s Trade Policy” (EU TRADE)**.

18 - 22 March: visit of a delegation from the National Bureau of Statistics of China on the functionalities of the **“Istat Data Warehouse, Data visualization and SDMX”** in the framework of the activities of the Memorandum of Understanding between Istat and NBS China. The visit has been co-organized with OECD.

2 - 5 April: visit of a delegation from the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia on **“Business tendency survey, the related methodology and the software used”**.

10 - 12 April: visit of a delegation from the Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat) on **“Conducting Frame and Agricultural Census in Turkey”**.



In partnership with...

China – National Bureau of Statistics

Duration: September 2012 – September 2015

A Memorandum of Understanding with NBS recognizing the importance and the need to strengthen the cooperation between international and national organizations to enhance the understanding and implementation of shared statistical methodologies and best practices was signed at the beginning of September 2012. The fields of mutual interest identified by the MoU are training, statistical methodologies, ICT and social and economic analysis, production of economic, social and environment statistics, use of administrative sources, institutional building, strengthening of the national statistical system with special focus on regional organisation.

BiH – Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Duration: July 2012 – July 2015

A Memorandum of Understanding with BHAS, recognizing the importance of the adoption of international standards, norms and classifications for the production and dissemination of high quality statistics, and the need to strengthen the cooperation between national organizations, was signed on July 2012. The mutual cooperation will be focused on the institutional building and on statistical methodologies.

Mexico - INEGI

Duration: June 2012 - June 2015

The Memorandum of Understanding signed with INEGI aims to the promotion of joint research in the field of business cycle analysis, considering in particular the related areas of statistical methods, survey design and sampling techniques.

Brasil - Fundacao Getulio Vargas (FGV)

Duration: October 2011 - October 2014

The Memorandum of Understanding signed with FGV aims to the promotion of joint research in the field of business cycle analysis, considering in particular the related areas of statistical methods, survey design and sampling techniques.

FAO - Statistics Division

Duration: October 2010 - October 2013

The Memorandum of Understanding with FAO recognizes the importance of the establishment of international standards, norms and classifications for the production and dissemination of high quality statistics, and the need to strengthen the cooperation between international and national organizations to enhance the understanding and implementation of statistical methodologies and best practices. The Memorandum promotes joint research on estimation methods, integrated survey frameworks, innovative ways for survey conduction and GPS techniques, focusing on agriculture statistics and rural development.





Activities

Cape Verde

Because of the well established relationships between INE and Istat, a renewed Memorandum of Understanding is going to be signed by the two institutions. The major fields of collaboration are: agriculture statistics, confidentiality, dissemination and data quality.

FAO – Project: Statistical training

Within the framework of the MoU, staff of FAO's Statistics Division will participate to in-house Istat training courses on record linkage, data gathering techniques and questionnaire design.

Mozambique

Both INE Mozambique and Istat have established within their organization a school for statisticians (ENE and SAES respectively). This common approach and the long tradition of cooperation between the two Institutes have conveyed towards the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding focusing on the twinning of the two schools for the capacity building of the statistical systems.

Tenders

ASEAN

EU Institutional Capacity Building Project for ASEAN Monitoring and Statistics

Fields of intervention: social statistics, economic statistics, methodology, IT

Istat plans to participate in the tender for the award of the above mentioned project funded by the European Union. The procurement notice has not yet been published.

Croatia

IPA - Technical assistance in development of business statistics and upgrading of data collection system

Fields of intervention: business statistics, methodology, surveys' techniques

Istat is participating in the tender in consortium with other European Institutions. The expression of interest was sent to the European Delegation in Zagreb. Our consortium has been short listed and the deadline for the submission of the technical and financial proposals is June 3rd, 2013.

IPA 2012

Multi-beneficiary statistical cooperation programme

Fields of intervention: social statistics, economic statistics, methodology, IT

Istat plans to participate in the tender for the award of the above mentioned project funded by the European Union.

Jordan

Twinning project "Strengthening the capabilities of the Department of Statistics in Jordan"

Fields of intervention: National accounts, sampling and survey techniques, data quality and documentation, data warehouses

Istat has joined the consortium set up and led by Statistics Denmark for the presentation of a proposal for the twinning project.

Serbia – Strengthening Serbian Statistical System by Upgrading Methodologies, Standards and appliance of the Good Practices

Fields of intervention: National accounts, ICT, SUT, methodology

Istat plans to participate in the tender for the award of the above mentioned project funded by the European Union. The procurement notice has not yet been published.

Study visits

July: visit of a delegation from the General Statistics Office Of Vietnam for the preparation of a Memorandum of Understanding to be signed by the two institutions.

Istat - Advanced school for statistics and socio-economic analyses Technical Cooperation Unit

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