

# 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 1.2: Cooperation with users and producers I

Mission carried out by

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**List of Abbreviations**

EU	European Union
ID	Identifier
NSI	National Statistical Institute (e.g. NSSRA)
NSS	National Statistical System (of official statistics)
NSSRA	National Statistical Service of the Republic of Armenia
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding

## 1. General comments

This mission report was prepared within the Twinning Project “Strengthening of the National Statistical System of Armenia – Phase II”. This was the second activity in component 1 and the actions planned for this activity were carried out as scheduled.

The purposes of the mission were:

- Discussions on how to deal with users of statistics and their different needs
- Presentation and discussion on how to develop Memoranda of Understanding with public authorities on sharing data
- Discussion on how to organise systematic training of users
- Development of plan to cooperate with users and producers
- To involve relevant stakeholders in the discussions

The consultants would like to express their sincere thanks to all officials and individuals met for the kind support and valuable information which they received during the stay in Armenia, and which highly facilitated their work. The views and observations stated in this report are those of the consultants and do not necessarily correspond to the views of EU, NSSRA or Statistics Denmark.

## 2. Assessment and results

The mission addressed three issues:

1. *Cooperation with users: the media*
2. *Cooperation with providers of administrative data for statistics*
3. *Coordination of the National Statistical System*

### 2.1. Cooperation with users: the media

A successful user meeting with media was conducted as an example of how other user meetings could be held. In preparation of the meeting, NSSRA had prepared and discussed with the experts a set of 22 questions to spur the comments of the media. These questions touched upon many different issues like which data sources the users use, timeliness of the statistics published, trust in the statistics produced, access to release calendar etc. The entire set of questions asked at the user meeting can be found in annex 4 to this report. These set of questions can be used as inspiration for meetings with other user groups in order to facilitate the discussion.

In order to get as open a feed-back as possible, the meeting was conducted in such a way that the experts put the questions and managed the discussion, and NSSRA officials only spoke when specifically asked to do so. This model worked very well and could be used for some future user meetings. However, it is important that NSSRA establish their own relations with user groups and conduct such meetings on a regular basis.

Even though only 5 media were present, there was an open and constructive exchange of views and information, and the representatives contributed with frank statements.

Comments and advice from the media for further development and prioritizing of the dissemination will be taken into account by NSSRA. These included:

- ▶ TRUST: NSSRA is considered a reliable source. However, it seems that they are not always objective. There is a need for NSSRA to demonstrate that they are independent. (e.g. explain

that the international codex Statistics Code of Practice is followed, controlled by Eurostat, Light Peer review is made etc.)

- ▶ **DOCUMENTATION:** The Media do not use and were not aware of the documentation available (Quality declarations). However, they felt a need for easily available and understandable explanations.
- ▶ **RELEASE CALENDAR:** No awareness about pre-announcing releases, and no awareness that pre-announcing is a symbol of the NSS being independent of political influences.
- ▶ **CONTACT:** When statistics are needed the media use the web page of NSSRA or contact the experts by telephone. This works satisfactorily. Statisticians are available and searching the web site is usually OK.
- ▶ **REVISIONS and ERRORS:** Media feel fully informed when published data are corrected because of errors. They are also aware that preliminary data could change when final data later are presented.
- ▶ **IMPROVEMENTS:** To a large extent the Media are satisfied with NSSRA. It was, however, mentioned that in particular statistics about economics, labour market and education should be improved as well as the link between education and labour.
- ▶ **OPENNESS:** There is a huge interest (a mutual one) in continuing and expanding the contact between media and NSSRA. Media would like to be invited to seminars and discussion events on
  - ▶ Different topics
  - ▶ To know more about the frame /conditions the NSSRA works under
  - ▶ To learn about how statistics are produced and disseminated internationally

Training needs for external users were identified: Representatives of the media expressed interest in seminars and training sessions organised by NSSRA in order to better understand and be able to use statistics in their work.



*The focus group meeting 9 December 2015 at NSSRA with users from the mass media (photo Armenpress).*

## 2.2. Cooperation with providers of administrative data for statistics

There is a need to strengthen the cooperation with providers of data for statistics in order to

- ensure that administrative data providers understand the needs for statistics and do their best, within reason, to accommodate these needs
- understand if the administrative authority can be helped in their work by the statistics produced
- ensure that NSSRA is fully informed about the contents and quality of the data
- ensure timely and efficient delivery of the data
- ensure that NSSRA gets early warning when data will be changed, e.g. as a result of changed legislation

In another project, Statistics Norway had given advice on cooperation with providers of administrative data and had delivered a draft template that could be used as a basis for NSSRA's work. This template was discussed with the MS experts and the following conclusions were made:

- The template recommended by Statistics Norway on Cooperation agreement (MOU) with providers of administrative data for statistics is a comprehensive and very useful model. It is recommended to use it as a basis for discussions with data providers aiming to reach agreements and improve cooperation.
- However, it may prove difficult to persuade data providers to fulfil all of the provisions of the template, as their primary objective is administration, not statistics. This could necessitate modifications of the template.
- The MOU is to be translated to Armenian and tested against the Ministry of Environment.

## 2.3. Coordination of the National Statistical System (NSS)

The coordination of the National Statistical System was not specifically mentioned in the Terms of Reference, but it was found to be useful to include a discussion of this issue, which is somewhat related to the issue discussed under 2.2. above.

The National Statistical System consists of all producers of official statistics in the country. A definition of official statistics was offered by the experts and accepted as a basis for future work on National Statistical System. The definition is as follows: Statistics provided by public bodies / the state; describing the demographic, social and economic situation of the country and parts of the country: Official statistics should provide quantitative or qualitative information on all major areas of citizens' lives, such as economic and social development, living conditions, health, education, and the environment. Official statistics should provide a common reference frame for discussions among citizens and decision makers.

The challenges and opportunities of coordination of a national statistical system were outlined for further inspiration. These can include:

1. Total centralisation (however this is impossible, but it may be possible to move in this direction)
2. Common standards
  - Common definitions of certain central statistical concepts
  - Standards for output data
  - Standards for metadata
- 3 Guidelines, e.g. on sampling, seasonal adjustment
4. Sharing of (micro) data, without or with ID
5. Common dissemination
  - Users shouldn't need to care who produced the statistics
6. Metadata portal

7. Certification by the NSI
  - Label "Official Statistics"
  - Example [tilastokeskus.fi/meta/svt/index\\_en.html](http://tilastokeskus.fi/meta/svt/index_en.html)
  - To obtain this label, the producer must comply with standards and quality requirements
8. Assistance from the NSI, e.g., training courses or advice
9. Organisation
  - Bilateral meetings with most important producers
    - Who reports to international organisations?
    - Which ones are most important?
  - NSS Coordination Committee
    - Chair and secretary: NSSRA
    - 2 or 4 meetings per year
    - Agree on standards and requirements
  - Peer Review
    - E.g. by EU
    - Should include other producers

The experts gave a presentation on this issue to all heads of units – see the related PowerPoint presentation on Coordination of NSS.

### 3 . Conclusions and recommendations

The broad headings for the recommendations were:

- NSSRA should continue the user involvement by inviting other important user like Universities and ministries /Central bank to user meetings
- NSSRA should conclude on a priority plan for dissemination activities for the next year
- After pilot test of the agreement with data providers (the Ministry of the Environment), the template should be adjusted to be used for negotiations with other providers
- NSSRA should make a plan for external training courses, based on the wishes expressed in the user meeting with the media.

### 4. Road map and time plan until next mission in March 2016

#### *a. Cooperation with users*

- The media: NSSRA should prepare and send to all invited media a report on the outcome of the focus group meeting. The report should clarify what NSSRA is going to do to satisfy the needs expressed, including training courses or seminars.
- Ministries: NSSRA should prepare for a focus group meeting to be conducted during next mission
- Research: NSSRA should prepare for a focus group meeting to be conducted during next mission

#### *b. Cooperation with providers of administrative data for statistics*

NSSRA should:

- Test the Norwegian template for MOU with the Ministry of Environment
- Report on the result
- Draft changes to the template

***c. Coordination of the National Statistical System***

NSSRA should.

- Select the three most important producers of official statistics
- Draft a list of possible activities.



# Annex 1: Terms of Reference

## Terms of Reference

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

7-10 December 2015

#### Component 1: Statistical Information Dissemination System

##### Activity 1.2: Cooperation with users and producers I

#### 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

- Discussions on how to deal with users of statistics and their different needs
- Presentation and discussion on how to develop Memoranda of Understanding with public authorities on sharing data
- Discussion on how to organise systematic training of users
- Development of plan to cooperate with users and producers
- To involve relevant stakeholders in the discussions

#### 2. Expected output of the activity

- Strategy and plan for cooperation with users, including training and organisational setup
- Strategy and plan for cooperation with other producers of official statistics, including organisational setup
- Outline of the National Statistical System (NSS)
- A lining up of work programme for the next activity (1.3 is scheduled to 29 February-3 March 2016)

#### 3. Participants

##### NSSRA

Component leaders

- Mr. Stepan Mnatsakanyan

- Ms. Anahit Safyan
- Ms. Narine Musheghyan

Other staff

- Ms. Silva Ulubabyan
- Ms. Nelly Margaryan
- Ms. GoharNshanyan
- Ms. Alina Hunanyan
- Mrs. Amine Martikyan
- Mrs. Lilit Karapetyan

**MS experts**

Ms. Annegrete Wulff, Expert, Statistics Denmark

Mr. Lars Thygesen, Expert, Statistics Denmark

**Otherstakeholders taking part in the activity**

Representatives also to be invited:

- Representative of “AR” TV channel
- Representative of “Armenpress” news agency
- Representative of “Arminfo” news agency
- Representative of “PanArmenian.Net” news agency
- Representative of Public radio of Armenia

## Annex 2: Programme for the mission

<b>Time</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Purpose / detail</b>
Monday, noon	Hotel / NSSRA	Meeting with RTA	To discuss the programme of the week
Monday, afternoon	NSSRA	Meeting with BC Component Leader and BC Experts	Assessment of current situation  Discussions on how to deal with users of statistics and their different needs
Tuesday, morning	NSSRA	Meeting with BC Component Leader and BC Experts	Presentation and discussion on how to develop Memoranda of Understanding with public authorities on sharing data
Tuesday, afternoon	NSSRA	Meeting with BC Component Leader and BC Experts	Preparation for stakeholder meeting
Wednesday, morning 11:00	NSSRA <i>In meeting room</i>	Meeting with stakeholders	Meeting with stakeholders
Wednesday, afternoon	NSSRA  <i>In meeting room</i>	Meeting with BC Component Leader and BC Experts	Discussion on how to organise systematic training of users Development of plan to cooperate with users and producers  Presentation and discussions the Coordination of the National Statistical System (NSS)
Thursday, morning	NSSRA	Meeting with BC Component Leader	Presentation of MS Experts' findings and agreement on the reached conclusions
Thursday, morning	NSSRA	Ad-hoc meetings	Final clarifications with BC Experts, prepara- tion of report and presentation for BC Project Leader
Thursday, afternoon	NSSRA	Debriefing with BC Project Lead- er	Conclusions and recommendations for the next activity and the implied work programme for BC Experts

## **Annex 3: Persons met**

### **NSSRA:**

Stepan Mnatsakanyan, NSSRA President  
 Anahit Safyan, Member of State Council on Statistics  
 Narine Musheghyan, Statistical Information Dissemination and Public Relations Division  
 Nelli Margaryan, Statistical Information Dissemination and Public Relations Division  
 Armine Martikyan, Statistical Information Dissemination and Public Relations Division  
 Lilit Karapetyan, Statistical Information Dissemination and Public Relations Division  
 Gohar Nshanyan, Statistical Information Dissemination and Public Relations Division  
 Silva Ulababyan, Statistical Information Dissemination and Public Relations Division  
 Aida Martirosyan, Information Resources Management and Technologies Department  
 Sona Shahgeldyan, Information Resources Management and Technologies Department  
 Tatevik Avetisyan, Information Resources Management and Technologies Department  
 Karine Yesayan, Information Resources Management and Technologies Department  
 Armenuhi Arushanyan, IT Development Division  
 Hasmik Yeghiazaryan, International Statistical Co-operation Division  
 Ruzanna Shaboyan, International Statistical Co-operation Division  
 Hasmik Soghomonyan, International Statistical Co-operation Division  
 Karine Kuyumjyan, Population Census and Demography Division  
 Diana Martirosova, Head of Household Surveys Division  
 Hasmik Karapetyan, Price Statistics and International Comparisons Division  
 Nelly Baghdasaryan, Social Sphere and Nature Protection Division  
 N. Astvatsatutova, Macroeconomic Indicators and National Accounts Division  
 Marina Petrosyan, Construction Statistics Division  
 Vardan Arevshatyan, Business-register Division  
 Haykush Titizyan, Finance Statistics Division  
 Artavazd Galstyan, Printing and Copying Division  
 Lusine Kalantaryan, Labour Statistics Division  
 Siranush Zeynalyan, Labour Statistics Division  
 Ani Aloyan, Internal Audit Department  
 Anahit Avetisyan, Food Security Statistics Division  
 Gayane Gevorgyan, Industry Statistics Division  
 Margarita Petrosyan, Procurement and Logistics Division  
 Arsen Avagyan, Agriculture Statistics Division  
 Lusine Kalantaryan, Labour Statistics Division  
 Anahit Harutyunyan, Trade and Other Services Statistics Division  
 Kristine Poghosyan, Balance of Payments and Foreign Trade Statistics Division  
 Armenuhi Arushanyan, IT Development Division  
 Ruzanna Petrosyan, IT Development Division

### **External stakeholders:**

Alisa Gevorgyan, Public Radio of Armenia  
 Gevorg Perkuperkyan, Armenpress news agency  
 Alina Hovhannisyan, Arminfo news agency  
 Karosolakyan, PanArmenian.Net  
 Representative from AR TV channel

### **RTA Team:**

Mr. Peter Bohnstedt Anan Hansen, Resident Twinning Adviser  
 Ms. Margarit Bejanyan, RTA Assistant  
 Ms. Anush Poghosyan, RTA Language Assistant

## **Annex 4: List of questions asked at the user meeting with media**

1. What official statistics do you use and what sources do you use?
2. In what ways/methods do you receive statistical information (mail, e-mail, web, library, telephone, meetings) and which preferable method fully meets your needs?
3. Last time when did you need statistical data?
4. Are you familiar with the methodology/documentation of official statistics?
5. What sources do you use ([www.armstat.am](http://www.armstat.am) , [www.armstatbank.am](http://www.armstatbank.am) , [www.armDevinfo.am](http://www.armDevinfo.am) , press releases, data bases etc.)?
6. Are you aware of the Release Calendar of Statistical Indicators?
7. Are you informed that there exists the Calendar of Statistical Publications according to which the timetable of publications is announced in advance?
8. In your opinion, is official statistics published according to the announced timetable?
9. In case of errors in published statistics, do you feel informed about the error?
10. Do you have trust in published statistics and what opinion do you have about the other sources?
11. Do you use NSSRA press releases, statistical glossary, open library, electronic list of the library?
12. Are you aware of the revision policy on statistical indicators?
13. Which way of communication do you prefer with the NSSRA?
14. Are you pleased with the search system in the NSSRA webpage? Do you find what you are searching?
15. Do you use other searching tools such as Google, Yahoo, Yandex ....?
16. Where should Armstat improve to fulfill your needs?
17. What's your opinion, if there is a need to organize such meetings, seminars, trainings and workshops in NSSRA often?
18. Are you informed that the NSSRA produces statistics but cannot provide individual data?
19. Do you use the web-pages of other organizations (RA Central Bank, European Union, World Bank...)?
20. Is NSSRA open and transparent in your every-day work?
21. Do you think you can get the information you need through a telephone call?