

# **PEER REVIEW REPORT**

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

## **REPUBLIC OF SERBIA**

**RIMA GERDZIUNAITE  
PETER HACKL (CHAIR)  
ADRIAN REDMOND**

**DECEMBER 2017**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
2. INTRODUCTION	9
3. BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE NATIONAL STATISTICAL SYSTEM	11
4. COMPLIANCE WITH THE CODE OF PRACTICE AND THE COORDINATION ROLE WITHIN THE NATIONAL STATISTICAL SYSTEM	14
4.1 Strengths of the National Statistical Institute in relation to its compliance with the Code of Practice and to its coordination role	14
4.2 Issues and recommendations	15
4.2.1 Consolidate the institutional and legal framework	15
4.2.2 Increase resources and improve cost-effectiveness	20
4.2.3 Develop quality management further	23
4.2.4 Improve accessibility	26
4.2.5 Define the National Statistical System and strengthen coordination	28
4.3 National Statistical Institute views where they diverge from peer reviewers' assessment	32
ANNEX A: PROGRAMME OF THE VISIT	33
ANNEX B: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS	36

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CAPI	Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing
CATI	Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing
CoP	European Statistics Code of Practice
ESS	European Statistical System
FTE	Full-Time Equivalent
GSBPM	Generic Statistical Business Process Model
IPA	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance
NSI	National Statistical Institute
NSS	National Statistical System
ONAs	Other National Authorities
SORS	Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia

## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The National Statistical System (NSS) of the Republic of Serbia consists of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORS), the National Bank of Serbia, the City administration of Belgrade, as well as other authorised producers of official statistics listed in the five-year statistical programme such as the Ministry of Finance. The NSS operates on the basis of the Official Statistics Law, according to which the Office is the main producer and disseminator of official statistics, as well as being the coordinator of the NSS. The Law also established the Statistical Council of the Republic of Serbia as an integral part of the system of official statistics. Apart from its headquarters in Belgrade, SORS has 15 regional offices.

It was clear to the Peer Review team that SORS enjoys a high level of trust and respect, and its independence is widely accepted. The staff met by the Peer Review team showed high involvement and dedication. Junior staff, many of whom have been employed on a succession of temporary contracts, showed motivation and enthusiasm. SORS has been successfully using modern technologies to develop systems for collecting, processing and disseminating information. This includes, most notably, the development of the Integrated Survey Tool for data entry and processing, which the Peer Review team has identified as an innovative practice.

Statistical production in SORS is still based to a large extent on surveys. Business surveys are mandatory and household surveys are voluntary, and high response rates are achieved in both. The Official Statistics Law provides SORS with good access to administrative data and, as more and more administrative sources are used, the cost-effectiveness of statistical data production is increasing.

The Peer Review team identified five broad areas in which compliance with the European statistics Code of Practice (CoP) could be enhanced. These issues are related to consolidating the institutional and legal framework, increasing resources and improving cost-effectiveness, developing quality management further, improving accessibility, and strengthening coordination.

The legal framework of the NSS presents some weaknesses, and a revision of the Official Statistics Law is planned. The opportunity should be taken to strengthen statistical independence, improve the role of the Statistical Council, and clarify the legal basis for statistical confidentiality.

Budgetary cutbacks in Serbia have had consequences for SORS's financial and human resources. SORS was able to absorb some of these reductions by rationalising its data collection tools and developing greater use of administrative sources. However, the EU accession process requires SORS to fulfil new statistical obligations to comply with the statistical acquis. Accordingly, recommendations are made in relation to sustainable resources and cost-effectiveness in order for SORS to fulfil its current and future statistical obligations. More efficiency could be gained by easing current restrictions on the use of resources available to SORS and the ability of the Office to have greater autonomy concerning their own internal organisation. Related measures include the transfer of posts from the regional offices to the headquarters in Belgrade and the introduction of a staff mobility policy. In this context, a suitable system to enable the estimation of the costs of statistical products and processes should be established, which would allow assessing progress in cost-efficiency.

SORS should further develop its quality management framework by working more systematically on the improvement of process and product quality and by enhancing cost-

effectiveness. To that purpose, they should introduce plans for self-assessment and auditing of statistical processes and products. In this connection, and in order to assess the relevance and accessibility of its products, SORS should intensify communication with users and other stakeholders.

Dissemination is an area to which SORS should devote more effort, and three improvements are proposed here: SORS should enhance the accessibility of its statistical releases by providing more useful commentary; it should publish standard methodology and quality reports; and it should publish a revision calendar in order to notify users of planned significant revisions to its statistical results.

In Serbia, it is not quite clear who are the producers of official statistics, and it is not quite clear what statistics should be regarded as official. These matters should be clarified. And the cohesion of official statistics should be reinforced by providing a portal to official statistics, along with a common release calendar. Coordination of the NSS should also be addressed, and the Peer Reviewers provide some recommendations on how this might be improved.

Generally, the Peer Review team considers that the NSS of Serbia is largely compliant with the CoP. The recommendations in this report are intended to further enhance compliance.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### **Consolidate the institutional and legal framework**

1. The relevant Serbian authorities should arrange that the process governing the recruitment of the Director of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia is more transparent, and that the reasons for which the incumbency of the Director can be terminated are clearly specified in law and can never compromise professional independence. (European statistics Code of Practice, Indicator 1.8)
2. The relevant Serbian authorities should arrange that the Director of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia and, where appropriate, the heads of the statistical departments of other producers of official statistics, should be clearly assigned in law the sole responsibility for deciding on statistical methods, standards and procedures, and on the timing and content of statistical releases. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 1.4)
3. The relevant Serbian authorities should amend the provisions in the Official Statistics Law relating to the Statistical Council. The Council should be a relatively small advisory group operating at a strategic level with members representing the users, providers and producers of official statistics; members should be appointed for fixed terms; the Director of SORS should be an ex officio member; and the Council sessions should be chaired by an external member. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 11)
4. The relevant Serbian authorities should amend the provisions in the Official Statistics Law relating to statistical confidentiality: penalties should be prescribed for breaching confidentiality; and the provisions stating that enterprise employment, production, etc are not confidential should be removed. (European statistics Code of Practice, Indicators 5.1 and 5.3)
5. The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia should concentrate methodological services and consultation in one methodological unit; this unit should provide services at all stages of the statistical production process and should play a central role in the development of statistical methods and competencies. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 7)

### **Increase resources and improve cost-effectiveness**

6. The relevant national authorities should ensure that the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia is provided with the necessary human and financial resources to ensure that they can meet all priority national and international statistical needs, particularly those required to comply with the EU statistical acquis. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 3)
7. The relevant national authorities should consider the easing of current restrictions on the ability of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (a) to apportion its budget and (b) to make decisions concerning its own internal organisation. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 3)
8. The relevant national authorities should ensure that the proportion of the staff of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia that are permanent, as opposed to temporary, is increased in order to ensure business continuity. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 3)

9. The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia should introduce a staff mobility policy. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 10)
10. The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia should continue transferring posts from its regional offices to its head office. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 10)
11. The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia should strongly encourage all enterprises to use web-based methods of data provision. Further, the Office should provide, as far as practicable, user-friendly web-based methods of data collection for social surveys. (European statistics Code of Practice, Indicator 10.2)
12. The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia should use a suitable system to enable the estimation of the costs of statistical processes and products, and should use the resulting information for management purposes. (European statistics Code of Practice, Indicator 10.1)

#### **Develop quality management further**

13. Quality management in the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia should comprehensively cover all relevant issues; the planned activities and projects should be publicised by covering them in more detail in the annual programmes, and progress should be covered in the corresponding annual reports. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 4)
14. The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia should produce and publish reports on the five-year programmes and on the annual plans. (European statistics Code of Practice, Indicator 1.5)
15. The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia should establish user advisory groups for key statistical areas. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 11.1)
16. The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia should introduce plans for self-assessment and auditing of statistical processes and products. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 4.)
17. The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia should implement its plan for ensuring a non-excessive burden on respondents. Reduction targets should be set, performance indicators should be analysed by senior management, and progress reports should be published. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 9)

#### **Improve accessibility**

18. The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia should enhance the accessibility of its statistical releases by providing appropriate headlines and improved commentary on the information contained in the figures, reinforced with appropriate graphics. To achieve this, the Office should provide further appropriate training to staff who write releases. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 15)
19. The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, and, where relevant, other producers of official statistics, should publish standard user-oriented methodology and quality reports for all European statistics. (European statistics Code of Practice, Indicators 15.6 and 15.7)
20. The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia should publish a revision calendar in order to notify users of planned significant revisions to its statistical results. (European statistics Code of Practice, Indicators 6.6 and 8.6)

## **Define the NSS and strengthen coordination**

21. The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia should define the precise list of producers of official statistics and should decide on what statistics should be designated as official statistics. (Coordination)
22. The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia should develop a portal to official statistics by having links to the statistics of other producers, and the release calendar should be extended to cover all of Serbia's official statistics. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 6 and 15, Coordination)
23. The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia should establish a small organisational unit dedicated to supporting and promoting statistical coordination among all producers of official statistics. This unit should also focus on issues relating to quality and compliance with the European statistics Code of Practice. (Coordination)
24. The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia should develop guidelines for all producers of official statistics. These guidelines, covering development, production and dissemination, should be in line with the European statistics Code of Practice, and should be communicated effectively with other producers. The compliance with these guidelines should be monitored by the Statistical Office. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 7, Coordination)
25. The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia should ensure that any memorandums of understanding developed with other producers of official statistics should cover, inter alia, the coordination role of the Office. (Coordination)
26. The relevant Serbian authorities should amend the provisions in the Official Statistics Law to require the holders and planned holders of administrative data sources to consult with the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia before creating new sources or modifying existing sources. Data holders should be required to take account as far as reasonably practicable of the views of the Office before decisions are finalised. The Statistical Office should be required to maintain close contacts with the holders of administrative data in order to be aware of the possible creation of new sources or the modification of existing sources. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 8)



## 2. INTRODUCTION

This peer review of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORS) was undertaken in the framework of the Eurostat-funded project “IPA 2015 Multi-beneficiary statistical cooperation programme”. The GOPA-led consortium, under contract with Eurostat, was responsible for organising all activities and tasks related to the peer review.

The objective of peer reviews is to evaluate the extent to which National Statistical Institutes (NSIs) and the European Statistical System (ESS)<sup>1</sup> comply with the European statistics Code of Practice (CoP). The current series of assessments for enlargement countries is based on a similar round of peer reviews carried out in EU Member States, and follows, as much as possible, the same methodology, slightly adapted to the context of the enlargement countries.

The CoP, which sets out a common quality framework for the ESS, was first adopted in 2005 by the Statistical Programme Committee and updated in 2011 by its successor, the European Statistical System Committee. The CoP – 15 principles and related indicators of good practice – covers the institutional environment, the statistical production process and the output of European statistics. The ESS is committed to fully complying with the CoP and is working towards its full implementation. Periodic assessments review progress towards reaching this goal.

The first round of peer reviews in the EU Member States in 2006-2008 was followed by a round of ‘light’ peer reviews and adapted global assessments in the enlargement countries in 2010-2013. The light peer reviews explored how the NSIs and Eurostat were progressing in implementing the parts of the CoP relating to the institutional environment and dissemination of statistics (principles 1–6 and 15). This resulted in reports for each NSI and Eurostat, available on the Eurostat website<sup>2</sup>. These reports also include a set of improvement actions covering all the principles of the CoP; these formed the basis of the annual monitoring of the implementation of the CoP in the enlargement countries in the period 2011-2017.

In line with the second round of reviews carried out in EU Member States in 2014-2015, the scope of the current round of peer reviews in the enlargement countries is broader: the assessment of CoP compliance covers all principles; the CoP compliance of selected other national producers of official statistics (as well as the NSI) in each country is assessed; and the way in which statistical authorities coordinate the production and dissemination of official statistics within their statistical systems is explored.

In order to gain an independent view, the peer review exercise has been externalised and an audit-like approach, where all the answers to the self-assessment questionnaires have to be supported by evidence, has been applied. Each peer review in the enlargement countries is conducted by three reviewers and has four phases: completion of self-assessment questionnaires by a country; their assessment by peer reviewers; a peer review visit; and the preparation of reports on the outcomes.

The peer review of Serbia was conducted by Ms Rima Gerdziunaite, Mr Peter Hackl (chair), and Mr Adrian Redmond, who conducted a peer review visit to Belgrade on 27 November to 1

---

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

<sup>2</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/enlargement-countries/publications/reports>

December 2017. The programme of the visit is in Annex A and the list of participants in Annex B.

This report focuses on compliance with the CoP and the coordination of official statistics within the Serbian statistical system. The report highlights some of the current strengths of the statistical system and contains recommendations for improvement. Improvement actions developed by SORS on the basis of this report will be published within the four-week period starting when the final report is sent to the NSI.

### 3. BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE NATIONAL STATISTICAL SYSTEM

#### Legislation

The Official Statistics Law regulates official statistics in Serbia and the role of SORS. The current version of the Official Statistics Law, adopted in 2009, describes SORS as the main producer and disseminator of official statistics, as well as the organiser and coordinator of the system of official statistics of the Republic of Serbia.

The Law on Ministries defines the role of SORS, which relate to, among other things, the adoption of programmes, the development of methodology, statistical processing and analysis, the preparation and adoption of statistical standards, coordination with other statistical authorities, and cooperation with international organisations. Article 8 of the Official Statistics Law details the operations and activities of SORS.

The Director of SORS is appointed according to the legislation in force for filling vacant civil servant appointed positions (the Civil Servants Law of the Republic of Serbia). According to the Law on State Administration, the Director is accountable for his/her work to the Government.

#### Mission

In the Strategy of Official Statistics 2016-2020, prepared by SORS jointly with other producers of official statistics and adopted by the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia, it is stated that the main mission of official statistics is to provide relevant, impartial, reliable, timely and internationally comparable statistical indicators.

Further strategic directions are set out in the document "Official statistics development strategy and modernisation of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia".

#### Structure of SORS and the National Statistical System

The system of official statistics of the Republic of Serbia includes SORS, the National Bank of Serbia, and the City administration of Belgrade. There are also several other authorised producers of official statistics, some of which are Other National Authority (ONAs) producing European statistics.

SORS is organised into eight departments; three of these are statistical production departments and five are horizontal departments (two of which also coordinate regional offices). Each department consists of 2 to 13 divisions. Departments are managed by Assistant Directors who are accountable for their work to the Director. There are two smaller internal units linked to the Director.

There are 15 regional offices, who work mainly on data collection, data entry and some data editing.

There is an approved maximum of 455 permanent positions in SORS, though, owing to employment restrictions, the number employed at the time of the Peer Review visit was 422, of which 269 were employed in the central office and 153 in the regional offices. In addition, due to restrictions on the employment of new permanent staff, 114 persons in SORS are employed on temporary short-term contracts. SORS also employs an average of 134 temporary field interviewers. SORS considers that its staff levels are too low.

The Statistical Council consists of 17 members including the Director of SORS, representatives from various government ministries, the National Bank of Serbia, scientific and educational institutions, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Statistical Society of Serbia. The Director of

SORS acts as the chair of the Council. The composition, functions and organisation of the Council are described in the Official Statistics Law, according to which the main responsibility is to advise and monitor the implementation of proposals related to the strategy for the development of official statistics, statistical work programmes, draft laws and other legal acts concerning official statistics, standards and guidelines for the implementation of the basic principles of official statistics, development and promotion of the official statistics system, and other issues of importance for the functioning of official statistics.

The Official Statistics Law lists the main tasks of SORS within the system of official statistics: to prepare the statistical work programmes and annual implementation plans, to coordinate activities within the statistical system, to create methodologies for surveys, to set standards for producers of official statistics, to cooperate with other authorised producers of statistics regarding surveys they conduct and to approve sampling methodologies, to collect, process and analyse statistical data, to develop and maintain statistical registers and databases, to provide consulting and guidelines to users on the availability of the results within the whole statistical system and to disseminate official statistical data of the Republic of Serbia, as well as transmit it to international organisations. In addition, the Official Statistics Law gives SORS the right of access to administrative data, and states that SORS should participate in all activities related to the establishment of new or to the modification of existing administrative data sources, or in the activities related to sources based on constant monitoring and observation that are also relevant for official statistics. The Director of SORS is responsible for the protection of the professional credibility of official statistics from all kinds of unprofessional influence.

#### Statistical Programme

According to the Official Statistics Law, the activities of official statistics are based on five-year programmes, which are passed by the Parliament, and on annual implementation plans, which are passed by the Government. The five-year programme and annual plans cover the authorised producers of official statistics in the Republic of Serbia. SORS is responsible for preparing the programmes and plans.

The five-year programme, which includes the development strategy for official statistics, provides a detailed list of the expected results of official statistics. The current programme covers the period 2016-2020.

Based on the five-year programme, SORS prepares annual plans. The plan contains detailed elaboration of the programme, and lists the statistical surveys to be conducted, the administrative sources to be used, and development activities.

#### Statistical products

The statistical products of SORS cover a wide range of topics from areas such as macroeconomics, business statistics, demographic and social statistics, statistics of agriculture and environment, and regional statistics. The SORS website is the main channel for dissemination, where users can find information in Serbian (both Latin and Cyrillic) as well as in English. The SORS dissemination database allows users to generate tables interactively and to download the results in pdf, excel or xml format. The results of statistical surveys are presented via press and statistical releases. SORS also prepares multi-domain publications such as the Statistical Yearbook, the Monthly Statistical Bulletin, and Trends, a quarterly publication which presents and analyses time series. Some of the publications are prepared jointly with other organisations.

Dissemination is announced in advance through the press and publication calendars. Any modifications in these release calendars are published and explained. All users have equal access to statistical data, and there is no privileged access before the release time.

The SORS website contains additional services such as RSS, the ability to join a mailing list to receive releases by email, and the “Ask us” service for submitting user requests and questions. Apart from the data released on the SORS website, SORS also provides custom-designed analyses on request. In addition, researchers can apply for access to microdata using a standard written procedure.

SORS also uses Twitter and YouTube.

User satisfaction surveys are conducted every two years.

The statistical products of other producers are included in the five-year programmes and annual plans (which are prepared by SORS in consultation with the other producers). For example, the National Bank of Serbia publishes balance of payments statistics, the Ministry of Finance publishes statistics of government finances, and the Institute of Public Health of Serbia publishes health statistics.

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

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

The staff met by the Peer Review team showed high involvement and dedication. Junior staff, many of whom have been employed on a succession of temporary three- or six-month contracts for a few years, showed motivation and enthusiasm.

Despite a trend of reducing resources, and a near-complete ban on recruiting permanent employees, SORS has coped well. Part of the credit for this must go to the generous funding provided under IPA (Instrument for the Pre-Accession Assistance), but it is clear that SORS has made good use of this funding. It has continually expanded the range of statistics available and improved the service it provides (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 15). Discussions with ministries, researchers, the media, data providers and international organisations showed that SORS enjoys a high level of trust. Its independence and impartiality are not questioned (European statistics Code of Practice, Principles 1 and 6). The results of the most recent user satisfaction survey were generally very positive.

New administrative registers are being established in Serbia, and SORS has been building up good relationships, based on regular contacts and memorandums of understanding, with the authorities in charge of such registers. These authorities have shown a degree of willingness to modify the registers to accommodate statistical needs. There has been a significant increase in the use of such data for the production of statistics by SORS over the past two years, and SORS is about to discontinue the expensive monthly survey of salaries and wages because they will be able to get the data they need from administrative sources. Given the Government's recognition of the need for good registers in various fields in the context of eGovernment, this is an opportunity that SORS, with its strengths, should be able to capitalise on. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 8.)

SORS also has good relationships with respondents, and manages to achieve quite high response rates in both business and household surveys. For example, the response rate is 85-90% in the Short-term Business Statistics survey, 85% in Structural Business Statistics, 80% in the Labour Force Survey, and 85% in the Survey of Income and Living Conditions. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principles 4, 8 and 12.)

SORS has been successfully using modern technologies to develop systems for collecting, processing and disseminating information. This includes, most notably, the development of the Integrated Survey Tool (IST) for data entry and data processing, which the Peer Review team has identified as an innovative practice. IST is a metadata-driven codeless development environment, fully designed and developed by SORS. Conceptually, the system is compliant with the Generic Statistical Business Process Model (GSBPM), with IST modules corresponding to phases of the statistical information cycle such as data entry, checking, editing and report generation. Modules have been developed for CAPI (Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing) and CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing), and for generating web-based questionnaires. Currently, 90% of SORS surveys have been developed using IST. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principles 7 and 10.)

The innovative concept in IST is to store not just the data in databases, but the applications themselves as well. The metadata database, which contains the detail and logic of the application, is interpreted in real time to run data entry and data processing.

This unified approach to surveys, and unified technology for statistical production, allows IST to deliver many benefits:

- It reduces costs and increases efficiency.
- It reduces the complexity of statistical production. Instead of a tailor-made “stovepipe” approach with different platforms and software tools, there is instead just one platform, one program, and one metadata database.
- It dramatically decreases the time needed for fully developing an IT system for a statistical survey, because a system can be developed quickly within the IST codeless development environment.
- It simplifies the work for IT staff, statisticians and end-users.
- It provides a sustainable environment not dependent on constant technological change.

SORS offers IST free of charge to other statistical authorities, nationally and internationally. An incidental advantage of this is that it allows surveys, and their associated processing system, to be exchanged. Some other national statistical institutes in the region are now using IST, and the vision of SORS is to have joint further development of IST at international level.

Another IT system worth mentioning is the reference metadata system developed by SORS. This system, called RZSMETA, complies with Eurostat’s Single Integrated Metadata Structure (SIMS) standard, and is designed to produce standardised metadata and quality reports, both user-oriented quality reports and detailed producer-oriented reports. RZSMETA development was completed in 2016 and it is now being deployed. Like IST, it is a tool that can be used by others. It is planned that some other producers of official statistics in Serbia would use the product, and representatives of these producers are being provided training by SORS in its use. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principles 10 and 15.)

## 4.2 ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section presents the issues where the Peer Review team considers that the overall level of compliance with the CoP throughout the National Statistical System (NSS) could be enhanced:

- Consolidate the institutional and legal framework;
- Increase resources and improve cost-effectiveness;
- Develop quality management further;
- Improve accessibility;
- Define the National Statistical System and strengthen coordination.

These issues are discussed with specific recommendations in the following sections of the report.

### 4.2.1 CONSOLIDATE THE INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The Peer Review team identified four areas where SORS could further improve its institutional and legal framework:

- Strengthen statistical independence;
- Improve the role of the Statistical Council;
- Clarify the legal basis for statistical confidentiality;
- Improve methodological services.

#### 4.2.1.1 STRENGTHEN STATISTICAL INDEPENDENCE

The State Administration in Serbia consists of integrated authorities (ministries, and administrative authorities within ministries) and special organisations. According to the State Administration Law (Article 33), “Special organisations shall be established to carry out expert and related executive tasks whose nature requires a greater level of autonomy than the one enjoyed by an integrated authority”. The Law on Ministries defines ten special organisations, one of which is SORS. The management of SORS informed the Peer Review team that the hierarchical level of the Director of SORS is comparable to that of the highest ranking public servant.

Civil servant posts in Serbia are designated as either appointed positions (because the Government makes appointments to these positions) or executive positions. Within SORS, the Director and Assistant Directors are appointed positions. When a vacancy arises in an appointed position, an internal competition is held (internal to the civil service); if that fails, an open competition is held. The selection procedure is implemented by a Commission in charge of the appointment. The Commission members are appointed by the High Civil Service Council to include experts in relevant domains. When the selection procedure is completed, the Commission creates a shortlist of up to three candidates. This shortlist is passed to Government, who then makes the final selection. The head of a special organisation, such as the Director of SORS, is appointed for a five-year term, which is renewable. The Peer Review team feels that, while the recruitment and appointment process is reasonably clear, it should be more transparent.

According to Regulation (EC) No 223/2009, “The reasons for dismissal of heads of NSIs or their transfer to another position shall not compromise professional independence.” And CoP Indicator 1.8 states that “The reasons on the basis of which the incumbency can be terminated are specified in the legal framework. These cannot include reasons compromising professional or scientific independence.” In Serbia, the reasons for dismissal of a civil servant in an appointed position are set out in Article 78 of the Civil Servants Law. These provisions apply to all civil servants at this level, and they make no reference to professional independence. Nor is there any reference in the Official Statistics Law to the protection of the Director of SORS from dismissal in the context of professional independence. The Peer Review team considers that this legal provision should be included in Serbian law.

To achieve full compliance with the CoP, **the Peer Review team recommends that:**

- 1. The relevant Serbian authorities should arrange that the process governing the recruitment of the Director of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia is more transparent, and that the reasons for which the incumbency of the Director can be terminated are clearly specified in law and can never compromise professional independence. (European statistics Code of Practice, Indicator 1.8)**

Professional independence is referred to in Article 5 of the Official Statistics Law. This states that “Official statistics are based on common standards, official definitions and basic



principles”, one of these principles being the principle of professional independence which “means that the decisions on the definitions, methods of collection, processing and dissemination of official statistics are exclusively in charge of the producers of official statistics”. Article 10 states that “The Director of the Office is obliged to protect the professional credibility of official statistics from all kinds of unprofessional influence”. While it was clear to the Peer Review team, from discussions with users and other stakeholders, that the professional independence of SORS is unquestioned, the team feels that the wording in the Official Statistics Law should be made more explicit, and should also refer to independence in the context of the timing and content of statistical releases.

The Peer Review team also notes that Article 98 of the Government Rules of Procedure states that “When giving public statements and appearing in public [...] directors of special organisations [...] must express and endorse viewpoints of the Government”. While, as noted above, the Director of SORS is the director of a “special organisation”, the Peer Review team has no reason to believe that this provision has had a practical effect on the behaviour of the Director, or that he behaved in any way other than a professional manner. Nonetheless, it gives a further reason for clarifying, in law, the professional independence of the Director of SORS.

To achieve full compliance with the CoP, **the Peer Review team recommends that:**

- 2. The relevant Serbian authorities should arrange that the Director of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia and, where appropriate, the heads of the statistical departments of other producers of official statistics, should be clearly assigned in law the sole responsibility for deciding on statistical methods, standards and procedures, and on the timing and content of statistical releases. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 1.4)**

#### **4.2.1.2 IMPROVE THE ROLE OF THE STATISTICAL COUNCIL**

The role of the Statistical Council is defined in Article 13 of the Official Statistics Law: “The Statistical Council [...] is an integral part of the system of official statistics and it is in charge of the strategic issues of official statistics. The major role of the Council shall be to endeavour to meet the needs of the widest range of users and to protect fully the rights of data providers.”

Article 14 spells out its role, which is quite wide, in more detail. It is to render professional opinion and take part in monitoring the implementation of proposals on a range of issues. These issues include the five-year statistical programme, requests for conducting a census, the revision of major surveys, infrastructure projects, standards and guidelines for the implementation of the basic principles of official statistics, the development and promotion of the official statistics system, international statistical cooperation, and cooperation with universities and scientific institutions.

Apart from the Director of SORS, the Council consists of 16 members: nine representing various government ministries, two from the National Bank of Serbia, one from the Chamber of Commerce of Serbia, three professionals from scientific research and educational institutions, and one from the Statistical Society of Serbia. Members are not appointed for fixed terms.

The Peer Review team has some concerns about the Council and how it operates. The Council does not seem to have the right balance if it is to meet its primary role, which is to speak on behalf of users and data providers: it is heavily weighted towards government departments and producers of official statistics. The Peer Review team proposes a rebalancing in order to represent the voice of users more adequately. It should have fewer members from

administrative authorities, and should have broader representation from other user groups, for example from the business sector, trade unions, and civil society. The status of the Council is purely advisory, though that is not entirely clear from the articles above. The law does not stipulate who is to preside over the Council meetings, and in fact these meetings are chaired by the Director of SORS, who also sets the agenda. To the Peer Review team, it seems unsatisfactory that the person presiding over the meeting is the person receiving the advice.

Based on discussions with management, and on the minutes of the Council meetings (on the SORS website, in Serbian only), it is clear to the Peer Review team that the Council does not act as a forum for strategic discussion. Rather, Council meetings are really information sessions in which the Director (and Assistant Directors) of SORS provide information to other Council members. This information usually relates to the five-year programme, the annual plan, and progress with censuses and major surveys. The Council meets twice a year.

To enhance compliance with the CoP, the Peer Review team recommends that:

- 3. The relevant Serbian authorities should amend the provisions in the Official Statistics Law relating to the Statistical Council. The Council should be a relatively small advisory group operating at a strategic level with members representing the users, providers and producers of official statistics; members should be appointed for fixed terms; the Director of SORS should be an ex officio member; and the Council sessions should be chaired by an external member. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 11)**

#### 4.2.1.3 CLARIFY THE LEGAL BASIS FOR STATISTICAL CONFIDENTIALITY

SORS takes stringent measures to ensure that statistical confidentiality is protected. These include physical, technical, logical and policy measures. In practice, these protection measures are strong and there has never been any breach of statistical confidentiality. Discussions of the Peer Review team with stakeholders show that SORS is fully trusted in this respect. Nonetheless, based on an examination of the Official Statistics Law, the Peer Review team considers that the legal basis for statistical confidentiality should be strengthened.

The penalty provisions relating to confidentiality in the Official Statistics Law are quite weak. Article 53 prescribes a fine for an “Authorised producer of official statistics in case they fail to stipulate in a special act the measures and procedures to secure the confidentiality of data”. Surprisingly, no penalty is prescribed in case a member of staff breaches confidentiality. In the document “Guidelines on Measures of Data and Information Protection in the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia”, an article states that “disciplinary or criminal proceeding against him/her can be initiated” if a person breaches statistical confidentiality. However, this is rather vague and it is not in national legislation. In the Law on the Census of Population, Households and Dwellings 2011 (Article 31), a fine is prescribed for “enumerators, coordinators, supervisors and other direct participants in the Census if they [...] act opposite to the confidentiality obligation”, but this is a rather narrow provision. The Peer Review team feels that this gap in the Official Statistics Law should be filled.

Another unusual situation arises in Article 45 of the Official Statistics Law. This states, in part, that:

“The following information shall not be regarded as confidential:

1. Number and structure of the hired and permanently employed with legal and physical persons, not including their personal data;

2. Production range, i.e. products manufactured, processed, forwarded, stored, purchased and sold by an entrepreneur, enterprise, i.e. other organisation and institution, as well as all services rendered to public or enterprises, i.e. other organisations or institutions;

3. Data on damage or environmental effects caused by the activities of an entrepreneur, enterprise, i.e. other organisation or institution”.

The statement that, for instance, an enterprise’s employment and production data are not confidential does not sit well with the CoP principle of statistical confidentiality. The Peer Review team is reassured by SORS management that in practice all such data are treated as confidential irrespective of this provision. Nonetheless, the team considers that the provision should be removed from the Official Statistics Law.

Indicator 5.2 of the CoP states that “Staff sign legal confidentiality commitments on appointment”. This is indeed the case in SORS. But the Peer Review team feel that the relevant authorities might well consider, while amending the confidentiality clauses in the Law, whether a provision to this effect should be included.

To achieve full compliance with the CoP, **the Peer Review team recommends that:**

- 4. The relevant Serbian authorities should amend the provisions in the Official Statistics Law relating to statistical confidentiality: penalties should be prescribed for breaching confidentiality; and the provisions stating that enterprise employment, production, etc are not confidential should be removed. (European statistics Code of Practice, Indicators 5.1 and 5.3)**

#### **4.2.1.4 IMPROVE METHODOLOGICAL SERVICES**

SORS is resolved to providing high quality statistics based on sound methodology.

There is some degree on centralisation of methodology expertise in SORS. In particular, there is a unit responsible for sampling, which receives requests for sample selection from subject-matter specialists responsible for particular surveys. This unit is responsible for sample design, sample selection and estimation methods for all surveys that are based on random samples, and it calculates sampling weights, standard errors and confidence intervals. The Unit also provides guidelines, recommends appropriate methodologies, and periodically examines these procedures.

Apart from sampling, each statistical department develops their own guidelines and methodology, and implements their own methods for data validation, editing, imputation, etc. There is no central methodology unit, and the function of such a unit is performed by an ad hoc forum consisting of the assistant directors and some experts from particular areas. Significant methodological changes, such as the modification of a questionnaire, are submitted to this forum for approval.

SORS have plans to expand the sample methodology unit into a full methodology unit, which the Peer Review team supports. This unit could provide standards for methodological documentation, editing/imputation, seasonal adjustment and disclosure control; it could provide training in particular techniques; and it could promote harmonised methods and cost-effectiveness.

To enhance compliance with the CoP, **the Peer Review team recommends that:**

5. **The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia should concentrate methodological services and consultation in one methodological unit; this unit should provide services at all stages of the statistical production process and should play a central role in the development of statistical methods and competencies. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 7)**

#### **4.2.2 INCREASE RESOURCES AND IMPROVE COST-EFFECTIVENESS**

The Peer Reviewers identified four areas of improvement related to the resources and of the cost-effectiveness of SORS:

- Ensure sustainable resources;
- Increase staff mobility, and continue moving posts from regional offices to headquarters;
- Increase the use of web-based methods of data collection;
- Develop a system of cost accounting.

##### **4.2.2.1 ENSURE SUSTAINABLE RESOURCES**

SORS financial and human resources have been reduced over the last few years in line with budget cuts, and the Government has imposed restrictions on the recruitment of staff to the public sector in Serbia. These restrictions make not only the recruitment of new staff very difficult but also the substitution of retired staff.

The budget of SORS amounted to €6.85m in 2016. While the approved maximum number of permanent staff is 455, the actual number is 422 FTE (full-time equivalents). However, SORS has the option to recruit temporary staff, and, currently, a total of 114 persons are employed on temporary contracts. Therefore, a total of 536 FTE is working in the headquarters and regional offices. In addition, an average of 134 interviewers are doing field work for SORS. Since 2007, SORS has lost about 150 staff members. The age distribution in SORS is also of some concern: of the permanent staff, 45 are over the age of 60, none is aged under 30, and the average age is 49.

Contracts with temporary staff allow engagements for three or six months only. Although temporary contracts can be renewed, considerable effort is required to retain knowledge and competencies, and the continuity of work in SORS is at risk.

The reduction of resources contrasts with the growing demand for statistics and the need for modernisation of the statistical infrastructure. To overcome its shortage of resources, SORS is developing greater use of administrative sources, and is making cost-effective improvements to the methods for data collection, data editing and the documentation of metadata. However, several statistical domains still need to be further developed relative to the EU standards, and in some areas much work needs to be done. For example, SORS have produced a standard system for documenting methods and quality, but the populating this system with the required information will take a lot of effort.

Based on the approved annual plan for the coming year, the Parliament adopts in December the budget of SORS for the coming year and, provisionally, for the following two years. Funds that were not used in the financial year cannot be transferred to the next year. Different budget lines are preordained for staff, surveys, maintenance and procurement of equipment, etc, so that there is little flexibility in shifting resources across different headings. SORS also has only

a limited ability to make decisions concerning its internal organisation, so that the organisational chart does not adequately show relations and the distribution of competencies. SORS expects that the proposed new version of the Statistics Law would allow more flexibility in using financial and human resources, because, under that proposal, SORS would report to Parliament rather than to Government.

The Peer Review team formed the opinion that without an adequate resource level, SORS faces the risk of not being able to fulfil its obligations regarding national needs in official statistics as well as in aligning to the EU acquis. While the Peer Review team considers that SORS should further enhance its cost-efficiency, it also considers that SORS should be resourced adequately, and it should be able to use its financial and human resources more flexibly.

To enhance compliance with the CoP, the Peer Review team recommends that:

- 6. The relevant national authorities should ensure that the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia is provided with the necessary human and financial resources to ensure that they can meet all priority national and international statistical needs, particularly those required to comply with the EU statistical acquis. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 3)**
- 7. The relevant national authorities should consider the easing of current restrictions on the ability of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (a) to apportion its budget and (b) to make decisions concerning its own internal organisation. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 3)**
- 8. The relevant national authorities should ensure that the proportion of the staff of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia that are permanent, as opposed to temporary, is increased in order to ensure business continuity. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 3)**

#### **4.2.2.2 INCREASE STAFF MOBILITY, AND CONTINUE MOVING POSTS FROM REGIONAL OFFICES TO HEADQUARTERS**

There is no internal staff mobility policy in SORS. The Peer Review team considers that staff members should be provided with the opportunity to work in various areas in the Office. This would enhance opportunities for staff and help to meet their career development needs. It would also broaden the skills-base in SORS and thereby provide the Office with greater resilience. For example, it could help SORS to fill vacancies after retirement, or cope with the unexpected prolonged absence of an expert.

Of the permanent 422 FTEs, 269 work in the head office and 153 in the 15 regional offices. The main role of the regional offices is to conduct data collection activities, in particular among important enterprises in the region; the regional offices also perform some data entry and editing. The Peer Reviewers formed the opinion that such a large proportion of staff allocated to regional offices seems rather disproportionate given the current workload which largely falls on the head office. The implementation of new technologies for data collection, such as the use of web-based questionnaires, should reduce the need for direct data collection, free up resources in the regional offices, and allow reallocating positions to the SORS head office for higher level statistical activities which are much needed to fulfil national and European obligations. SORS has already transferred some posts from the regional offices to its head office, and the Peer Review team considers that, in the interests of cost-efficiency, this process should continue.

To enhance compliance with the CoP by improving the cost-effectiveness of its organisation, **the Peer Review team recommends that:**

- 9. The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia should introduce a staff mobility policy. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 10)**
- 10. The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia should continue transferring posts from its regional offices to its head office. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 10)**

#### **4.2.2.3 INCREASE THE USE OF WEB-BASED METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION**

For most of SORS's enterprise surveys, web-based questionnaires are available. While not all enterprises use this facility, the Peer Review team considers that web-based data collection can help in reducing the form-filling burden. It also reduces costs, considerably increases the efficiency of statistical processes, improves data quality, and can help to protect statistical confidentiality.

90% of SORS surveys use the Integrated Survey Tool (IST) for data collection and data processing, a software package designed and developed by SORS. IST delivers many benefits (see Section 4.1 above). It is very cost-effective and has helped SORS cope with the shortage of human resources. One of the many useful facilities of IST is that it can automatically generate web questionnaires. Given the considerable advantages of web-based data collection, the Peer Review team considers that SORS should strongly encourage all enterprises to use the web questionnaires for providing data.

For household surveys, SORS relies on interviewing, and has developed two new modules in IST for CAPI and CATI data collection. The Peer Review team considers that it is now time for SORS to move towards the development of web-based applications for social surveys.

To enhance compliance with the CoP and improve cost-effectiveness, **the Peer Review team recommends that:**

- 11. The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia should strongly encourage all enterprises to use web-based methods of data provision. Further, the Office should provide, as far as practicable, user-friendly web-based methods of data collection for social surveys. (European statistics Code of Practice, Indicator 10.2)**

#### **4.2.2.4 DEVELOP A SYSTEM OF COST ACCOUNTING**

Following the reporting requirements of the public service, SORS identifies costs by sectors, though only for some types of costs. It does not currently have an accounting system that allows allocating resources to individual statistical products or processes. The development of a proper cost-accounting system would allow SORS to estimate the actual costs of the statistical products (surveys) and processes. This could also enable SORS to cope more effectively with the restrictions on financial and human resources, and to use cost-based planning to make the best use of resources. It would also provide evidence, for those responsible for the budget, of the resources needed to produce quality statistics.

To enhance compliance with the CoP by improving the efficiency of its organisation, **the Peer Review team recommends that:**

- 12. The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia should use a suitable system to enable the estimation of the costs of statistical processes and products, and should use the**

**resulting information for management purposes. (European statistics Code of Practice, Indicator 10.1)**

### **4.2.3 DEVELOP QUALITY MANAGEMENT FURTHER**

The Peer Reviewers identified four areas of improvement in relation to quality management:

- Strengthen the role of quality management;
- Intensify communication with users and other stakeholders;
- Develop self-assessment and auditing;
- Measure and report on the response burden.

#### **4.2.3.1 STRENGTHEN THE ROLE OF QUALITY MANAGEMENT**

Central responsibility for quality issues is assigned to the Working Group for Quality Management. The Working Group, which usually meets weekly, has nine members and consists of experts from statistical units, sampling methodology, dissemination and IT. The Working Group is directly responsible to the Board of Directors and the Director of SORS. Activities of the Working Group include user and staff satisfaction surveys, staff training on quality issues, setting standards for documents, etc. It produces an annual plan and annual reports which go to the Board of Directors. All documentation of the Working Group is available on the SORS intranet.

In SORS, procedures to monitor the quality of the statistical products are the responsibility of the relevant production unit.

Following discussion during the visit, the Peer Review team concluded that SORS would benefit from further developing its quality management framework and its organisational structure in such a way that:

- The responsibility for the quality management programme is assigned to the Quality Manager in charge of coordinating the Working Group for Quality Management, who should report to the Director.
- Plans and reports are published on the activities of SORS related to quality management.
- Quality management focuses on projects that are needed to support activities in all statistical areas, including: the development of detailed quality guidelines for unit managers on documenting the statistical processes in use at SORS along the lines of the GSBPM; the production of quality reports for all statistical products using the new RZSMETA system (see Section 4.1); and producing guidelines for self-assessment (see Section 4.2.3.3).

To further enhance the compliance with the CoP, the Peer Review team recommends that:

- 13. Quality management in the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia should comprehensively cover all relevant issues; the planned activities and projects should be publicised by covering them in more detail in the annual programmes, and progress should be covered in the corresponding annual reports. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 4)**

#### 4.2.3.2 INTENSIFY COMMUNICATION WITH USERS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

Principle 11 of the CoP requires that statistical authorities should meet the needs of users. Efficient communication and strong relations with users are needed to comply with this requirement. The basic flow of information to users and other stakeholders is via the website and other channels, where statistical results and metadata, and also background information such as plans and reports about various statistical activities, can be provided. Another effective tool for strengthening the relations with users can be provided by creating user groups to discuss particular subject matter areas.

The development of official statistics in Serbia is based on five-year programmes (passed by Parliament) and annual plans (passed by the Government). SORS prepares these programmes and plans in consultation with other producers of official statistics. The current programme covers the period 2016-2020. It provides detailed information on the expected outcomes, and also incorporates the strategy for official statistics over the period. The annual plan for 2017 consists of a very detailed 90-page table listing the surveys or other activities and the producer responsible. These documents, the programme (with the incorporated strategy) and the plan, contain useful and relevant information for users and other stakeholders. They should be accompanied, at the end of their relevant periods, by detailed progress reports. However, the Peer Review team was struck by the very limited information provided in the published reports.

The most recent annual report, entitled “Activity Report, 2016” (the English version was provided to the Peer Reviewers but is not published on the SORS website) is very short. It contains two pages of text, fairly general and lacking in detail, relating to the activities of SORS only, accompanied by small tables relating to legislation and funding. It does not provide a proper or useful account of the activities and progress of SORS and other producers during the year. To intensify the relations with users and to improve the image and credibility of SORS and official statistics, the Peer Review team believes that the annual report should contain detailed, relevant information. This remark also applies to the report on the five-year programme and on the associated five-year strategy. Besides details on the statistical output over the period, the reports should cover the development of the statistical infrastructure, information on international activities including the EU accession process, progress on the coordination of the NSS, significant events, etc. The reports should also cover the progress of ONAs and other producers, and achievements in the compliance of producers with the CoP. Other units in the statistical infrastructure, such as the Statistical Council or the Working Group on Quality Management, should report on activities and progress. This could be done in the annual report or by publishing the information otherwise on the SORS website.

Reporting in this way provides an effective tool to inform, to encourage participation, to increase transparency, and to enhance the credibility of SORS and the NSS.

User consultation in Serbia is rather limited. Discussions take place at the Statistical Council, which, with the improvements in Section 4.2.1.2, would act as an effective forum for users, though with a very broad remit. The two-yearly user satisfaction survey provides useful feedback from a wide range of users. There are many informal contacts with users. While SORS has set up many working groups with Ministries, the National Bank of Serbia, the Tax administration, etc, to discuss various statistical matters, the Peer Review team were surprised to find that there were no actual user groups.

The Peer Reviewers believe that SORS should establish standing user groups for key statistical areas, such as macroeconomic, business, agricultural or social statistics. These groups should



include key users from ministries, other producers, the media, representative organisations, and the research community.

To increase the compliance with the CoP by intensifying communication with users and other stakeholders, **the Peer Review team recommends that:**

**14. The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia should produce and publish reports on the five-year programmes and on the annual plans. (European statistics Code of Practice, Indicator 1.5)**

**15. The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia should establish user advisory groups for key statistical areas. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 11.1)**

#### **4.2.3.3 DEVELOP SELF-ASSESSMENT AND AUDITING**

While SORS has a clear commitment to quality and continual improvement, procedures should be put in place to measure this. Indicator 4.4 of the CoP requires that statistical authorities should regularly review their key statistical outputs, in order to and assess the quality of the statistical processes and the products. Two useful tools for this are self-assessments and audits.

SORS performs some quality reviewing, but it's not done in a systematic way. They have plans to introduce self-assessments, though these have not yet been put into effect due to pressure on resources. The Peer Review team consider that self-assessment provides valuable information and helps to improve quality and cost-efficiency, and that SORS should introduce a plan for such assessments. Periodic self-assessments, perhaps every five years, should be conducted by the relevant survey managers with the participation of those involved in the statistical production chain.

The position of Internal Auditor was added to the organisational chart of SORS in 2016, but this position has not yet been filled. The Peer Reviewers consider that this post should now be filled, and that SORS should develop a plan for conducting methodological audits of key statistical products. Ideally, when high profile statistical products are being audited, external experts should be invited to participate, and summaries of the audit reports should be published.

To increase the compliance with the CoP by regularly reviewing the quality of statistical processes and products, **the Peer Review team recommends that:**

**16. The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia should introduce plans for self-assessment and auditing of statistical processes and products. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 4)**

#### **4.2.3.4 MEASURE AND REPORT ON THE RESPONSE BURDEN**

Principle 9 of the CoP requires that statistical authorities should keep the reporting burden proportionate to the needs of the users and not excessive for respondents, and that the statistical authorities should monitor the response burden and set targets for its reduction.

SORS has a policy of not requesting data in a survey if those data can be obtained from administrative sources, and indeed the proportion of data coming from such sources has increased significantly in recent years. However, SORS does not currently measure the extent of this burden. In some surveys, enterprises are asked for estimates of the time needed for answering questions and completing the form, but this information is not collected systematically.

In 2017, the “Action plan for non-excessive burden on respondents” was adopted. The aims are to devise a procedure for reducing the burden on reporting units, to strengthen cooperation with data providers, to measure the estimated burden, and to analyse the content of statistical surveys with a view to reducing the burden by simplifying the questionnaires.

The implementation of these actions will be a considerable step towards full compliance with Principle 9 of the CoP. To ensure that the burden is proportionate to the needs of the users, SORS should, in addition to monitoring the burden, set targets for its reduction over time. Performance indicators on reducing the burden should be produced and periodically analysed by senior management, and SORS should report publicly on progress.

To increase the compliance with the CoP, the Peer Review team recommends that:

- 17. The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia should implement its plan for ensuring a non-excessive burden on respondents. Reduction targets should be set, performance indicators should be analysed by senior management, and progress reports should be published. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 9)**

#### 4.2.4 IMPROVE ACCESSIBILITY

The SORS website is the main channel for dissemination of statistical data and other information, and user satisfaction surveys indicate that users are mostly satisfied with the content and functionality of the site. However, the Peer Review team noted that in certain areas SORS could improve the accessibility of information, and identified three areas of improvement:

- Enhance the accessibility of statistical releases;
- Publish methodology and quality reports;
- Publish a revision calendar.

##### 4.2.4.1 ENHANCE THE ACCESSIBILITY OF STATISTICAL RELEASES

Generally, satisfaction with the SORS website is good: the user satisfaction survey conducted in 2015 shows that 67% of users think that the website contents are very good or good, 66% think that the contents and functionality of the dissemination database are very good or good, and 77% of users easily understand the published statistical data. However, user comments from this survey also indicate that the structure of releases should be improved: each statistical release should, according to users’ opinions, be accompanied by a more detailed interpretation of the data.

SORS has adopted two internal documents regulating the production of releases: “The procedure for creating and publishing press releases” and “Guidelines for writing press releases”. However, the implementation of these procedures and guidelines should be improved. The Peer Reviewers agree with the users who ask for better interpretation. Statistical releases provide many detailed tables; but the releases make modest use of graphics, there is no headline, and the textual commentary tends to be very short and repetitive. (By contrast, the commentary in more complex publications such as the Statistical Yearbook is very good.)

The purpose of statistical releases is to provide the latest information to the media and other users. They should contain a well-chosen headline and explain the information revealed by the statistics in an interesting way, while still remaining impartial and objective. By bringing the story behind the figures to life, the statistics will be more widely used, users and the media will be more effectively informed, and the statistics will be less liable to misinterpretation. Some

years ago, SORS provided training to its staff on writing statistical releases; the Peer Review team believes that this training should be resumed. SORS should also consider employing a journalist for a period to provide advice on writing commentary for releases in a newsworthy way.

To increase the compliance with the CoP by enhancing the accessibility of its statistics, **the Peer Review team recommends that:**

- 18. The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia should enhance the accessibility of its statistical releases by providing appropriate headlines and improved commentary on the information contained in the figures, reinforced with appropriate graphics. To achieve this, the Office should provide further appropriate training to staff who write releases. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 15)**

#### 4.2.4.2 PUBLISH METHODOLOGY AND QUALITY REPORTS

According to the CoP and Regulation (EC) No 223/2009 on European Statistics, producers of official statistics must ensure that statistics are developed, produced and disseminated on the basis of uniform standards and harmonised methods. Furthermore, users of statistics must have access to appropriate metadata describing the quality of statistical outputs so that they are able to interpret and use the statistics correctly.

SORS has an area on its intranet portal dedicated to quality management. The system Documentation of Quality Management, based on ISO 9001, was launched in April 2016. The aim of this system is to provide updated and standardised procedures and guidelines to staff. Documentation related to quality and metadata reporting includes “Procedure for the production, publishing and updating of reference metadata and quality reports”, “Manual for using application for production of reference metadata and quality reports”, and “Handbook for Creating Metadata and Quality Reports” (based on ESS standards and guidelines for quality reporting).

SORS currently produces quality reports for statistical surveys when required by Eurostat. These reports are submitted to Eurostat but not published on SORS website. Users informed the Peer Review team that they were aware that some metadata for Serbia can be found on the Eurostat website but not on the SORS website.

RZSMETA, the reference metadata system developed by SORS (see Section 4.1) and which complies with Eurostat’s metadata standard, is now being deployed to produce standard reports on methods and quality. The Peer Reviewers consider that user-oriented reports on methodology and quality should now be published by SORS, and, where relevant, other producers, for all European statistics. In time, the publication of these metadata should be extended to cover all official statistics.

Serbia subscribes to the IMF’s Enhanced General Data Dissemination System (e-GDDS), but not yet to their Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS). There has been some contact between SORS and IMF on the matter, but the subscription process has yet to be completed. The Peer Review team considers that this matter should now be resolved.

To enhance compliance with the CoP, **the Peer Review team recommends that:**

- 19. The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, and, where relevant, other producers of official statistics, should publish standard user-oriented methodology and quality reports for all European statistics. (European statistics Code of Practice, Indicators 15.6 and 15.7)**

#### 4.2.4.3 PUBLISH A REVISION CALENDAR

SORS adopted a general revision policy at the beginning of 2017. The policy sets the rules on how major revisions or changes in methodology are communicated to users. In some cases, revision policies have already been incorporated in the methodological documentation of specific statistical products and are available on the SORS website.

SORS does not prepare or publish a revision calendar, though major revisions are generally announced in advance on the SORS website. In some cases, when SORS publishes the revised data, a press conference is organised. This was done, for example, for the revision to National accounts statistics under the transition to the ESA 2010 accounting framework. Some of the users interviewed by the Peer Review team explained that they already know about revisions in advance because, as regular users, they are kept informed in various ways. But some users said that not all revisions are announced in advance and that it would be useful to have precise information on the timing of revisions.

Indicator 6.6 states that “Advance notice is given on major revisions or changes in methodologies”, and the Peer Review team considers that the best way to do this is by publishing a revision calendar.

To further enhance compliance with the CoP, **the Peer Review team recommends that:**

**20. The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia should publish a revision calendar in order to notify users of planned significant revisions to its statistical results. (European statistics Code of Practice, Indicators 6.6 and 8.6)**

#### 4.2.5 DEFINE THE NATIONAL STATISTICAL SYSTEM AND STRENGTHEN COORDINATION

The Peer Review team identified three areas of improvement:

- Clarify the scope of official statistics;
- Improve coordination in the NSS;
- Work more closely with administrative data holders.

##### 4.2.5.1 CLARIFY THE SCOPE OF OFFICIAL STATISTICS

In Serbia, it is not clear who are the producers of official statistics. And it is not clear what statistics should be regarded as official.

Article 4 of the Official Statistics Law states:

“The system of official statistics of the Republic of Serbia includes, as authorised producers of official statistics, the following agents:

1. Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia
2. National Bank of Serbia
3. City administration of Belgrade, for the territory of the City of Belgrade
4. Other authorised producers of official statistics, listed in the five-year statistical program.”

Article 13 of the Official Statistics Law states that “The Council shall determine the list of the other authorised producers of official statistics”. However, this determination has not been done.

A reading of the five-year programme for 2016-2020 and the annual plan for 2017 indicates that there are, in total, 31 organisations that are termed as producers of official statistics. Confusingly, some producers in the programme are not mentioned in annual plans, and some producers in the annual plans are not mentioned in the programme. Further examination of the list of 31 organisations shows that many of them are not producers but in fact just suppliers of data. It would be very difficult to determine, even from careful reading of the laws, programme, plan, and websites of SORS and other public authorities, which producers are official producers and which statistics are official. On the other hand, the Peer Review team considers it quite likely that other Serbian public authorities produce statistics that are not referenced in the programme, and that some of these statistics could be sufficiently good and relevant to be deemed official. There are other uncertainties. For instance, if a producer listed in the programme (and therefore by definition an “authorised producer”) publishes some statistics that are not referred to in the programme, are those statistics official?

To clarify this situation, the Peer Reviewers consider that SORS should produce a precise list of the statistics from ministries and other public agencies that are to be regarded as official. This would, as a consequence, provide a precise list of ONAs and other producers of official statistics, and would therefore, for the first time, give a clear definition of the NSS. This would make the brand of official statistics more visible, and could facilitate the use of standard quality criteria. Before approving a particular statistic as official, SORS could take advice from the Statistical Council on the relevance of the statistic.

To improve the overall coordination across the NSS, **the Peer Review team recommends that:**

**21. The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia should define the precise list of producers of official statistics and should decide on what statistics should be designated as official statistics. (Coordination)**

There are no guidelines on dissemination for other producers, and there is no common dissemination policy. There are no links to the statistics of other producers from the SORS website. The Peer Reviewers consider that SORS should enhance the dissemination and accessibility of official statistics by providing a common portal for the whole NSS. This portal would not necessarily contain the statistics of other producers, though that would perhaps be the best solution, but it should at least provide direct links to the individual statistics. This portal could be developed from the existing SORS website, or could be set up as a separate site.

Currently, the only producer to publish a release calendar, apart from SORS, is the National Bank of Serbia. The Peer Review team considers that all official statistics should be published in accordance with a pre-announced release calendar, and that the portal should therefore also contain a common release calendar for the whole NSS covering the publication of all official statistics. SORS should also monitor and assess the compliance of other producers with the release calendar.

To enhance compliance with the CoP, **the Peer Review team recommends that:**

**22. The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia should develop a portal to official statistics by having links to the statistics of other producers, and the release calendar should be extended to cover all of Serbia’s official statistics. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 6 and 15, Coordination)**

#### 4.2.5.2 IMPROVE COORDINATION IN THE NSS

In law, the coordination role of SORS is quite strong. According to Article 7 of the Official Statistics Law, SORS is the “coordinator of the system of official statistics of the Republic of Serbia”. Article 29 states that “Other authorised producers of official statistics shall be obliged to cooperate with the Office on the methodology of statistical surveys that are envisaged by annual implementation plans, and when required, they consult the Office on the methodology and databases that they determine”. Article 8 goes into the coordination role of the Office in some detail: “As the organiser and coordinator of official statistics, the Office prepares five-year statistical programme and annual implementation plans; creates methodology for the surveys and sets the standards for the overall official statistics”; SORS “takes decisions on proclaiming official results”; it “sets implementation standards for all authorised producers of official statistics”; it “cooperates with other authorised producers of statistics regarding statistical surveys they conduct and approves sampling methodologies”; and it “creates and maintains databases resulting from official statistics”.

There is good coordination in preparing the five-year programme and the annual plans, and in formalising standards for classifications. However, the Peer Review team formed the opinion that, in practice, SORS fulfils its coordination role to a rather limited extent.

Owing to resource constraints, there are no staff in SORS dedicated to working on coordination, though to some extent coordination activities are incorporated in the work of various SORS divisions. Some communication takes place through the meetings of the Statistical Council, and there are some formal working groups involving some producers dealing with specific topics. The Peer Review team believes that SORS should set up a small permanent unit dedicated to supporting coordination among producers of official statistics.

There is no information repository or other method for effective communication within the NSS. However, in the 2016-2020 programme, one of the planned activities is to “improve the cooperation with all the users of statistical data and services by implementing new forms of communication and mutual information sharing”. The Peer Review team supports the development of this activity. In November 2017, there was a first meeting of producers of official statistics. The Peer Review team considers that this group should be formalised into a permanent cooperation committee and should meet regularly to discuss statistical coordination, including issues related to the CoP and statistical quality. Indeed, the Peer Review team was informed that SORS already proposes to move in this direction.

No guidelines or standards exist for other producers to assist them in implementing the CoP, and the Peer Review team considers that such assistance should be provided. Guidelines, consistent with the CoP, should be developed and communicated effectively to other producers. These guidelines should cover standard methods, quality reporting, the handling of revisions, release calendars, dissemination etc. SORS should also set up a system for assessing compliance with these guidelines.

To improve statistical production and cooperation, SORS has signed memorandums of understanding, protocols and agreements with many producers of official statistics, including the National Bank of Serbia, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of the Interior, the Serbian Environmental Protection Agency, and many others. However, apart from the Cooperation Agreement with the Tax Administration, such agreements make no reference to the coordination role of SORS. The Peer Review team believes that SORS should update agreements, or create new agreements where none exist, with all producers of official statistics, to ensure

that these agreements include the coordination role of SORS. These agreements would also assist in formalising the NSS.

To improve the overall coordination across the NSS, the Peer Review team recommends that:

- 23. The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia should establish a small organisational unit dedicated to supporting and promoting statistical coordination among all producers of official statistics. This unit should also focus on issues relating to quality and compliance with the European statistics Code of Practice. (Coordination)**
- 24. The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia should develop guidelines for all producers of official statistics. These guidelines, covering development, production and dissemination, should be in line with the European statistics Code of Practice, and should be communicated effectively with other producers. The compliance with these guidelines should be monitored by the Statistical Office. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 7, Coordination)**
- 25. The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia should ensure that any memorandums of understanding developed with other producers of official statistics should cover, inter alia, the coordination role of the Office. (Coordination)**

#### **4.2.5.3 WORK MORE CLOSELY WITH ADMINISTRATIVE DATA HOLDERS**

The Official Statistics Law provides SORS with good access to statistical sources, and SORS has built up good relationships with the authorities in charge of such sources. Memorandums of understanding are drawn up and agreed between the data owners and SORS. The planned establishment of an inventory of all administrative data that are available in Serbia in cooperation with the Serbian government will be an excellent basis to further develop relations with owners of administrative data that could be used in statistical production and that could lessen the burden on respondents. The Peer Review team welcomes the implementation of a procedure by the SORS Administrative Sources and Registers Division which aims at the identification and analysis of the statistical potential of all administrative sources for the needs of statistical production. Much good analytical work is done on the data by the SORS Data Integration Division, which produces reports on the quality of the data.

The Official Statistics Law also gives SORS the right to be involved in the creation or modification of registers. Article 9 states that “The Office shall participate in all activities related to the establishment of new or to the change of existing administrative data sources, or in the activities relative to the sources based on constant monitoring and observation and that are also relevant for official statistics”. Indeed, SORS’s voice is being heard in the establishment of new registers, and authorities have shown some willingness to modify registers to take account of statistical needs. However, the register situation in Serbia is changing fairly rapidly. It is possible that a new source might reach the stage of being too late for the statistical view to be considered, It is also possible that an existing source might be altered without the view of SORS being taken into account. Accordingly, the Peer Review team believes that the existing provision in the Law should be strengthened: it should put an obligation on data holders to consult SORS beforehand and to take account of their views as far as is reasonably possible. But also, the Law should put an obligation on SORS to keep close contact with potential data holders so as to be aware of planned new sources or modifications.

To improve the overall coordination across the NSS, the Peer Review team recommends that:

**26. The relevant Serbian authorities should amend the provisions in the Official Statistics Law to require the holders and planned holders of administrative data sources to consult with the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia before creating new sources or modifying existing sources. Data holders should be required to take account as far is reasonably practicable of the views of the Office before decisions are finalised. The Statistical Office should be required to maintain close contacts with the holders of administrative data in order to be aware of the possible creation of new sources or the modification of existing sources. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 8)**

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



## ANNEX A: PROGRAMME OF THE VISIT

### PEER REVIEW VISIT TO SERBIA

27 November – 1 December 2017

### AGENDA

Time	Programme	Participants
<b>Day 1 – Monday, 27 November 2017</b>		
09.00 - 10.30	PR team discussion to finalise the preparation of the visit	PR team
10.30 - 11.00	Preparatory meeting with the NSI coordinator team	PR team, M Kovačević, Lakčević, Musić, Nikić, Jančić, Kapuran, Šutić, Gavrilović, Kurteši, Janković, Danilović, Cvetković, Pavlović, Virt
11.00 - 11.30	Welcome and introduction of programme, organisational matters	PR team, M Kovačević, Lakčević, Musić, Nikić, Jančić, Kapuran, Šutić, Gavrilović, Kurteši, Janković, Danilović, Cvetković, Pavlović, Virt
11.30 - 11.45	Coffee break	
11.45 - 13.00	General information session with a description on how the national statistical system is organised	PR team, M Kovačević, Lakčević, Musić, Nikić, Jančić, Kapuran, Šutić, Gavrilović, Kurteši, Janković, Danilović, Cvetković, Pavlović, Virt
13.00 - 14.00	Lunch	
14.00 - 15.00	Coordination role of SORS	PR team, M. Kovačević, Lakčević, Musić, Nikić, Jančić, Kapuran, Šutić, Gavrilović, Kurteši, Janković, Danilović, Cvetković, Pavlović, Virt, Obradović, Škiljević
15.00 - 15.15	Coffee break	
15.15 - 17.15	The statistical law and related legislation (CoP Principles 1, 2, 5 and 6)	PR team, M Kovačević, Lakčević, Musić, Nikić, Jančić, Kapuran, Šutić, Gavrilović, Kurteši, Janković, Danilović, Cvetković, Pavlović, Virt, Škiljević, Trifunović, Smolčić, Azdejković, Aleksić
<b>Day 2 – Tuesday, 28 November 2017</b>		
09.00 - 10.45	Programming (statistical work programmes), planning and resources, (CoP Principles 1, 3, 9 and 10)	PR team, M Kovačević, Lakčević, Musić, Nikić, Jančić, Kapuran, Šutić, Gavrilović, Kurteši, Janković, Danilović, Cvetković, Pavlović, Virt; Ivezic, Živković, Trmčić, Brajović, Karašičević, Škiljević, Ogrizović Brašanac, Milojković
10.45 - 11.00	Coffee break	
11.00 - 12.00	Presentation of SORS Integrated System of data processing (IST) and Reference Metadata (RZSMETA)	PR team, M Kovačević, Lakčević, Musić, Nikić, Jančić, Kapuran, Šutić, Gavrilović, Kurteši, Janković, Danilović, Cvetković, Pavlović, Virt, Ljuboja-Raden, Cerovina
12.00 - 13.00	Lunch	
13.00 - 15.15	Quality (organisational	PR team, M Kovačević, Lakčević, Musić, Nikić, Jančić,

	structure, tools, monitoring, implementation of QM... and discussion) (CoP Principle 4 and 11 to 14)	Kapuran, Šutić, Gavrilović, Kurteši, Janković, Danilović, Cvetković, Pavlović, Virt, Zdravković, Pantelić, Ilić, Smolčić, Mladenović, Ljuboja-Rađen, Jordanovski, Stančić
<b>15.15 - 15.30</b>	Coffee break	
<b>15.30 - 17.15</b>	Dissemination and confidentiality (CoP Principles 5, 6 and 15)	PR team, M Kovačević, Lakčević, Musić, Nikić, Jančić, Kapuran, Šutić, Gavrilović, Kurteši, Janković, Danilović, Cvetković, Pavlović, Virt, Trifunović, Smolčić, Aksentijević, Vukojčić Ševo, Popović, Mamula
<b>Day 3 – Wednesday, 29 November 2017</b>		
<b>09.00 - 10.30</b>	Methodology, data collection, data processing and administrative data (CoP Principles 2, 7 and 8)	PR team, M Kovačević, Lakčević, Musić, Nikić, Jančić, Kapuran, Šutić, Gavrilović, Kurteši, Janković, Danilović, Cvetković, Pavlović, Virt, Škiljević, Cerovina, Kovačević, Karašičević, Smolčić, Žikić, Ogrizović Brašanac, Veličković, Đorđević
<b>10.30 - 10.45</b>	Coffee break	
<b>10.45 - 12.00</b>	Methodology, data collection, data processing and administrative data (CoP Principles 2, 7 and 8) cont.	PR team, M Kovačević, Lakčević, Musić, Nikić, Jančić, Kapuran, Šutić, Gavrilović, Kurteši, Janković, Danilović, Cvetković, Pavlović, Virt, Škiljević, Cerovina, Kovačević, Karašičević, Smolčić, Žikić, Ogrizović Brašanac, Veličković, Đorđević
<b>12.00 - 13.00</b>	Lunch	
<b>13.00 - 14.00</b>	Meeting with ONAs	PR team, Pinkulj, Bajić, Vasić (National Bank of Serbia), Kostić, Čolakov, Đuričić, Negić (Treasury - Ministry of Finance), Vujinović Vulović (Public Debt Administration - Ministry of Finance); SORS: Lakčević, Šutić, Gavrilović, Kapuran, Janković, Pavlović, Virt
<b>14.00 - 15.00</b>	Meeting with ONAs	PR team, Krstić, Ivanović (Institute of Public Health), Bojčevski, Vasiljević (Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water management), Redžić (Serbian Environmental Protection Agency - Ministry of Environmental Protection), Radosavljević, Venezija, Mitrović (Ministry of Interior); SORS: Lakčević, Šutić, Gavrilović, Kapuran, Janković, Pavlović, Virt
<b>15.00 - 15.15</b>	Coffee break	
<b>15.15 - 16.00</b>	Meeting with Statistical Council	PR team, Hinić (National Bank of Serbia), Radović (Ministry of Trade, Tourism and Telecommunication), Čokorilo (Ministry of Economy), Krunić Lazić (Serbian Environmental Protection Agency - Ministry of Environmental Protection); SORS: Jančić, Cvetković, Šutić, Kapuran, Pavlović, Virt
<b>16.00 - 17.30</b>	Meeting with junior staff	PR team, Korović, Pavlović, Iričanin, Čalasan, Mucić, Kovačević, Rajčević, Kostović, Todorov, Marjanović
<b>Day 4 – Thursday, 30 November 2017</b>		
<b>09.00 - 10.30</b>	Meeting with main users –	PR team, Pinkulj, Bajić, Vasić (National Bank of Serbia),

	Ministries and other public/private institutions (including the Central Bank as a user)	Mladenović, Kuzmanov (Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit), Herak (Regulatory Agency for Electronic Communications and Postal Services), Jančić, Drašković (Ministry of Finance), Živković (Microsoft); SORS: Lakčević, Nikić, Šutić, Gavrilović, Kapuran, Pavlović, Virt
<b>10.30 - 10.45</b>	Coffee break	
<b>10.45 - 12.45</b>	Meeting with main data providers/respondents	PR team, Dobrosavljević (Serbian Business Registers Agency), Šorgić (Central registry of compulsory social insurance), Glišović (Tax Administration - Ministry of Finance), Milošević (Ministry of Justice), Arsić (Serbian Customs Administration - Ministry of Finance), Živković (Microsoft), Vasić (Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia), Milaković (TEI-TECHNO DOO); SORS: Nikić, Šutić, Kapuran, Pantelić, Škiljević, Pavlović, Virt
<b>12.45 - 14.00</b>	Lunch	
<b>14.00 - 15.00</b>	Meeting with main users - media	PR Team, Mikavica (daily newspaper "Politka"), Boarov (weekly newspaper "Vreme"), Filipović (Bloomberg); SORS: Aksentijević, Danilović, Kapuran, Gavrilović, Lakčević, Šutić, Pavlović, Virt
<b>15.00 - 16.00</b>	Meeting with main users - scientific community	PR team, Božić (Faculty of Mathematics), Zubović (Institute of Economic Sciences), Nikitović (Centre for demographic research), Šantić, Stojilković Gnjatović (Faculty of Geography), Radoičić (Faculty of Organisational Sciences); SORS: Lakčević, Kapuran, Gavrilović, Šutić, Pavlović, Virt
<b>16.00 - 16.15</b>	Coffee break	
<b>16.15 - 17.15</b>	Meeting with main users - international organisations	PR team, Ignjatović (Statistics Sweden Balkan Project Office), Antonijević (OSCE), Varga (UNDP), Jović (UNICEF); SORS: Lakčević, Kapuran, Šutić, Đoković Papić, Pavlović, Virt
<b>Day 5 – Friday, 1 December 2017</b>		
<b>09.00 - 10.30</b>	PR team discussion	PR team
<b>10.30 - 10.45</b>	Coffee break	
<b>10.45 - 12.45</b>	Clarifications, remaining or additional issues and focus areas	PR team, M Kovačević, Lakčević, Musić, Nikić, Jančić, Kapuran, Šutić, Gavrilović, Kurteši, Janković, Danilović, Cvetković, Pavlović, Virt
<b>12.45 - 13.30</b>	Lunch	
<b>13.30 - 15.30</b>	Meeting with senior management: conclusions and recommendations	PR team, M Kovačević, Lakčević, Musić, Nikić, Jančić, Kapuran, Šutić, Gavrilović, Kurteši, Janković, Danilović, Cvetković, Pavlović, Virt

## ANNEX B: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

	<b>Peer reviewers</b>
1	Ms Rima Gerdziunaite
2	Mr Peter Hackl (chair)
3	Mr Adrian Redmond
	<b>Eurostat observer</b>
4	Mr Torbjoern Carlquist
	<b>Observers from Bosnia &amp; Herzegovina</b>
5	Ms Dijana Mlikota, Assistant Director, Macroeconomic statistics
6	Ms Selveta Hot, Coordinator, International cooperation and European integration Department
	<b>Management of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia</b>
7	Mr Miladin Kovačević, Director General
8	Ms Snežana Lakčević, Assistant director, Social statistics Department
9	Ms Olja Musić, Assistant director, ICT and publication Department
10	Ms Mira Nikić, Assistant director, Development and information Department
11	Mr Zoran Jančić, Assistant director, General affairs and data collection in field Department
12	Mr Slavko Kapuran, Assistant director, European integration, International cooperation and project management Department
13	Mr Vladimir Šutić, Assistant director, Business statistics Department
14	Mr Dušan Gavrilović, Assistant director, National accounts, prices and agriculture Department
15	Mr Ergin Kurteši, Assistant director, AP Vojvodina Regional Statistical Department
	<b>Other staff of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia</b>
16	Mr Miroslav Janković, Head, ICT usage statistics and business trends Unit (responsible person for coordination role of SORS)
17	Ms Aleksandra Danilović, Head, User support Unit
18	Ms Nataša Cvetković, Head, Planning, quality management, dissemination and information Division
19	Ms Kristina Pavlović, Head, European integration and international cooperation Division (SORS Peer Review coordinator)
20	Mr Miloš Virt, Head, European integration Unit
21	Ms Dragica Obradović, Head, Administrative sources and registers Division
22	Ms Veselinka Škiljević, Head, Administrative sources Unit
23	Mr Nenad Trifunović, Head, Automatic data processing and storage Division
24	Ms Mirjana Smolčić, Head, Quarterly national accounts Unit
25	Ms Tanja Aleksić, Head, Human resources management unit
26	Ms Spomenka Azdejković, Head, Staff and legal issues Division

27	Ms Ivana Ivezić, Head, Financial issues, accounting and logistics Division
28	Ms Gojka Živković, Head, Project financial monitoring, accounting and reporting Unit
29	Mr Boško Trmčić, Head, Domestic trade, catering and tourism statistics Division
30	Ms Biljana Brajović, Head, Structural business statistics Division
31	Ms Marija Karašićević, Statistical advisor, Sample methodology Division
32	Ms Mirjana Ogrizović Brašanac, Head, Sample methodology Division
33	Ms Jelena Milojković, Head, Internet technologies and e-commerce Division
34	Ms Jagoda Ljuboja-Radjen, Statistical advisor, Data dissemination system development Unit
35	Mr Miodrag Cerovina, Head, Unit for conceptual and methodological development and statistical business register
36	Ms Jelena Zdravković, Statistical advisor, Government finance statistics Unit
37	Ms Vesna Pantelić, Head, Labour market statistics Division
38	Ms Katarina Stančić, Head, Prompt and complex reporting and public policies support Division
39	Ms Biljana Ilić, Head, Regional coordination and elections Unit
40	Ms Danijela Mladenović, Statistical advisor, Domestic trade statistics Unit
41	Ms Gordana Jordanovski, Senior statistician, Vital statistics and migrations Unit
42	Ms Sanja Aksentijević, Head, Dissemination and PR Unit
43	Ms Slavica Vukojčić Ševo, Senior statistician, Unit for census organisation and statistics of migrants, residence permits and illegal migrations
44	Mr Dragan Popović, Head, IT system development unit
45	Mr Jovan Mamula, Senior statistician, Structural business statistics Division
46	Ms Marija Kovačević, Junior statistician, Staff and legal issues Division
47	Mr Mladen Veličković, Head, Legal and property issues Unit
48	Ms Gordana Žikić, Head, Data integration Division
49	Ms Dragana Đoković Papić, Head, Social indicators, justice administration and gender statistics Division
50	Ms Ljiljana Đorđević, Head, Census of population Division
	<b>Junior staff of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia</b>
51	Mr Petar Korović, Group for econometrics analyses
52	Ms Nevena Pavlović, Group for SILC and Sustainable Development Indicators
53	Ms Sanja Iričanin, Group for databases and IST developing
54	Ms Jelena Čalasan, Group for databases and IST developing
55	Ms Marija Mucić, Population Census Division, Group for methodology and analysis
56	Ms Marija Kovačević, Staff and legal issues division
57	Mr Uroš Rajčević, ICT usage statistics and business tendency Unit
58	Ms Olga Kostović, Group for Financial Monitoring of Projects, Accounting and Reporting
59	Mr Miloš Todorov, Analytics, IT and public information division

60	Ms Katarina Marjanović, Group for SILC and Sustainable Development Indicators
	<b>Other National Authorities</b>
61	Mr Marko Bajić, Assistant General Manager, Directorate for Economic Research and Statistics, National Bank of Serbia
62	Mr Aleksandar Pinkulj, Head, Balance of Payment Division, National Bank of Serbia
63	Ms Ivana Vasić, Adviser for Financial Accounts, Monetary Financial Statistics Unit, National Bank of Serbia
64	Ms Maja Krstić, Head, Database Development and Administration Unit, Institute of Public Health of Serbia "Dr Milan Jovanović Batut"
65	Mr Ivan Ivanović, Head, Informatics and Biostatistics Department, Institute of Public Health of Serbia "Dr Milan Jovanović Batut"
66	Ms Zorica Radosavljević, Head, Division for Statistics and Records, Ministry of Interior
67	Mr Ilijazi Venezija, Deputy Head, Department for Statistics, Analytics and Developments, Ministry of Interior
68	Mr Vladimir Mitrović, Inspector, Department for EU cooperation, Ministry of Interior
69	Ms Olga Kostić, Head, Department for IPSAS Application Metodology, Treasury – Ministry of Finance
70	Ms Nevenka Čolakov, Advisor, Department for IPSAS Application Metodology, Treasury – Ministry of Finance
71	Ms Zorica Đuričić, Head, Department for Public Payments and Fiscal Statistics, Treasury – Ministry of Finance
72	Ms Jelena Negić, Advisor, Department for Public Payments and Fiscal Statistics, Treasury – Ministry of Finance
73	Ms Milena Vujinović Vulović, Analyst, Group for Strategic Planning and Financial Risk Management, Public Debt Administration – Ministry of Finance
74	Ms Mirjana Bojčevski, Adviser, Unit for Analytics and Statistics, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management
75	Ms Jelena Vasiljević, Adviser, Group for organic production, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management
76	Mr Nebojša Redžić, Head, National Register of pollution sources Department, Serbian Environmental Protection Agency – Ministry of Environmental Protection
	<b>Main data providers/respondents</b>
77	Mr Branislav Dobrosavljević, Data services manager, Serbian Business Registers Agency
78	Ms Dušica Šorgić, Assistant director, Registry affairs, Central registry of compulsory social insurance
79	Mr Dragoslav Glišović, Sector coordinator, Sector for information and communication technology, Tax Administration – Ministry of Finance
80	Ms Ana Milošević, Legal specialist, Division for the e Judiciary, Ministry of Justice
81	Mr Predrag Arsić, Head of Statistics and BI Department, Serbian Customs Administration – Ministry of Finance
82	Mr Ivan Živković, Account Executive Public Sector, Microsoft

83	Ms Jelena Vasić, Head, Department for support to development, Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia
84	Mr Bojan Milaković, Manager, TEI - TECHNO DOO
	<b>Main users: Ministries and other public/private institutions (including the Central Bank)</b>
85	Mr Aleksandar Pinkulj, Head, Balance of Payment Division, National Bank of Serbia
86	Ms Ivana Vasić, Adviser for Financial Accounts, Monetary Financial Statistics Unit, National bank of Serbia
87	Mr Marko Bajić, Assistant General Manager, Directorate for Economic Research and Statistics, National bank of Serbia
88	Ms Biljana Mladenović, Economic Analyst and Adviser, Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit Government of the Republic of Serbia
99	Ms Lidija Kuzmanov, Employment and Economic Development Coordinator and Adviser, Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit Government of the Republic of Serbia
100	Mr Nikola Herak, Junior Adviser, Economic Affairs and Market Analysis Department, Regulatory Agency for Electronic Communications and Postal Services
101	Mr Ognjen Jančić, Head, Fiscal Analysis Group, Ministry of Finance
102	Ms Jelena Drašković, Advisor, Macroeconomic and Fiscal Analysis and Projections Department, Ministry of Finance
103	Mr Ivan Živković, Account Executive Public Sector, Microsoft
	<b>Main users: Media</b>
104	Mr Aleksandar Mikavica, Journalist, daily newspaper "Politka"
105	Mr Dimitrije Mita Boarov, Journalist, weekly newspaper "Vreme"
106	Ms Gordana Filipović, Journalist, Bloomberg
	<b>Main users: Scientific community</b>
107	Mr Vladimir Nikitović, Senior Research Associate, Centre for demographic research
108	Mr Milan Božić, Professor, Faculty of Mathematics, University of Belgrade
109	Mr Jovan Zubović, Director of Institute of Economic Sciences, Institute of Economic Sciences
110	Ms Danica Šantić, Professor, Faculty of Geography, University of Belgrade
111	Ms Jelena Stojilković Gnjatović, Professor, Faculty of Geography, University of Belgrade
112	Mr Zoran Radoičić, Professor, Faculty of Organisational Sciences, University of Belgrade
	<b>Main users: International organisations</b>
113	Ms Zorana Antonijević, National Programme Officer, Democratisation Department, OSCE
114	Mr Dragan Ignjatović, ex Project coordinator, Statistics Sweden Balkan Project Office
115	Mr Daniel Varga, Programme Associate for Monitoring and Evaluation and Learning Manager, UNDP
116	Ms Aleksandra Jović, Child Rights Monitoring Specialist, UNICEF
	<b>Statistical council</b>
117	Mr Branko Hinić, Director General, Directorate for Economic Research and Statistics, National Bank of Serbia

118	Mr Mladen Radović, Head, Department for prices, Ministry of Trade, Tourism and Telecommunication
119	Ms Nataša Čokorilo, Senior Advisor, Section for Strategic Analysis and Industrial Policy, Ministry of Economy
120	Ms Maja Krunić Lazić, Independent Advisor for Monitoring Economic Activities and Environmental Financing, Serbian Environmental Protection Agency, Ministry of Environmental Protection