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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.7

**Activity A.7: Integrating the elements for quality management in the ICBS -
Goals and visions, organization, awareness within ICBS, self-assessment,
quality reporting and monitoring**

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List of Abbreviations

BC	Beneficiary country
BPMN	Business Process Model and Notation
CoP	European Statistics Code of Practice
DDI	The Data Documentation Initiative
EFQM	European Foundation for Quality Management
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy
EU	European Union
GAMSO	Generic Activity Model for Statistical Organisations
GSBPM	The Generic Statistical Business Process Model
ICBS	Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics
MS	Member State (of the EU)
NSS	National statistical system
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
QAF	Quality Assurance Framework of the European Statistical System
QM	Quality Management
SDDS	Special Data Dissemination Standard Plus (IMF)
SDMX	Statistical Metadata eXchange
SIMS	Single Integrated Metadata Structure
ToR	Terms of Reference
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

Executive Summary

The main purpose of this activity was to take the first step toward designing a single integrated program that describes how the production process and the statistical output can be documented and how their quality will be reviewed at the topic/sub-topic level.

The BC Project Leader Deputy initiated the mission by ensuring a common understanding of the purpose and expected output of the mission.

After this the Quality Coordinator from Statistics Denmark continued by giving a presentation on the modernisation framework of official statistics from the UNECE and the approach taken by Statistics Denmark in order to go from policy to practical implementation. This session was also attended by the top management at the ICBS.

The ICBS presented their vision for quality management. The vision is to implement a systematic organisation wide approach to quality management that embraces production, products and management based on adopting and assimilating international standards. The combined program aims to integrate all the activities that each statistical unit has to undertake in order to document their production processes and statistical outputs, as well as the quality reviews they will undergo. The program should, as much as possible have an approach of avoiding duplication of effort and with a coordinated overall plan. The combined program will also describe all the activities at the institution level, necessary to support and promote this work.

This was followed up by the component leader presenting lessons learned from previous initiatives to adopt quality frameworks in the ICBS among others the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM), and from currently managed metadata - structured reference metadata (SIMS, SDDS and SDMX), classifications, concepts, the Generic Statistical Business Process Model (GSBPM), and the national organizational evaluation of the Israeli Public Service.

The Director of Economic Research in the National Statistician's Office gave a status for the implementation documentation of statistical output for which the Single Integrated Metadata Structure (SIMS) has been chosen. Status is that a broad pilot test approach has been completed for education statistics. The approach involved subject matter specialists compiling their metadata according to specific instructions and guidelines with an implementation team interacting with the specialist via an on-line platform in order to ensure a common interpretation and approach. In addition the Software tool, Magic, used by the ICBS for SIMS has been updated to version 2 including updates of the corresponding guidelines. Furthermore, all SIMS fields have been categorised into user oriented, producer oriented and appropriate for surveys or administrative data. Finally, links between SIMS fields and GSBPM and CoP is under establishment. The next steps will be (i) Planning the dissemination of metadata on the new ICBS Website soon to be launched and (ii) Expand the number of subject areas entering metadata into Magic.

This was followed up, the next day by a presentation of the Danish approach for process documentation. The presentation was mainly about practical implementation and workflows, but also about supporting tools and standards, training of staff, organisation, benefits and challenges. Especially the IT-tool Enterprise Architect which Statistics Denmark is using was of particular interest. However, the MS experts stressed that process documentation is basically a way to organise what the ICBS is already doing just by using a common and international accepted language and perception of processes. The experts recommended that the first minor step, that is relatively easily implementable, could be to start organising existing documentation into a GSBPM folder structure before investing time and resources in expensive IT-tools. This process would have the additional benefit of highlighting gaps to be filled.

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One of the main topics discussed under the mission was how to integrating the elements for quality management in a way so the subject unit will regard the process and output documentation as one task and not two separate tasks. The expert emphasised that the goal must be to encourage the organisation to see documentation as part of the everyday work in producing statistics.

At the discussion the experts pointed out the efficiency gain in documenting both processes and output in terms of resources and that the investment time most likely will be paid back in relatively short time. From the management point of view implementing a common practice will also make the production less vulnerably for changes in staff members.

The importance of changing the view of seeing process documentation as something private to something others can benefit from was highlighted from the experts as being crucial.

The possibility of applying a “Write once, use everywhere” approach was also discussed. From the MS experts point of view the “write once” approach might somehow be hard to apply since the end users of process and output documentation differs. They stressed that the process documentation is mainly targeted towards internal users whereas output documentation is mainly targeted toward external users. However, having clear and comprehensive process documentation will be a great help for the statistical output documentation. The approach of integration taken in Denmark is to include references in SIMS to GSBPM.

Furthermore, the possibility of integrating metadata requirements from IMF and OECD into the ongoing initiatives was discussed. Statistics Denmark is also working on linking SIMS to SDDS. This mapping is still not completed but is ongoing.

At the end of the mission a draft roadmap outlining possible steps for ICBS to take in order to enhance and integrate process documentation by means of GSBPM in the organisation was discussed. It was agreed that a step-by-step approach allowing the possibility to ‘think big, but start small’ should be applied (Approval from the management, pilots, and implementation). It is recommended to apply responsible persons and deadlines in the roadmap and then to start implementing.

From the presentations given by the ICBS experts, the MS experts found that their theoretical knowledge on quality management as well as their acquaintance of supporting tools like QAF, GSBPM and SIMS is very comprehensive. The ICBS clearly demonstrated that quality management of official statistics is not only something that the ICBS pay attention to at MS missions but also between missions. Thus great progress has already been made and the ICBS is with no doubt ready to move to a practical implementation of quality management.

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 seventh mission devoted to quality documentation, tools and methods within Component A: Quality Management of Official Statistics.

The main purpose of the activity is to integrate the elements of quality management in the ICBS. The elements being quality reporting according to SIMS, process documentation according to the GSBPM frame and quality reviews of specific statistical topics. At the activity practical implementation and integration of tools and organisation were discussed.

The mission assisted the ICBS and the Twinning Project experts in getting an overview of the present situation regarding Quality reporting of Official Statistics in Europe and in Israel.

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

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

2. Assessment and results

The first day started with Ms. Sigalit Mazeh pointing out the expectations to the current activity. After this Karin Blix gave a presentation of the modernisation framework of official statistics from the UNECE and Statistics Denmark way from policy to practical implementation.

Mr. Oz Shimony and Mr. Ari Paltiel presented the vision for quality management in the ICBS.

Ms. Batia Attali gave a presentation (in Hebrew) on the current status of the integration of quality and metadata in the ICBS. The status was given on 13 topics covering lessons learned from previous initiatives to adopt quality frameworks in the ICBS (EFQM), structured reference metadata (SIMS, SDDS and SDMX), Metadata on different data sources, classifications, concepts, GSBPM (surveys and census), “Selfie”, metadata in ICBS’s website and metadata in cross-cutting statistical products to the current work plan for implementing SIMS.

Mr. Tom Caplan gave an introduction on the current plan to implement SIMS in the ICBS.

How IT is connected to all these projects and how to deal with it without using a central integrated IT system (Statbank and Colectica) was discussed. Israel has an exemption regarding deliveries to the OECD that can be done using Excel. This exemption will not last for very long and data transfer using SDMX will have to be implemented.

There is resistance in the subject-matter units in terms of preparing process documentation and output documentation, as the units fears an overload of work. The general perception seems to be that documenting both products and processes is something extra – not something that is part of the production of the statistics. These are not separate projects and need to be sold as one thing. The experts emphasised that the goal must be to encourage the organisation to see documentation as part of the everyday work in producing statistics.

The second day began with a presentation on process documentation by the MS experts. The presentation was mainly about practical implementation and workflow, but also about supporting tools and standards, training of staff and organisation, and benefits and challenges. Especially the tools which Statistics Denmark is using were of particular interest. The presentation and subsequent discussion, was followed by a workshop on the definition of goals and how to promote the use of GSBPM in the subject-matter units.

There were some very fruitful discussions on how to move forward and what and when to integrate the work on different metadata (product documentation (SIMS), process documentation (GSBPM), variables and concepts) and how to implement GSBPM in the production systems. In Statistics Denmark the quality team encourage the producer of statistics to implement a folders structure according to GSBPM and to work on common data libraries – filing structure. The benefit has in brief, for those whom has implemented it, been highlighting gaps to be filled for process documentation, a common language, a common perception of processes and making the production less vulnerably for changes in staff members.

The goal for the third day was to draw up a roadmap for quality management in the ICBS. Draft roadmap for integrating the elements for quality management in the ICBS (annex).

The fourth day was used on ad hoc meetings. Meetings were held with Mr. David Landau on using the GSBPM to describe the processes for handling tailor made statistics, Mr. Tom Caplan, Ms. Karin Agamov on the way forward for quality reports in Magic, and Mr. Ari Paltiel, Ms. Sigalit Mazeh and Ms. Batia Attila discussing the next mission and which topics should be discussed and the way forward.

3. Conclusions and recommendations

3.1. General observations

The activities on quality in ICBS have been ongoing since the last Twinning, and the participating staff is highly engaged. There is an increase in work on quality, and progress is being made in many areas. Great plans are in place.

Recommendation:

- It is recommended to apply responsible persons and deadlines in the roadmap and then to start implementing and remember to think big and start small.