

Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic

Improvement actions

Recommendation 1

The Law on State Statistics should use the term “official”, rather than “state”, statistics.

Recommendation 2

The scope of the Law on State Statistics (section 1) should be broadened from “the assessment of the socio-economic development [of the Republic and its parts]” to “to meet the needs of users in a democratic society”.

Recommendation 3

The Law on State Statistics should be amended to enhance the role, status and identity of the Statistics Council, broaden its membership, and appoint members for fixed terms.

Recommendation 20

The Law on State Statistics should stipulate that statistical information should be disseminated free-of-charge to all users.

Situation

The Act No. 540/2001 Coll. on State Statistics has been amended several times during the last years with the aim to solve first of all application problems of statistics in the Slovak Republic. Since the recommendations aim at ensuring a more modern legislation for statistics in the Slovak Republic, this can be realised by elaboration of a new act and not by another amendment of the current act.

Improvement action (for 1-3 and 20)

Elaborate a new act on statistics covering, among others, issues recommended by peer review and submit it to the legislative process.

T: 31.12.2017

Status and comments

As part of the project of the Reform of the collection and processing of statistical data in the public administration of the Slovak Republic, the first draft of the amendment to the Act on State Statistics was prepared based on expert discussions, which in addition to legislative recommendations resulting from the project takes also into account the recommendations of the second round of peer review. The final draft of the amendment to the Act approved internally will be submitted to preliminary comment procedure, to inter-departmental comment procedure and after its evaluation and incorporation of comments, the adjusted draft of the amendment will be submitted to negotiation in the Government and in its advisory bodies. The Government's draft amendment will be submitted to negotiation in the National Council of the Slovak Republic. The public and the business sector will also have the opportunity to participate in the drafting of the amendment.

Note: the original deadline for this improvement action was changed to 31.12.2020

Recommendation 4

The Law on State Statistics should be brought into line with latest European thinking about best practice in the appointment and dismissal procedures of the President

Situation

Process of dismissal and appointment of the President of the SOSR is based on the professional competence and independence. It is in line with broader legislative framework in force in the Slovak

Republic for organisation of activities of government and organisations of the central state administration (Act no. 575/2001 Coll.). The Act No. 540/2001 Coll. on State Statistics only specifies provisions of the Act 575/2001 Coll. It is expected that the problem will be clarified by the Regulation of the EP and of the Council amending Regulation (EC) No 223/2009 on European Statistics. After adoption of the Regulation the relevant provisions will be directly effective in the legal framework of the Slovak Republic.

Improvement action

Support adoption of Regulation of the EP and of the Council amending Regulation (EC) No 223/2009 on European Statistics by active participation in relevant CWPS ((EU Council Working Party Statistics) meetings.

T: according to timetable of relevant meetings of CWPS.

Status and comments

Completed. The SOSR actively participated in the CWPS meetings relating to amendment of Regulation 223/2009; the alignment of the Law on State Statistics will follow (together with the improvement action for recommendation 1-3, 20)

Recommendation 5

Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic's responsibility for coordinating other producers of official statistics – including in relation to methodology, standards and classifications – should be strengthened and made more explicit in the Law on State Statistics.

Situation

The SOSR implements the recommendation by latest amendment of the Act No. 540/2001 Coll. on State Statistics (provisions 5, 8, and 11). At present the amendment proposal was submitted to the National Council of the Slovak Republic; after adoption it should enter into force on 1.1.2015.

Improvement action

None; recommendation met as explained above.

Recommendation 6

Consideration should be given to funding a post in the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic to lead on coordination across the National Statistical System (NSS)

Situation

The recommendation was fulfilled by funding a post to lead on coordination across the NSS (in force as of 1.7.2014). The tasks are defined in the Organisational Order of the SOSR and are performed by the unit General Methodology and Registers. Note: later the post was transferred to SOSR's President Office.

Improvement action

None; recommendation met as explained above.

Recommendation 7

The Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic (SOSR) should enhance the system of permanent user groups and their remit to include: compiling information about the uses made of Slovakian

statistics; documenting and prioritising unmet user needs; providing formal advice on the State Statistical Survey Programme (SSSP); and providing a user perspective on quality.

Situation

Within the action programme focussing on learning about the needs and expectations of key customers and on supporting a better interpretation and better use of statistical products (one of action programmes of the SOSR Development Strategy) the SOSR communicates by suitable forms (working meetings, presentations, consultation) within permanent groups with key users from bank and financial sector, foreign trade a construction industry, as well as within ad-hoc groups with representatives from other areas. Evaluation of the activities is presented in a summary report discussed in the top management meeting and feasible and adopted requirements are reflected in statistical activities.

Improvement action

Based on the review of the structure of existing permanent user groups establish permanent user groups covering business sector and science, research, and universities. Focus remit of user groups on compiling information about the use of statistics in their environment, on documenting and prioritising unmet user needs, on formal advice on the SSSP and on providing a user perspective on quality of statistical products. Reflect this enlargement in the summary report of the action programme.

T: 31.12.2016

Status and comments

Completed. In 2015 another working group (in addition to existing ones) was established consisting of eight representatives of science, research, universities and business. During the new permanent user group meeting the direction, scope of work and mandate were approved. Then the group was also provided with information on the SOSR marketing activities, priorities of social, demography and business statistics. The SOSR database, as well as user's feedback, was also presented.

Recommendation 8

The Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic should strengthen the existing working level arrangements to enable data suppliers to engage more effectively with the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic.

Situation

Cooperation with business suppliers in order, among others, to eliminate possible problems in data collection is a regulated process (meetings with key data suppliers, specialised seminars, etc.) and is supported by the action programme "Activities focussing on learning about expectations of key data suppliers as well as on improvement of their readiness to provide data of required quality" (one of the action programmes of the SOSR Development Strategy).

Improvement action

In order to strengthen and improve the systematic and regular cooperation with business sector (in the role of data suppliers) extend the SOSR Statistical Council by including representatives of business to ensure broad contacts with businesses.

T: 31.12.2015

Status and comments

Completed: In 2017 the position, mandate and the composition of the Statistical Board changed which is reflected in the new Statute and the Rules of procedure of the Board (in force since

1.9.2017). The new Statute introduces a Permanent expert group of users and data providers which strengthens the representation of business sector.

Note: the original deadline for this improvement action was changed to 31.12.2017

Recommendation 9

The Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic should be given immediate access for statistical purposes to data held on the population register

Situation

Population register was used by the SOSR for population census 2011 – namely within preparation and imputation. At present the negotiations with the register owner are continuing with the aim to use the register regularly as administrative data source first of all for the needs of demographic statistics. The intention is reflected in the SOSR conception of administrative data sources adopted in June 2014 and supported by the latest amendment to the Act No. 540/2001 on State Statistics.

Improvement action

1. Within implementation of the adopted SOSR conception on administrative data sources ensure official access for statistical purposes to data held on the population register.

T: 31.12.2015

Status and comments

Completed. The task was completed by gaining access to the Register of Natural Persons (as reference register). The access is granted via agreement on the regular data provision signed between the SOSR and Ministry of Interior of the SR.

2. Within the working group on census create and introduce questionnaire in order to evaluate in regular intervals changes and status of the population register having in mind its potential use in population census 2021. Use the results to make decision on the way of conducting census in the Slovak Republic.

T: 31.12.2014 (questionnaire); **31.12.2017** (preliminary decision on the way of conducting census)

Status and comments

Completed: The working group on population census 2021 was established in 12/2014. The group elaborated and distributed the questionnaire on administrative data and evaluated responses. Based on the analysis of results the concept of the integrated population census was approved by the government by the adoption of the legislative intention concerning the census law in 12/2017. The integrated census will use data from the administrative data sources, registers and data from the field. Register of natural persons is one of the reference registers used in the e-collection of data from the population, as well as the direct source of data used in the census. The source was the subject of analysis. The systematic evaluation of the source is ensured, metadata are available and the communication with the registry administrator (Ministry of Interior) is registered.

Recommendation 10

The State Statistical Survey Programme should indicate clearly those surveys and administrative sources that are used for (i) European purposes, (ii) European and national purposes, and (iii) for national purposes only.

Situation

Within elaboration of the State Statistical Survey Programme the SOSR annually identifies emerging new user needs (taking into account limited resources for the production of statistics) and surveys that should be stopped (suspended), reduced or simplified.

The Programme for each survey describes, among others, purpose of the survey; how the survey results will be used and cites related legal acts. The information is used in negotiations on financial resources from the state budget as well as in reviewing user requirements for statistics.

Improvement action

In the draft decree on State Statistical Survey Programme for the years 2015-2017 revise the characteristics of surveys and of used administrative data sources by adding in each characteristic in Annex 1 of the Programme the text indicating whether the survey results are used:

- I. for national purposes
- II. for European purposes
- III. for both European and national purposes

T: 31. 10. 2014

Status and comments

Completed. In the decree "The Programme of State Statistical Surveys 2015 - 2017", [no 291/2014](#), within characteristics of each survey, the purpose and use is stated. If the survey is used for the European purposes, there is directly stated in the decree, that the survey is used for the ESS needs. There is also the reference to the European legal act or to other relevant document.

Recommendation 11

Consideration should be given to the transfer of responsibility (and associated resources) for the production of European statistics from small organisations to the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic

Situation

Within the ESO programme¹ in the Slovak Republic the SOSR initiated discussions about transfers of responsibility and resources for the production of European statistics from small organisations to the SOSR, but it has not yet received a response.

Improvement action

Based on feasibility analysis submit proposal to the government of the Slovak Republic that the SOSR will become the only producer of the European Statistics supported, however, by adequate financial and human resources.

T: 31.12.2015

Status and comments

Completed. Within the Operational Programme - Effective Public Administration (OP EPA) the SOSR submitted to the Ministry of Interior of the SR, unit of European Programmes, the project proposal "Reform of the statistical data collection and processing in the public administration" . After implementation of the comments the project proposal was submitted to the evaluation commission of the OP EPA.

Recommendation 12

¹ Efektívna, Spoľahlivá a Otvorená verejná správa (Effective, reliable and open public administration)

The possibility of further centralising the responsibilities of the Regional Offices should be explored.

Situation

Within optimisation of the division of labour between the SOSR Regional Offices and Headquarters many statistical activities have been centralised (statistical registers, field-work, dissemination). In the past (before the centralisation of statistical activities) majority of the supporting processes concerning managing human resources and economical activities in Regional Offices were centralised too.

Improvement action

Explore the possibility of further centralisation of responsibilities and of conduct of some processes allocated in the SOSR Regional Offices to Headquarters.

T: 31.12.2015 (exploration)

Status and comments

Completed. Regarding the possibility to further centralise the responsibilities of the Regional Offices, centralisation of HR management was conducted. The analysis conducted did not identify other activities which would benefit from centralisation in terms of their effectiveness

Recommendation 13

The Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic should review whether the work it commissions from the Institute for Informatics and Statistics (INFOSTAT) in support of the production of European statistics should be brought into the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic.

Situation

Within optimisation of the SOSR processes and after establishment of the new department of mathematical-statistical methods the transfer of tasks conducted by INFOSTAT to the SOSR has started. The transferred tasks prevailing concerned preparation of new statistical surveys, design or implementation of new methodological approaches in seasonal adjustment of time series, etc. The process continues systematically with the aim to transfer step-by-step tasks related to production of statistics to the SOSR.

Improvement action

Identify other parts of the remaining tasks performed by INFOSTAT that are directly related to statistical production and could be brought to the SOSR; after creating suitable conditions (resources) for their successful transfer ensure realisation of the transferred tasks by the SOSR.

T: annually by 31.12.2017 (within preparation of the contract with INFOSTAT)

Status and comments

Completed. Tasks of a production nature, if ensured by the necessary SOSR capacity, were transferred to the SOSR. Other tasks conducted by INFOSTAT are of scientific nature.

Recommendation 14

Work on the implementation of the Integrated Statistical Information System should continue.

Situation

In the time the recommendation was formulated the new Integrated Statistical Information System (ISIS) was developed and set up and step-by-step implementation for particular statistical domains

has started. The process continues at present together with step-by-step migration of historical data and integration with other information systems of public administration of the Slovak Republic (registers, administrative data sources). The process will continue in the future with parallel further development of the system to fulfil new needs.

Improvement actions

1. Bring all statistical surveys into ISIS environment

T: 31.12.2015

Status and comments

Completed. In 2014 and the year after, all planned statistical surveys were transferred into the new Integrated Statistical Information System (ISIS).

2. Ensure step-by-step integration of ISIS with relevant IS of administrative data sources owners.

T: 2014 and continuously further

Status and comments

Completed. The SOSR has continued the integration of administrative data sources into the Integrated Statistical Information System (ISIS). The integration has been incorporated into normal business practices. In 2016 the import of files from Financial Administration into ISIS was defined, tested and stored. Storing of administrative data from DataCentre and the State Treasury was prepared and tested. Selected data from Social Insurance Agency are continuously stored in the System.

Recommendation 15

Work on the implementation of Quality Management System should continue, and Quality Reports should be produced for all statistical domains.

Recommendation 17

The Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic should prioritise the production of user-oriented Quality Reports.

Situation

The SOSR elaborates producer oriented quality reports for statistical domains on the basis of sectoral EU legislation or requirements of Eurostat. At present the quality reports structure is not harmonised among statistical domains (by Eurostat), the structure of each quality report is identical with the structure required by Eurostat for particular domain.

Improvement actions (for recommendation 15 and 17)

1. Map coverage of statistical domains by quality reports.

T: 31.12.2014

Status and comments

Completed. Existing quality reports were mapped. The map creates the basis for elaborating ESMS reports in domains not yet covered by a quality report.

2. Ensure elaboration of user oriented quality reports for all domains in line with ESMS (Euro SDMX Metadata Structure) and in relevant cases (required by Eurostat) elaboration of producer oriented quality reports in line with ESQRS (The ESS Standard Quality Report Structure) by incorporating the elaboration of reports into annual plans of statistical activities; publish the user oriented reports on the SOSR internet site.

T: 31.12.2017

Status and comments

Completed. The SOSR's methodology directorate elaborated the structure for user oriented quality reports based on the recommended ESMS form and prepared a detailed explanatory description concerning content of the report. Subsequently all IT tools and forms in ESMS structure as well as the space on internet site were prepared for the publication of the user oriented quality reports. First quality reports were published in 2018. The work was incorporated into business practice. Elaboration of both the producer and user oriented reports was included in annual plans for statistical activities of the SOSR.

Note: the original deadline for this improvement action was changed to 31.12.2018

Recommendation 16

Consideration should be given to enhancing the Quality Management System to enable more transparency about trade-offs between different dimensions of quality.

Situation

The SOSR is a customer oriented institution. In line with its QMS documentation within the first phase of the statistical process, it identifies in communication with users the purpose and intended use of the required statistics. At present the communication implicitly covers issues regarding quality dimensions preferences, however it is not explicitly stated in the documentation regarding production and related monitoring and analysis (process, product, internal audits) incl. impact on other (not preferred) quality dimensions.

Improvement action

Modify the QMS documentation by adding explicitly the obligation to identify preferences regarding quality dimensions related to intended use of statistics within the first phase of the statistical process (GSBPM, specification of user needs) in detailed communication with users (user groups). Take into account the resulting trade-offs between different dimensions of quality as well as priorities resulting from importance of the intended use of statistics in subsequent phases of the process. Adapt the system for monitoring and analysis accordingly; reflect it in the QMS documentation.

T: 30.9.2016

Status and comments

Completed. The requirements of the task were integrated into the SOSR internal directive "The value added process of the production of statistical outputs" in force from 15.9.2015. The directive is based on the GSBPM model.

Recommendation 17

Please see above.

Recommendation 18

Systematic input from external experts in quality and methodology should be sought.

Situation

The SOSR integrated into its existing quality management system selfassessments of statistical surveys and methodological audits. In contrary to already conducted system audits the methodological audits are performed by internal auditors only.

Improvement actions

Involve external experts preferably from academic field into conduction of methodological audits.

T: 31.7.2015

Status and comments

Completed. An external expert from academia was involved in SORS internal methodological audits. The participation is approved within the Annual Programme of the SOSR QMS internal audits (system and methodological).

Recommendation 19

Response burdens (on data suppliers) should be reported upon in terms of the time taken to provide statistical data.

Situation

The SOSR has been measuring and evaluating respondent time burden since 2008. In surveys in enterprises „the time needed for filling out statistical form based on accounting or on keeping on statistical files“ has to be recorded by respondent. In case of household surveys, the time of interviewing is recorded. In contrary to household surveys, considerable differences are found out in particular reporting units in enterprise surveys. Modification of the question should help achieve more reliable results.

Improvement action

Modify the question regarding time needed to fill in statistical form so that it is in line with the Quality Assurance Framework (indicator 9.2, method 6). In statistical surveys stated in the State Statistical Survey Programme for 2015 modify the question in the following way: “time needed for keeping files of statistical data in addition to accounting system, for retrieving the required information, for consultations with internal or external experts when filling in the form”.

T: 31.12.2014

Status and comments

Completed. The new wording of the module 2 (the question concerning the time spent) of the survey forms was modified as follows:

“Time needed for keeping files concerning statistical records, for retrieving the required information from accounting or statistical records, for consultations with internal or external experts when filling in the form and for filling in the statistical form itself”.

Recommendation 21

The results of custom-designed (bespoke) analyses (or a list of such analyses to help others to access the analyses) should be published on the website.

Situation

The SOSR elaborates non-standard (custom-designed, bespoke) statistical outputs; they are recorded centrally in the SOSR. In line with the Principles for publishing and providing statistical data of the SOSR, the outputs are charged according to a pricelist. Neither the non-standard outputs nor the list of them are made public.

Improvement action

Publish and up-date quarterly the list of non-standard (custom-designed, bespoke) outputs on the SOSR internet site.

T: from 2015, quarterly

Status and comments

Completed. The [list of the non-standard outputs](#) was published on the SOSR Portal - first time in April 20, 2014, since then quarterly.

Recommendation 22

The explanation of statistical messages, in bulletins and reports, should be improved.

Situation

Within the action programme "Submission of suggestions for elaboration of value added products and their realisation", the SOSR creates products including knowledge interpretation and visualisation of data for some selected areas. Evaluation of the programme is presented in a summary report discussed in the top management meeting.

Improvement action

Broaden creation of the value added products to other areas; improve information value by improving (deepening) knowledge interpretation.

T: 2015 – 31.12.2017

Status and comments

Completed. The elaboration of statistical products with added value (more analytical and explanatory text, visualization) is being conducted according to the annual plan of the elaboration of value added products as well as to the SOSR annual catalogue of publications. The plan is elaborated every year. Note: in 2016 - 14 such products will be published (with e.g. housing construction as the new area).

Recommendation 23

The results of User Satisfaction Surveys should be published alongside SOSR's plans to address the issues raised.

Situation

In line with its strategic goals the SOSR conducts biannually „Survey on the customer satisfaction with the SOSR statistical products and services“. The survey results are published on the SOSR internet site. Detailed evaluation is discussed in the top management meeting and the realisation of feasible and adopted recommendations resulting from the survey is integrated into the SOSR plans of statistical activities.

Improvement action

Publish detailed evaluation of the user satisfaction survey (by question) on the SOSR internet site; use references to link feasible and adopted recommendations of users with plans of statistical activities published on the SOSR internet.

T: 31.12.2015 (then biennially)

Status and comments

Completed. The detailed evaluation of the latest survey on customer satisfaction with statistical products and services of the SOSR was submitted to the management board meeting in September

2015 and subsequently published on the SOSR Portal (About us – Marketing activities – in Slovak). The relevant and feasible suggestions / requirements were linked to the annual plans of statistical activities 2016. The approach will be repeated in all the following user satisfaction surveys.

Recommendation 24

The ways in which confidentiality protection is assured in relation to microdata analysed both in the Safe Centre and in off-site facilities should be documented on the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic's website.

Situation

Based on agreement, the SOSR provides universities and scientific research institutions with confidential microdata by sending protected file or by allowing access to data via the SOSR safe centre. In the first case in the file provided the methods of protection of confidential statistical data are applied so that the risk of indirect identification is minimised. In the second case only the risk of direct identification is eliminated since the confidential data do not leave the SOSR area. A brief description of the protection methods of confidential data is published on the SOSR internet site, however not in the part where researchers apply for microdata.

Improvement action

Document the statistical disclosure control methods applied in both on-site and off-site access including the impact on information value of data; publish the methods on the SOSR internet site in the part where researchers apply for microdata.

T: 31.12.2014

Status and comments

Completed. The most frequently used methods in on-site and off-site approaches, incl. impact on the information loss, were published in the way understandable for users on the SOSR Portal (part: Information service - Conditions for granting access to confidential statistical data for scientific purposes)
