**TWINNING CONTRACT**

**AM/14/ENP/ST/15**

# Strengthening of the National Statistical System of Armenia – Phase II

# MISSION REPORT

**on**

**Statistical Information Dissemination System**

**Activity 1.8:** **Follow-up on achievements and recommendations for the future**

Mission carried out by

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First draft

National Statistical Service
Republic of Armenia

**STATISTICS DENMARK**

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## List of Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| CMS | Content Management System |
| CoP | Code of Practice |
| EU | European Union |
| NSS | National Statistical System (of official statistics) |
| NSSRA | National Statistical Service of the Republic of Armenia |
| QAF | Quality Assurance Framework |

# 1. General comments

This mission report was prepared within the Twinning Project '' Strengthening of the National Statistical System of Armenia – Phase II''.
It is the final mission to be completed within Component 1 of the project.

The purposes of the mission were:
- To discuss the status regarding the component at the beginning of the project
- To discuss the status of the project results
- To prepare recommendations regarding the sustainability of the achievements
- To prepare recommendations for future work of NSSRA after the project finishes
- To identify outstanding issues and needs for further support, if any

The MS Experts would like to express their thanks to all officials and individuals met for the kind support and valuable information which was received during the stay in Armenia and which highly facilitated the work of the MS Experts.

This views and observations stated in this report are those of the consultant and do not necessarily correspond to the views of EU, NSSRA or Statistics Denmark, but represents our best professional opinion. It is important to stress that we both highly impressed by the dedication and the amount of results achieved by the NSSRA staff during the Twinning project.

We are convinced that the NSSRA will do everything necessary to ensure that the results and new procedures and initiatives will continue and flourish after the end of the Twinning project.

Two major issues should be kept in mind and guide the initiatives of the NSSRA in field of dissemination: These are "value to user" and the need for constant investment in the dissemination platform.

The second is the easiest. The IT infrastructure (hard and software) of behind www.armstat.am and armstatbank.am is now technologically obsolete and must be replaced sooner than later. The IT infrastructure behind our dissemination must be continuously changed and developed to reflect new technologies and the needs of our users. This is a question of staff and resources.

Carsten Zangenberg (Director for communication, methodology and sales, Statistics Denmark) formulated the principle of "value to users" at the users meeting on 1 June as: "*The usefulness and quality of a statistical product or service is not what we put in to it. It is what the users get out of it and how they can use it*".

Being guided by the principle of "value to users" requires a new focus and change of corporate culture and approach. This is a difficult and ongoing process at many NSI's including our own. But is a necessary process to ensure that we are both relevant and trusted in the future.

# 2. Status at the beginning of the project

During the definition of the projects work plan, it was decided to address the following issues:
- Updating the dissemination strategy
- Update and improve the user satisfaction survey
- Introduced tools and methods for systematic dialogue with users
- www.armstat.am needed to be modernized
- NSSRA needed input to continue work on quality issues in the newly established Quality unit

# 3. Status of project results

**Updating the dissemination strategy**
The dissemination strategy of the NSSRA have been updated to reflect best European and international practices. In principle there is no European legal framework describing requirements to the dissemination done by a national statistical institute. However a number of guidelines and requirements can be deduced from the European Code of Practice (CoP) and the associated Quality Assurance Frame work (QAF) used by Eurostat members. These documents shifts dissemination from paper / print and towards a purely electronic dissemination situation where print is a secondary option.

**Update and improve the user satisfaction survey**
The present NSSRA user satisfaction survey needed to be updated, so the NSSRA dissemination unit together with the Twinning project updated the survey. The survey has been changed to an internet based questionnaire.
Some decisions regarding the launch and target groups of the survey are still pending but these are minor and have no influence on the projects results.

**General trust survey**
Under CoP and QAF user satisfaction must be systematically monitored and reported. We believe that the NSSRA should also introduce a general trust survey. Trust in official statistics in many countries is problematically low. At the current moment, the level of trust in the NSSRA is not known. In order to monitor the progress of the dissemination work done by the NSSRA – a trust survey should be conducted as soon as possible. OECD is currently working on a methodological paper that NSSRA can use as inspiration for its work in this area.

**Tools and methods for systematic dialogue with users**
Both the communication and dissemination must be driven by the need of our users. As statistics has many different user groups we, as an NSI must undertake a systematic dialogue with our main user groups. The relevant user groups are usually defined and prioritized in the dissemination strategy. The Code of Practice and the QAF also require that we engage in a constant dialogue with users and systematically monitor their satisfactions. The need to update the Communication and Dissemination Strategy and improve the user satisfaction survey follows logically from this perspective of systematic monitoring and discussion. The recommendation that the NSSRA should introduce a general trust survey- is another "needed" tool for dialogue with users.

**Modernization of armstat.am**
The user friendliness of www.armstat.am was tested in a systematic way using the software tool usertesting.com. The results confirmed comments from users that it was often difficult and time consuming to locate figures and data on web site.
It was therefore decided to implement a major reorganization of the "front page" and to simplify and clean up the navigational architecture. What is usually known, as the "look and feel" was also made more clear and more up to date.
The CMS (Content Management System) behind armstat.am made it relatively easy to implement these changes when the basic understanding of the underlying system was realized

and understood by the IT staff. The necessary technical changes were then implemented with impressive professional skills and with great enthusiasm.
During the implementation comparisons with a number of European NSI's web sites were made and the staff got very inspired and now have a very clear idea about the way they would like to further develop the design and functionality of www.armstat.am.

The CMS is technically obsolete and a new CMS based on current technologies is needed before armstat.am can be further improved. The IT will need additional training in relevant technologies together with access to external technical support before armstat.am can be further modernized. At the moment available technology is the limiting factor and not staff skills.

**Quality Work**
During the first Twinning project the NSSRA together with staff from Statistics Denmark compiled a number of quality declarations and quality descriptions for statistical products. These quality declarations were compiled in Armenian and in English and disseminated through www.armstat.am. Tables in armstat.am are linked to these quality descriptions and these are generally used to provide users with documentation of the statistical products. During the first project systematic quality work was still in its infancy and standards were being discussed and formalized in international fora and in Eurostat's work. Quality is closely related to dissemination (meeting user needs for understanding the nature and limitations of each statistical product) and it's therefore naturally that this second twinning project dedicated tine to discuss how the quality work inside the ESS has developed since the first project. The NSSRA has lately established a dedicated quality unit. This is in line with current European best practices. According to Eurostat and the Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) a formal staff position of "Quality Manager" and the quality unit must be clearly shown in the NSI's organizational chart.

# 4. Sustainability of the achievements

Over all it is our conclusion that the results of the projects achievements in component 1: *Dissemination of Statistics* are sustainable.

The staff of the NSSRA is fully capable of continuing the work as done through the project implementation and as recommended in the various mission reports. Twinning as an instrument addresses only the technical capacity and competences of the staff. This means that sustainability ultimately depends on the NSSRA's capacity to retain staff with skills acquired through the Twinning project and theses staff members, willingness and capacity to transfer their skills and competences to other staff members.
From this perspective, there is no doubt that the achievements are sustainable however, from an infrastructure perspective there is reason for concern.

**Updating the dissemination strategy**
The dissemination strategy has been updated and we are sure that the NSSRA have the necessary skills to continue to update and change the strategy every second year as recommended by us. At the end of the day the sustainability of the dissemination strategy depends on the management support given to the activities defined in the strategy and the NSSRA's capacity for collecting and aggregating "users needs" into actions that can be implemented with the available resources.

**Update and improve the user satisfaction survey**
The improved and updated survey is sustainable. The sustainability issues lies in the analysis of the result and how conclusions based on the results are turned into action plans for improving the statistical products, the quality declarations and the dissemination.

**Introduced tools and methods for systematic dialogue with users**
In terms of the introduced "tools and methods for dialogue with the users" there are no sustainability issues however all dialogue with users is dependent on the institution also having the willingness, technical and financial resources to implement the recommendations from the users. So ultimately, the sustainability depends on the NSSRA's capacity to change – the tools themselves are sustainable. We recommend that formal "user boards" are introduced. Establishing such boards will require some resources that should be drawn from the subject matter units.

**Modernization of Armstat.am -IT – infrastructure**
The IT staff is generally highly skilled and motivate for carrying out changes to armstat.am and to armstatbank.am thereby ensuring these platforms are up to date and relevant. However, the hardware, operating system and software (CMS) running armstat.am is best described as dying and in serious need of updating. As we understand it, the NSSRA plans to replace these items during a coming project with the World Bank.

# 5. Recommendations for the future (short and long term)

Modernization of communication and dissemination strategy
Dissemination technology and user expectations are changing rapidly we therefore have following recommendations:

**Tools and systematic methods for interaction with users**
- Introduce formal user boards for specific (statistics) areas
- Add list of formal user boards and their members to official web site

**Updating the dissemination strategy**
The communication and dissemination strategy must be considered as a "living" document that needs if not constant then at least regular attention. We therefore recommend that the NSSRA should:
- Link main communication and dissemination strategy to relevant sub strategies – i.e Dissemination strategy for Agricultural Survey
- Consider other social media than Facebook (e.g. Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.) as tools for communicating directly with users (2017)
- Supplement the dissemination strategy with a chapter covering social media

**Introduce a user trust survey**
We recommend that the NSSRA introduces a user trust survey – to monitor the general trust in the work of the NSSRA and in official Armenia Statistics. The NSSRA should:

- Design the survey using recommendations from OECD – and to allow international comparison
- Conduct the survey in 2017 and in 2020 to have a comparative baseline

**Update and improve the user satisfaction survey**

Regarding the user satisfaction survey a few decisions still needs to be taken in short term – we therefore recommend that's these re taken before the end of project implementation and no later than the end of September 2017. These are:

- Conduct a focus group meeting with user representatives from the media and press before end of June 2017 – may be coupled with the launch of the new web site
- Make a decision on how to technically present the User Satisfaction Survey on the website
- Make a decision on how to distribute the survey to the relevant respondents
- Develop an action plan for communicating results from user survey to different user groups
- Develop an action plan for communicating results of user satisfaction survey to employees of the NSSRA –
- Develop an action plan to ensure the findings – lessons learned are incorporated into the day to day work

**Modernization of armstat.am**

Regarding armstat.am we have the following recommendations:

- Decide to launch the reworked armstata.am on June 15 2017 –
- Do not keep old web site – it will just confuse users
- Send out press release the day before that armstat.am will change – Put note on website
- Create master plan for electronic dissemination
- A budget must be set aside for a total replacement of hard & software behind armstat.am
- A budget for total hardware replacement for armstatbank.am
- Fully representative test and development environment to be established
- Align internet development with IT strategy (process to start)
- Staff training in relevant technologies –Java, Json, JsonStat, dot.NET, Internet Server technologies, tools for interactions and visualization

The recommendation regarding hardware replacement has some urgency. As the MS expert is concerned that the current hardware simply breaks down and leaves the NSSRA without internet dissemination.

**Quality work**

Regarding the quality work we can provide the following recommendations:
- Make sure that organizational chart reflects the unit dedicated to quality
- The position of quality manager must be clearly stated on armstat.am
- Quality policy / strategy for quality work must be easily available from armstat.am

# 6. Identification of needs for additional support

Most of the recommendations can be implemented, without the NSSRA receiving additional financial or technical support.

**Develop an editorial set up for the NSSRA**

We recommend that the NSSRA develops an editorial setup for communication and dissemination. Such a set up will require dedicated staff with skills, competences from press and media. Some of the necessary knowledge can be transferred by external assistance but to be really use full and to have the necessary impact staff with significant media experience must be recruited and retained by the NSSRA. We are quite sure that this will require additional day to day budget and external technical support during the period were the new editorial set up is introduced.

**Develop a strategy and associated action plan for digital publishing**

It is our opinion that the NSSTA ultimately will need to develop a strategy for digital publishing. In the not too distant future all print / paper publishing can be expected to end and then all publishing must happen in a digital format. This shift should be reflected in the modernization work to be done on armstat.am. Such a strategy should be developed in closed discussions with other NSI's and will therefore require additional external support.

**Modernizing armstat.am**

Modernizing armstat.am and at the same time developing a strategy for digital publishing require a large initial investment that most likely will require external financial support. The modernization should logically be derived from an overall strategy of digital publishing or at least the modernization of armstat.am must be sufficiently flexible to support whatever requirements that will come from a strategy for digital publishing. Before the modernization is initiated the NSSRA will need to develop a requirement specification and analyse the technical solutions available in NSI's and solutions locally available in Yerevan. This initial analytical work will require inputs from NSI experts and from local technical consultants. The modernized armstat.am will also require a new graphical "look and feel"- The graphical works needs to be sourced from a local design company.

# 7. Outstanding issues

Evaluated in relation to the projects mandatory results and the associated indicators of achievement in the contract, we as experts sees no outstanding issues. In the moment of writing a few things need to be tidied up or decided and the redesigned armstat.am must be made public but this will happen easily before the end of the project implementation period.

**Continuing to improve electronic dissemination**

In terms of the work done on [www.armstat.am](http://www.armstat.am) and armstatbank.am the NSSRA staff and we have started a number technical activities aimed at introducing maps, graphs and different types of interactions related to modern web dissemination. As the technical platform is tech-

nologically obsolete, it has not been possible to achieve all that the NSSRA staff and the MS consultant had hoped. Currently the IT staff's technical skills can not be put to its full use because of outdated IT systems. So as previously mention under the sustainability paragraph.

**Changing the image and perception of the NSSRA**
It is not addressed by the Twinning project's project description, the mandatory results and the indicators of achievement – but all the activities in component 1 has been designed to ultimately address and improve the image and public perception of NSSRA. This change is an ongoing issue and the NSSRA must constantly address this issue and work to improve its image.
Radical initiatives such as establish an editorial unit staffed with personal that has significant working experience from electronic mass media should be considered and this is most likely necessary if the NSSRA wants to fundamentally change its image in various mass media.

# Annex 1: Terms of Reference

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## Terms of Reference

## EU Twinning Project AM/14/ENP/ST/15

## 30 May – 2 June 2017

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**Component 1: Statistical Information Dissemination System**

**Activity 1.8: Follow-up on achievements and recommendations for the future**

**0. Mandatory results and benchmarks for the component**

Mandatory results:

- Statistical Information Dissemination System improved (July 2017)

Benchmarks:

- Statistical Information Dissemination System in place (July 2017)
- Statistical Information Dissemination System Strategy paper developed and adopted by the State Council on Statistics (July 2017)
- User satisfaction survey questionnaire updated, tested and published at the NSSRA website (July 2017)
- Staff of NSSRA trained on issues related to the Statistical Information Dissemination (July 2017)

**1. Purpose of the activity**

- To discuss the status regarding the component at the beginning of the project
- To discuss the status of the project results
- To prepare recommendations regarding the sustainability of the achievements
- To prepare recommendations for future work of NSSRA after the project finishes
- To identify outstanding issues and needs for further support, if any

**2. Expected output of the activity**

Dissemination component follow up (for each topic in the component):

- Status at the beginning of the project
- Status of the project results
- Sustainability of the achievements
- Recommendations for the future (short and long term)
- Clarification of outstanding issues

**3. Participants**

<u>**NSSRA**</u>
Component leaders
- Mr. StepanMnatsakanyan
- Ms. Anahit Safyan
- Mr. Vanush Davtyan
- Ms. Narine Musheghyan

Other staff
- Ms. Silva Ulubabyan
- Ms. Nelly Margaryan
- Ms. Gohar Nshanyan
- Ms. Alina Hunanyan
- Mrs. Amine Martikyan
- Mrs. Lilit Karapetyan
- Ms. Aida Martirosyan
- Ms. Armenuhi Arushanyan
- Ms. Sona Shakhgeldyan

<u>**MS experts**</u>

- Mr. Carsten Zangenberg, Expert, Statistics Denmark
- Mr. Jesper Ellemose Jensen, Expert, Statistics Denmark

# Annex 2. Programme for the mission

| Time | Place | Event | Purpose / detail |
|---|---|---|---|
| Tuesday, afternoon *(30/5)* | NSSRA | Meeting with RTA | To discuss the programme of the week |
| *Website improvement* | NSSRA | Meeting with BC Component Leader and BC Experts | Assessment of situation and presentation by BC of the work conducted since last mission *related to website improvement*<br><br>Follow-up on outstanding issues *related to website improvement* |
| Wednesday, morning *(31/5)*<br><br>*Website improvement* | NSSRA | Meeting with BC Component Leader and BC Experts | Follow-up on outstanding issues *related to website improvement* continued<br><br>Identification of needs for additional support *related to website improvement* |
| Wednesday, afternoon *(31/5)* | NSSRA | Meeting with BC Component Leader and BC Experts | Discussion of status of project results within the component on dissemination<br><br>Follow-up on outstanding issues *related to the component on dissemination in general*<br><br>Discussion on how to ensure sustainability of the achievements |
| Thursday, morning *(1/6)* | NSSRA | Meeting with stakeholders | Discussions of the way forward after the Twinning project and what to be recommend-ed for the future (short and long term) |
| Thursday, afternoon *(1/6) 14:30* | NSSRA | Meeting with BC Component Leader and BC Experts | Meeting with stakeholders |
| Friday, morning *(2/6)* | NSSRA | Meeting with BC Component Leader<br><br>Ad-hoc meetings | Preparation of final conclusions, recommenda-tions and Mission Report |
| Friday, afternoon *(2/6)* | NSSRA | Debriefing with BC Project Lead-er | Discussion of MS Experts' findings and agreement on the reached conclusions<br><br>De-briefing and presentation for BC Project Leader |

# Annex 3: Persons met

**NSSRA:**

- Stepan Mnatsakanyan, President of the NSSRA
- Anahit Safyan, Member of the State Council of Statistics
- Narine Musheghyan, Statistical Information Dissemination and Public Relations Division
- Anahit Nersisyan, Transport and Communication Statistics Division
- Gohar Nshanyan, Statistical Information Dissemination and Public Relations Division
- Armine Martikyan, Statistical Information Dissemination and Public Relations Division
- Arsen Avagyan, Agriculture Statistics Division
- Armen Martirosyan, Balance of Payments and Foreign Trade Statistics Division
- Anahit Nazaryan, Construction Statistics division
- Anna Amroyan, Household Surveys division
- Lusine Markosyan, Household Surveys division
- Hasmik Yeghiazaryan, International statistical cooperation unit
- Sona Shakhgeldyan, IT department
- Aida Martirosyna, IT department
- Armenuhi Arushanyn, IT department
- Movses Chapanyan, IT department
- Lusine Kalantaryan, Labour Statistics Division
- Susanna Khachartyan, Macroeconomic Indicators and National Accounts Division
- Nadezhda Astvatsaturova, Macroeconomic Indicators and National Accounts Division
- Georgi Torosyan, Population Census and Demography Division
- Karine Kuyumjyan, Population Census and Demography Division
- Mariam Yeritsyan, Price Statistics and International Comparisons Division
- Ruzanna Shaboyan, Quality assurance unit
- Alina Grigoryan, Social Shpere and Nature Protection division
- Ani Hambardzumyan, Social Shpere and Nature Protection division
- Suzanna Khachartyan, Trade and Other Services Statistics Division
- Satenik Hakobyan, Trade and Other Services Statistics Division

**External stakeholders:**

- A. Movsisyan, Armenian National Agrarian University
- Hakob Khachatryan, Armenian National Agrarian University
- Nina Vardanyan, Armenian National Agrarian University
- Lusine Kostanyan, Armenian National Agrarian University
- Gevorg Keshsishyan, Armenian National Agrarian University
- Hasmik Ghazaryan, Armenian National Agrarian University
- Anahit Mnatsakanyan, Armenian National Agrarian University
- Armen Broyan, Armenian State University of Economics

- Suzy Muradyan, Armenpress news agency
- Diana Afyan, Central Bank of Armenia
- Miakhayil Melkonyan, International Information Agency "Novosti Armenia"
- Arevik Torosyan, National Institute of Healthcare
- Narine Rushanyan, RA Ministry of Culture
- Shushan Gjarzoyan, RA Ministry of Diaspora
- Lusine Zhazhoyan, RA Ministry of Emergency Situations
- Lilit Gharibyan, RA Ministry of Emergency Situations
- Siranush Badalyan, RA Ministry of Emergency Situations
- Anna Papyan, RA Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources
- Garik Mkartchyan, RA Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources
- Narek Karapetyan, RA Ministry of Finance
- Hayk Barseghyan, RA Ministry of Justice
- Artyom Mesropyan, RA Ministry of Justice
- Armine Matosyan, RA Ministry of Labor and Social Issues
- Nune Hovhannisyan, RA Ministry of Nature Protection
- Hasmik Hovhannisyan, RA Ministry of Nature Protection
- Vahagn Petrosyan, RA Ministry of Territorial Administration and Development
- Ashot Avetisyan, RA Ministry of Territorial Administration and Development
- Iveta Arzumanyan, RA Ministry of Transport, Communication and Information Technologies
- Arman Galstyan, RA Ministry of Transport, Communication and Information Technologies
- Alla Karapetyan, RA National Academy of Sciences
- Lusine Aleksanyan, Research Institute of Labor and Social Issues
- Hasmik Khachatryan, State Committee of Urban Planning adjunct to the Government of Armenia
- Ashot Avagyan, State Committee of Urban Planning adjunct to the Government of Armenia
- Armen Kocharyan, State Committee of Urban Planning adjunct to the Government of Armenia
- Tatev Mirzoyan, Yerevan today


**RTA Team:**

- Peter Bohnstedt Anan Hansen, Resident Twinning Adviser
- Liana Atoyan, RTA Assistant
- Anush Poghosyan, RTA Language Assistant