



COORDINATION OF ISRAEL'S NATIONAL STATISTICAL SYSTEM: FOUNDATIONS, CURRENT ACTIVITIES, CONCERNS AND DIFFICULTIES

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It's All in the Numbers!



FOUR ASPECTS OF COORDINATION

- 1. The legal foundations
- 2. The institutional responsibility of the Public Council for Statistics and its relationship to the ICBS
- 3. Coordination of International Statistics and satisfying international standards.
- 4. Quality Assurance and quality management of NSS statistics

THE LEGAL FOUNDATION

- The law governing the activities of the Central Bureau of Statistics is [the Statistics Ordinance \(New Version\), 5732 – 1972](#)
- specifies the responsibilities of the National Statistician and the ICBS which he heads in coordinating the statistical system of the state agencies, and the roles of the Public Council for Statistics in the national statistical system generally.
- It is quite comprehensive and specifies the following functions :



THE LEGAL FOUNDATION

- **Professional Leadership** by the National Statistician: he/she “guides” the statistical system, based on “scientific principles” and must be consulted by state institutions.
- **Planning, Coordination and Documentation by the Public Council on Statistics (PCS) and the ICBS** - preparation of long term plans, uniform statistical classifications, collection and publishing information on statistical activities carried out by state institutions

THE LEGAL FOUNDATION

- **Advisory and Coordination function of the PCS –**
“advises The Prime Minister and the government on matters relating to the statistical activities conducted by state institutions” as well as advising the National Statistician concerning the activities of the ICBS
- Receives national statistical plans and comments on them re: coordination and efficiency.

REVIEW BY STATE COMPTROLLER:

COORDINATION FUNCTION NOT CARRIED OUT SUFFICIENTLY

- *The ICBS should take the actions necessary to improve its joint activities with state institutions, in a manner which will enable it to ascertain that the statistical information it publishes meets the professional standards necessary for statistics; state institutions...should cooperate with the ICBS and permit it to exercise its functions, and in addition they should provide it with information and consult it in all matters which the Statistical Ordinance requires; the Chairperson of the Public Council for Statistics should ascertain that the Council will take the decisions that will enable it to give substance to its activities and to fulfill its role as set out in the Statistics Ordinance. p. 249*

ISSUES RELATING TO LEGAL FOUNDATION

1. Partial exercise of functions by institutions
2. Roles in law not recognized by other members of the system
3. No specified quality standard for NSS
4. Broad designation of membership
5. No sanctions for non-compliance with coordination functions.
6. Changing the legal framework requires political backing



INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS

- Israel not subject to EU regulations but has treaty commitments and membership obligations to OECD, IMF, UN, WHO and other international organizations
- Obligations entail requirements for coordination, harmonization and adherence to quality standards.
- **Issues:** Role of ICBS, PCS and other agencies not formally defined (with legislation or administrative regulation) in this regard. Coordination up until now has been voluntary.



RELAUNCHING OF PCS

- New chairman appointed in October 2013
- Consists of: Plenary, Steering Committee, several Sub-committees
- Sub-committees act as advisory bodies to the ICBS in specific domains
- **ISSUES:** PCS has not (yet) acted as an advisor to government, but rather to the ICBS.
- Has not attempted to coordinate government-wide statistical activities or collect plans for statistical activities in state institutions



ICBS ACTIVITIES IN COORDINATION AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

- Activities of Statistical Coordination Department –
 1. OECD accession crystalized need for coordination and harmonization with the OECD and other international bodies. Focal point for coordinating and monitoring these activities within the ICBS.
 2. Previous Twinning Project : Meetings with potential NSS partners; adoption of COP; MOU with National Insurance Institute; Long-term strategic plan included: hub for official statistics, labelling Official Statistics within a quality assurance framework, demarcation of National Statistics, etc.
 3. Previous project led to current one focuses on quality and quality assurance.



ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

- Despite the positive outcomes of the previous Twinning project, several elements of the strategic vision have not yet progressed - including a a hub for official statistics, labelling and a national quality framework
- ICBS leadership in national coordination has not been acknowledged throughout the government system and is not seen as mandatory. Cooperation is voluntary
- Mapping the producers in the system, their functions and outputs which had begun several years ago is far from complete.



QUALITY MANAGEMENT

- In 2014 two senior staff members asked to begin coordination of statistical quality in the NSS, which was broadened to quality management in the NSS and the ICBS itself.
- Overall plan presented to the ICBS board and the PCS in 2015. The Plan included the following objectives:

2015 PLAN

- i developing a mandatory quality assurance program in the ICBS and in the NSS;
- ii. developing a training program for statistical quality in the ICBS and the NSS;
- iii. developing a proposal for a quality label for official statistical products;
- iv. extending the formalization of bilateral relationships between the ICBS and state institutions;
- v. developing a formal structure for provision by the ICBS of methodological-statistical advice to NSS members;
- vi. creating and maintaining a system for documenting planned and current NSS statistical activities;
- vii. together with the PCS, coordinating statistical planning in the NSS;
- viii. establishing a permanent unit and institutional structure for coordination and quality assurance.

ACHIEVEMENTS

- Statistical Quality Management Department established in 2016
- Steering committee set up to coordinate activities of QM department, Statistical Coordination Department, metadata team and Quality and Excellence Unit, all under the newly appointed Chief Scientist.
- Through joint and independent efforts key international documents have been translated (COP, QAF, GSBPM, SIMS) and presented to ICBS staff
- in the present Twinning project pilot projects in self assessment and quality declarations have been conducted
- Members of the steering committee have deepened their knowledge of European knowledge and practices



ONGOING AND PLANNED ACTIVITIES

- Appointment of Senior Liaison persons in government agencies for coordination and mapping purposes, aiming towards “launching” of NSS coordination body
- Initiative to create mandatory quality standard for sample surveys conducted by or on behalf of government agencies.
- Round of Bi-lateral high level meetings between National Statistician and Government agencies focused on mutual data needs, methodology, and quality standards, and presenting vision of coordinated National Statistical System

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES TO QUALITY ASSURANCE

- So far most activities focused on the ICBS and not the NSS
- NSS activities have been chiefly bilateral and subject focused. NSS-wide mechanisms have yet to be created and it is not clear how the ICBS activities and the role of the PCS will be linked.
- Challenge of trying to launch several major parallel initiatives both within and outside the ICBS with limited staff and resources.

