

Central Bureau of Statistics, Jerusalem – 17 December 2015, 10.00

Closing event of:

The Twinning project "Support to the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics in the development of National Accounts, Education Statistics, Survey Methodology, ICBS Website and Coordination of Israel National Statistical System"

Eurostat

Dear Prof. Pfefferman

Dear Yaffa Ben-Ari,

Dear Governor Dr Flug,

Dear Prof Gronau,

Dear HoD Ambassador Lars Faaborg-Andersen

Dear Deputy Ambassador Signe Biering Nielsen

Dear Lars Thygesen

Dear colleagues from the Danish and the Israeli statistical offices and from other Israeli institutions and stakeholders,

- Unfortunately it is not possible for Eurostat to be present at the event in person for reasons beyond our control but please be assured that we are with you in our minds and hearts as this is a particular important event for our colleagues from the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics – the end of a very important and – as we have been informed and witnessed through the information we have received – very successful twinning project. It was the first twinning project for the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics and it seems that it was a challenging project but it brought about excellent results and also a spirit that hopefully will stay in the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics as well as in the Israeli statistical system as a whole.
- It is a great pleasure to celebrate the success in all the components of the twinning project and we are sure there will be presentations about the implementation of the activities in all the five components and success stories will be told later – but Eurostat would like to highlight in particular the success in the component on the coordination of the Israel national statistical system.

Why this component - coordination of the statistical system

- The coordination of a statistical system is a huge challenge in any statistical system, be it in the Member States of the European Union or beyond.
- In order to coordinate a statistical system, it is necessary in the first place to define what is the scope and content of official statistics (not every set or piece of data is official statistics) and which institutions belong to the statistical system producing therefore, official statistics and this is what has been done within the framework of this twinning project. This is a very difficult task, that is currently also at the heart of discussions in the European Statistical System and there are no easy solutions and criteria to be applied straight away.

Why is the definition of the statistical system so important?

- The definition of the institutions (offices, ministries and similar) belonging to a statistical system is of crucial importance for each and every country because these institutions need to follow the UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and (as is the case for most of the European neighbourhood countries) the European Statistics Code of Practice.
- What does this mean for these institutions?
- First, they need to be professionally independent – meaning the head of the entity producing official statistics - be this the central bureau of statistics or a department in a ministry or an agency - should be nominated through an open and transparent procedure based on professional criteria only, should receive a fixed term of office (with or without prolongation) and be dismissed on the basis of professional failures only.
- Second, these institutions should follow scrupulously the principle of confidentiality of individual data, so data collected for statistical purposes should be provided to anybody not belonging to the statistical system in aggregated form only. Never should individual responses from enterprises, companies, households, people be used for other purposes than for which they were collected – hence no data transfer from the statistical system to the tax office or other government bodies.
- Third, these institutions should publish the dates and time of their press releases with headline indicators (such as inflation, GDP, unemployment, etc.) and at the given time everybody should get access to the data at the same time – so no pre-release of sensitive data to any government body or minister. This is all about the principle of impartiality, which statisticians should follow in their daily work.
- Fourth, the institutions should follow common quality frameworks and assurance procedures, so the society knows that data being produced by the national statistical system bear a quality label – this is the major difference between official statistics and other data floating around on the internet these days.
- So, once the borders of the statistical system have been defined, then its coordination should start. Coordination in terms of applying the same international classifications, methodology, concepts, definitions of variables and indicators. This sounds easy but it is not because different institutions usually follow their own way of working adapted to their needs and not to the needs of producing statistics.
- Therefore, the inclusion and successful completion of this component can be considered a major step forward in the development of the Israel statistical system and Eurostat would like to congratulate the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics for embarking on this difficult process and for achieving the results as they were planned in this component.
- This is usually a long-term process, so there will be new and continuous challenges in the coordination of the statistical system and Eurostat would like to wish its colleagues in the Israeli central Bureau of Statistics all the success it needs in pursuing the aim of improved coordination in the statistical system.

Thanks

- The conclusion of this project also deserves a thank you for all stakeholders involved in the completion of this project in general and of this component in particular. Eurostat hopes that the relationship built within this twinning project will continue to develop and bear fruit also in the future – without the twinning project behind.

Thank you and good luck for the future – and please be aware that Eurostat will always be there to support you in your efforts to coordinate the statistical system and hence to produce high quality statistics for the society and public at large.