Types of audits: experiences from some European NSIs

EU Twinning Project JO/13/ENP/ST/23

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Component 3: Quality and metadata

Activity 3.9: Quality Audit – I

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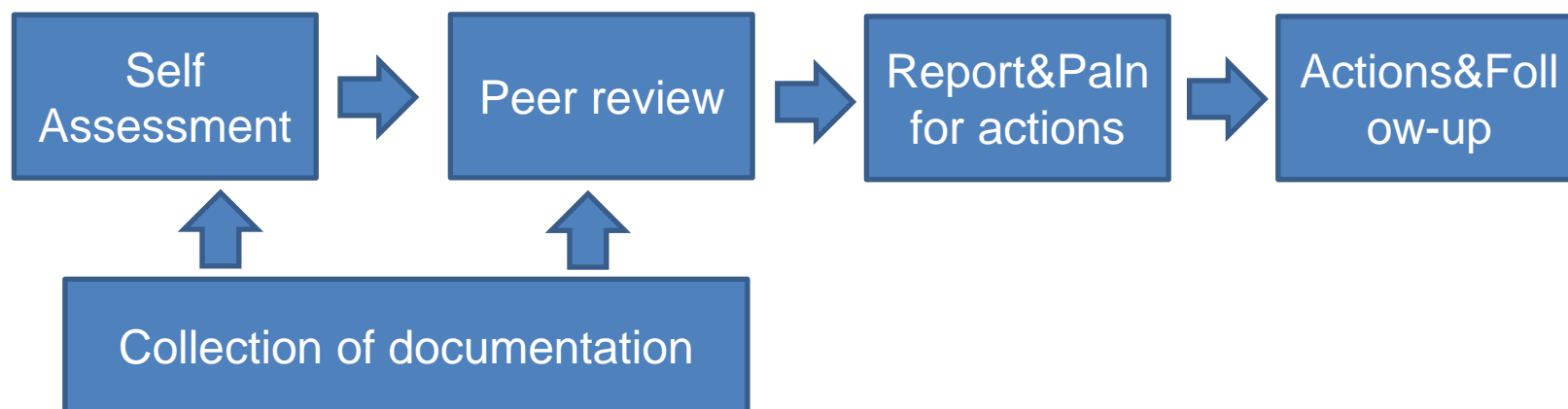*Head of Unit "Methods and Techniques supporting the Statistical Production"*

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Istat

Statistics Sweden

Statistical auditing started on a regular basis in 2002

Purpose of the Audit Programme

- Get the basis for improvements at **statistical products** level
- Get a basis for improvements at central level
- Identify and make known good examples

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│ Self         │ ──▶ │ Peer review  │ ──▶ │ Report&Paln  │ ──▶ │ Actions&Foll │
│ Assessment   │     │              │     │ for actions  │     │ ow-up        │
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│ Collection of documentation       │
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Statistics Sweden

Components of the Audit Programme

- **Self-assessment questionnaire** filled in by the staff of the audited product. Questions on planning and management, staff, dialogue with the users, issues on the design, data collection/treatment, dissemination, evaluation, documentation, software systems.

- **Peer-review** by a 3-person team.

- **Plan of action**: **Audit Report** (10 to 12 pages) describing production issues, identifying **good examples**, and formulating **improvement proposals**. An Audit Secretariat makes regular follow-ups on implementation of the proposals/actions

- Yearly, the Audit Secretariat compiles an evaluation of the implemented **improvement activities** which is presented to the NSI Director General and Board of Directors

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Statistics Sweden

Main features of the Audit Programme

- ✓ Planning of the Auditing activities: in the end of each year, every Department is asked to update their list of statistical products and priorities concerning audits. Based on this, the Audit Secretariat makes a time schedule for audits during the following year.

- ✓ Auditors (about 60 persons) are chosen among the personnel employed in the production processes, and are trained with a one day course.

- ✓ Each audit team performs on average 2-4 audits per year

- ✓ About 20 to 25 products audited each year

- ✓ A network of representativeness from different Departments established to be discussion partners for the Secretariat and contacts into the Organization

Statistics Portugal (INE)

Statistical auditing started on a regular basis in 2002

Purpose of the Audit Programme

- Internal quality audit program focused on the **statistical processes**

- Assessing the compliance of the statistical and organizational procedures towards the Statistical Production Procedures Handbook, developed by the NSI. **The whole auditing process is organized taking into account the ISO norms**.

- To improve the process documentation.

Statistics Portugal (INE)

Components of the Audit Programme

- **Audit program** for the single audit (includes a description of the audit content, reference documents, audit scheduling) is prepared by the audit team and delivered to the audited unit. **Documentation on the process**, basically represented by a checklist, is produced in order to support the auditors.

- The core of the auditing procedure is represented by a **direct interview** with a **predefined questionnaire**. **Non-compliance form** prepared by the audit team based on the **interview,** the analysis of the provided **documents** and the **observation of the activities** of the audited structure**.**

- **Audit Report** prepared by the audit team according to a given structure. The final report is sent to the Quality Management Unit, that forwards it to the audited unit and to the President

- **Correction/Improvement action plan**: contains the activities identified by the audited unit which are to be carried on for quality improvement, and to be evaluated in the follow-up stage

Statistics Portugal (INE)

Characteristics of the Audit Programme

- The annual audit plan is defined by the INE Top Management

- A pool of about 14 persons is trained as auditors (including the ISO norms)

- Every audit team is composed by **2 or 3 auditors**, with statistical background and with a coordinator.

- On average, every auditor carries out 2 audit per year.

- 6 to 7 processes are audited per year

- A very productive activity is the self-assessment using the DESAP checklist

UK National System: the National Statistics Quality Reviews

A separate institution, the <u>Statistical Authority</u>, which is responsible for approving statistics from ONS and other producers, is in charge of independently planning, monitoring and assessing the statistical production

Purpose of the Audit Programme

- Ensure transparency and coherence of government statistical surveys around w.r.t. the **UK Code of Practice** for Official Statistics

- Continuous improvements of the Government Statistical Service (GSS) Surveys especially aiming at the re-use of already available information and to reduce respondent's burden

Where the Authority determines that the Code has been complied with, it will designate the statistics as "**National Statistics**", but otherwise not.
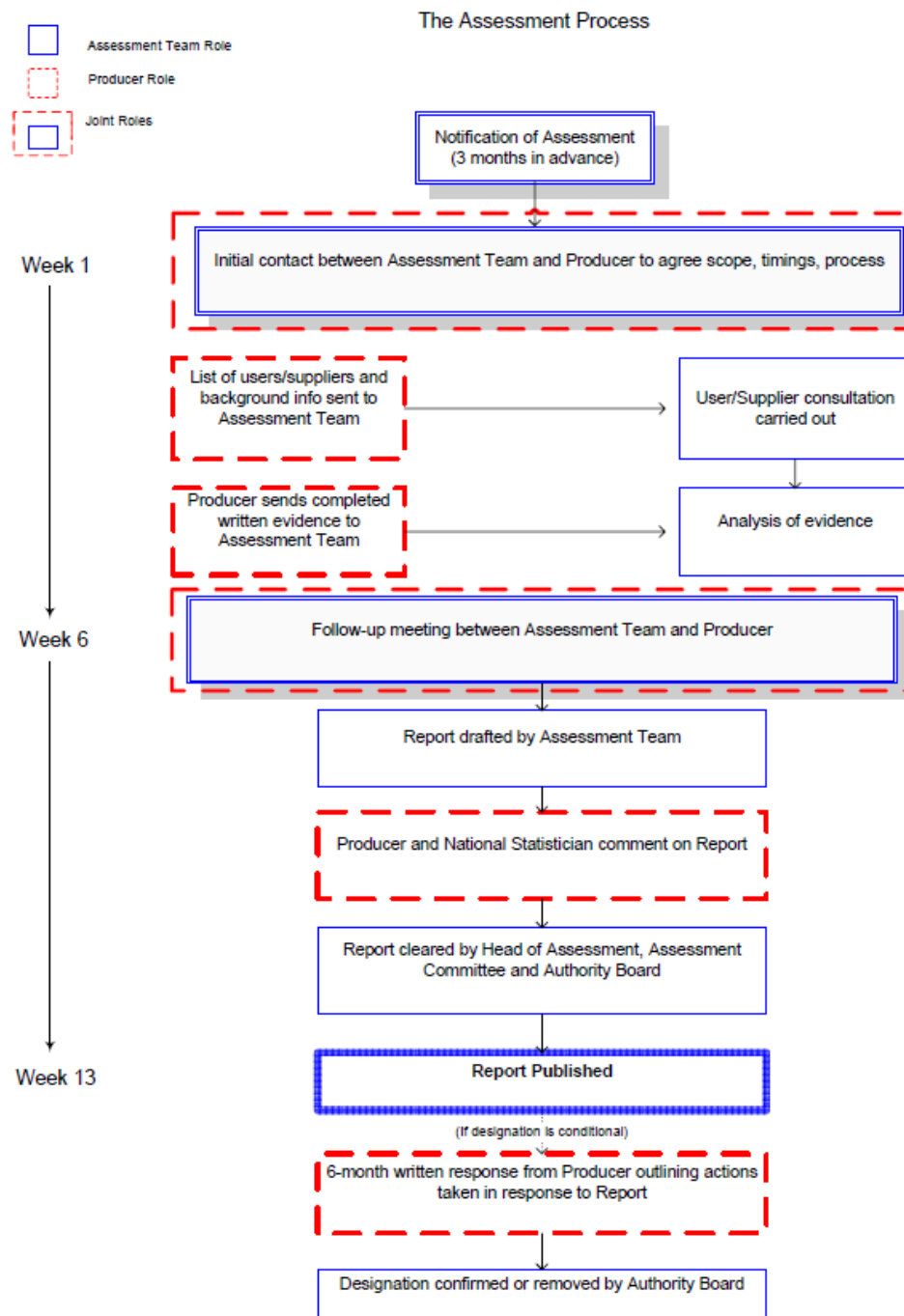
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UK National System: the National Statistics Quality Reviews

Components of the Audit Programme (Statistical Authority)

Two separate questionnaires.

- The first is the <u>organisational</u> evidence which is completed and updated by the Head of Profession for the organisation and focuses on those sections of the Code which relate to organisational practices.

- The second is the <u>product</u> evidence which is completed by the statisticians responsible for producing the statistics and focuses on the sections of the Code which relate to specific outputs. This takes the form of an open-ended questionnaire with questions linked to the various elements of the Code of Practice.

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UK National System: the National Statistics Quality Reviews

The Assessment Process

Legend:
- Assessment Team Role
- Producer Role
- Joint Roles

Notification of Assessment (3 months in advance)

Week 1 — Initial contact between Assessment Team and Producer to agree scope, timings, process

List of users/suppliers and background info sent to Assessment Team → User/Supplier consultation carried out

Producer sends completed written evidence to Assessment Team → Analysis of evidence

Week 6 — Follow-up meeting between Assessment Team and Producer

Report drafted by Assessment Team

Producer and National Statistician comment on Report

Report cleared by Head of Assessment, Assessment Committee and Authority Board

Week 13 — **Report Published**

(If designation is conditional)

6-month written response from Producer outlining actions taken in response to Report

Designation confirmed or removed by Authority Board

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Office for National Statistics (ONS), UK

ONS has its own assessment programme that is complemented by the National Statistics Quality Reviews

Before 2008: assessment with non standardised templates (but based on improvement actions, …) stopped when NSQR started

A new series of rolling, in-depth methodological reviews started on a regular basis in 2012/2013 (two reports seem available so far)

Characteristics of the Audit Programme: Frequency and details of reviews

- *Triennial Review*

  Surveys that are conducted on a monthly or quarterly basis are subject to review every three years

- *Quinquennial Review*

  Surveys that are conducted less frequently than quarterly, for example, annual inquiries, are subject to review every five years

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Office for National Statistics (ONS), UK

Purpose of the Audit Programme

- the need for the information (evaluating the reason for conducting the survey)

- the conduct of the survey

- costs

- respondent's views

- users' views

- options for change

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Office for National Statistics (ONS), UK

Components of the Audit Programme

- The core of the auditing procedure is represented by the **Quality, Methods and Harmonization Tool (QMHT):** self-assessment questionnaire developed by the GSS Quality task Force to aid producers of statistics in reviewing theirs surveys and outputs and originally focused on respondent burden issues

- Questionnaires filled in are disseminated on web

Statistics Norway*

➢ Self- assessment

➢ Reviews and audit

* H.V. Saebo (2014)Quality assessment and improvement methods in statistics –
what works.. European conference on quality in Official Statistics (Q2014)

Istat

Self-assessment at Statistics Norway

When: 2008

How: DESAP

Target: all statistics

Findings: need for more systematic user contacts, better quality
             of administrative sources, more automatic editing,
             better documentation

Conclusions: subjective assessment, stand-alone, good start for
             systematic work, preparatory work for Eurostat peer
             review

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Reviews and Audit at Statistics Norway

When: 2011-2013

Target: 21 statistics or clusters of statistics

Reference: Based on CoP, similar to European peer reviews
                  but at statistics or subject matter level

How: Self-assessment towards CoP; Process Mapping;
                Focus groups with users; Audit by internal team (4
                persons)

Outputs: Standardised and structured report: strengths,
                weaknesses and recommendations drawn by the
                team; action plan drawn by the division in charge of
                the statistic published in the intranet

Istat

Reviews and Audit at Statistics Norway

Findings: 170 proposal for improvement; some in common
              among statistics, some similar to self-assessment

              More focus on user needs; better dissemination and
              visualisation; better documentation (metadata); …

Follow ups: Centralised monitoring on action plans by reviewing
              teams (2013)
              ≈ 50% actions → fulfilled
              ≈ 50% actions → fulfilled in 2014

Delays: dependencies on others (internally, externally);
              external changes (Eurostat demands); lack of
              resources