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Support to the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics in Improving the Quality of Official Statistics

MISSION REPORT

on

Component A

Quality Management of Official Statistics

Activity A.6

Coordination of the national statistical system – development of a roadmap

Implemented by

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List of Abbreviations

| | |
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| BC | Beneficiary country |
| CoP | European Statistics Code of Practice |
| ENP | European Neighbourhood Policy |
| EU | European Union |
| GSBPM | The Generic Statistical Business Process Model |
| ICBS | Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics |
| MS | Member State (of the EU) |
| NSI | National Statistical Institute |
| NSS | National statistical system |
| OECD | Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development |
| ONA | Other National Authorities |
| QAF | Quality Assurance Framework of the European Statistical System |
| ToR | Terms of Reference |

Executive Summary

The main purpose of the activity is to develop a roadmap for the coming years to initiate coordination and quality assurance in Israel's national statistical system (NSS).

The activity included presentations and discussions on the strategic as well as operational aspects of introducing coordination and quality management in the NSS, specifically:

- *Current Status for the Coordination of the National Statistical System in Israel*
- *Experiences and input gained from the ICBS study visit to Sweden and UK*
- *Formulating a coordination policy/strategy - coordination and quality assurance in the Danish statistical system, followed by a discussion with the ICBS top management on the overall strategic direction for coordination and quality management in the Israeli NSS*
- *From policy to practical implementation – experiences with implementation and monitoring of national quality guidelines in Denmark*
- *Workshop on developing a roadmap for the work to be carried out by the ICBS to initiate coordination and quality assurance in Israel's NSS.*
- *Presentation to and acceptance of draft roadmap by the top management of the ICBS.*

Presentations given by experts stressed the need to identify the overall strategic goals and the key drivers for establishing coordination before initiating the implementation of coordination and quality assurance activities. Furthermore, the need for active involvement of Other National Authorities producing statistics (ONAs) and for creating a common frame of reference among ONAs and the National Statistical Institute (NSI) was stressed. Finally, potential instruments and organisational settings for introducing a coordination and quality assurance framework in the NSS were discussed.

During the mission a draft roadmap was developed laying out key milestones and specific deliverables for ICBS in implementing coordination and quality assurance (enclosed as Annex A6 – 8 to this report). The need to introduce a step-by-step approach allowing the possibility to 'think big, but begin small' was stressed. The roadmap was presented to the ICBS top management and was well received.

1. General comments

This mission report was prepared as part of the Twinning Project "Support to the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics (ICBS) in Enhancing the Quality of Official Statistics". This was the sixth activity within Component A: Quality Management of Official Statistics, devoted to Coordination of the Israeli National Statistical System (NSS).

The main purpose of the activity was to develop a roadmap for the work to be carried out by the ICBS in order to establish and implement coordination and quality assurance within the Israeli NSS.

The main activities of the mission were:

- Presentations by BC regarding current status for the coordination of the national statistical system in Israel and experiences and input gained from the ICBS study visit to Sweden and UK.
- Presentations by MS experts on introducing coordination and quality assurance in the Danish statistical system both from a strategic and operational/practical perspective.
- A discussion with ICBS top management regarding the overall strategic direction for coordination and quality management in the Israeli NSS.
- A workshop with BC and MS experts drawing up a roadmap for the implementation of coordination and quality management in the Israeli NSS and presentation of roadmap for ICBS top management.

The experts would like to express their thanks to all officials and individuals met for their kind support, for the valuable information they provided and for the fruitful discussions that took place during the mission, which highly facilitated the experts' work.

The views and observations stated in this report are those of the experts and do not necessarily represent the views of the EU, the ICBS or Statistics Denmark.

2. Assessment and Results

The first day of this mission started with a meeting with the quality and coordination team and the experts. The quality and coordination team expressed the following expectations for the mission:

- 1) reaching a common agreement and clarification of the direction of the future work
- 2) a practical workshop specifying the concrete next steps to be taken

The morning continued with a presentation given by Mr. Ari Patiel on the coordination of Israel's national statistical system including the foundations, current activities, concerns and difficulties. This formed the basis for clarifying questions from the experts and a discussion of some of the potential key drivers in setting up a coordination and quality assurance framework, including: 1) requirements derived from membership of OECD and other international organisations (IMF, UN), 2) demand from the public, the press (senior journalists), the ministries, the research unit of Knesset etc. 3) the link between quality standards and funding (e.g. methodological and metadata standards for surveys).

Subsequently, Ms Batia Attali presented the experience gained from the ICBS study visit to Sweden and the UK, including the differences in legal and organisational set-up for national coordination of the statistical systems in the two countries. The potential applicability of the instruments used in Sweden and the UK was discussed.

In the afternoon representatives from the management joined and Mr. Kim Voldby Pedersen presented the Danish experience in introducing coordination and quality assurance in the Danish statistical system, including the formulation of a Danish action plan for official statistics, the key drivers for enhanced coordination in the Danish statistical system as well as the 4 preconditions for successful coordination: 1) Mapping of the statistics produced by public authorities in the NSS, 2) Common quality standards, 3) Monitoring of compliance with the common quality standards and 4) Enforcement of the quality standards (e.g. labelling). Mr. Voldby finalised the presentation with some key reflections on potential challenges to be addressed in an Israeli context, including the following questions:

- Is there a burning platform? – What are the drivers (political, financial, statistical) for establishing coordination and quality assurance?
- Is there political and institutional support for enhanced coordination?
- What is the nature of the statistical legal framework in Israel – does it provide a sufficient mandate or is there a need for a revision?
- Should a 'stick' or a 'carrot' driven process be pursued?
- Is there a need for some strategic reflections before setting out?

This was followed by a discussion in the management group on the strategic aspects of coordination and quality assurance in an Israeli context (the initial discussion took place first in English with the presence of the Danish experts and afterwards an internal discussion took place between the ICBS staff in Hebrew). The main conclusions of this discussion were:

- The overall path/approach to be taken should *not* be regulatory, but should be based on creating incentives for the partners of the NSS to take part (voluntarily) and commit themselves to coordination and quality assurance (a 'carrot' driven approach).

- The ‘carrots’ (benefits) for the other national authorities producing statistics (ONAs) in the NSS will be to gain professional pride and reputation by being a member of the NSS and complying with the quality standards thereof.
- In terms of the implementation strategy, the management emphasised the need to involve the other national authorities/members of the NSS in the formulation of the vision and strategy for the NSS in order to create ownership.
- The ICBS should start first with those ONAs who are already interested in becoming ‘ambassadors’ for the coordination strategy.
- There is a need to ensure a budget for coordination.

Day 2 started with a summing up of day 1 with the quality and coordination team and the experts, including a summary of the internal ICBS discussing on day 1.

After this, Ms. Naja Andersen and Ms. Karin Blix presented the practical experiences in implementing national quality guidelines (a “pixie” version of the Code of Practice) and monitoring in Denmark - highlighting the need for involvement of ONAs and for creating a common reference frame among ONAs and NSI. The presentation gave rise to a discussion of the various challenges and lessons learned from the Danish experience and how this could be translated into an Israeli context.

In the afternoon, the overall goals and elements to be included in the roadmap were discussed based on the materials and questions prepared by the ICBS staff as well as the presentations given by the experts and the discussions of the previous day and half. It was decided that the ICBS team should prepare for the next day a preliminary draft of the overall goals (vision) for coordination of the NSS as this would be a precondition for laying down the roadmap.

Day 3 began once again with reflections on the previous day and the ICBS team presented the following overall goal and four sub-goals for coordination of the NSS:

Providing high quality statistical information to the public

- Common quality standards
- Mechanism of coordination
- Common commitment to quality and coordination
- Creating a community

After this, the experts presented a potential structure for a roadmap based on the Danish experience and the input gained from ICBS. This served as a basis for the following discussion and drafting of a roadmap facilitated by the experts. By the end of the day a draft roadmap was in place specifying the key milestones and specific deliverables as well as specifying, where possible, responsible persons/bodies and deadlines. The roadmap can be found as an Annex to this report (Annex A6 – 8).

Day 4 started with a meeting of the ICBS coordination and quality team and the experts going through the roadmap prepared the day before settling some outstanding issues before presenting the draft roadmap to the management. The experts also presented their suggestions for recommendations from the mission, which were well received by the quality and coordination team.

After this, representatives of the ICBS top management joined and Ms. Sigalit Mazeh and Mr. Ari Paltiel presented the roadmap, which was received very well. Mr. Kim Voldby also presented the recommendations of the experts to the top management, who welcomed the recommendations.

The mission was finalised with a debriefing and summing up of the activity conclusions. This included a few adjustments of the roadmap based on the meeting with the top management, a follow up on indicators of achievements of the component, a discussion on upcoming missions, as well as feedback on the current mission. Both the ICBS and the experts expressed their satisfaction with the mission (planning, preparation and execution), the good discussions and the outcome (the roadmap).

3. Conclusions and recommendations

3.1. General observations

The ICBS team has already been discussing and reflecting on issues related to coordination in the NSS for some time. The participating staffs are highly knowledgeable of the subject and of the issues at stake and are very motivated in progressing with this task.

In order to move forward, the ICBS has to take a number of concrete strategic and practical decisions as outlined in the roadmap regarding the approach, the instruments and the tools to be used in the coordination and quality assurance of the Israeli NSS.

The experts recommend that the ICBS implement the roadmap developed during the mission (see Annex A6 – 8) taking into consideration the recommendations given below.

Recommendations:

- Finalise details of roadmap, including deadlines and responsible persons by 31 March 2017.
- Present roadmap to top management for approval.
- Present roadmap and start dialogue with the chairman of the Public Council on Statistics.
- Present monthly status report to the top management and quarterly report to the board on progress on implementation of the roadmap.
- First draft of action plan for coordination and quality assurance in the Israeli NSS to be finalised before 1 August 2017.
- Think big, start small when it comes to harmonisation of standards, guidelines, definitions etc.
- Take a step-wise approach according to your chosen priorities in implementing the long term vision – start with the implementation of a pixie-version of quality standards (CoP) and proceed with detailed harmonisation later on.