

Minutes of the 7th User Conference

On Wednesday 21 December 2016, the Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT) held, on its premises in Piraeus, the 7th Annual User Conference in accordance with its Annual Statistical Work Programme.

Sixty three (63) representatives of the public and private-sector participated in the Conference, together with representatives from educational and research institutes. ELSTAT was represented by the Acting Head of the General Directorate of Statistical Surveys, Mrs Vasiliki Benaki, the Acting Head of the General Directorate of Administration and Organisation, Mr Ioannis Moschakis, as well as by the Heads of the competent Divisions and Sections of ELSTAT, in order to record users' comments and requests and to provide, if necessary, answers to questions made by users on the production of statistics.

The President of ELSTAT, Mr Athanasios Thanopoulos, welcomed the participants and briefly outlined the priorities of ELSTAT as regards the dissemination of its statistics, with a view to fulfilling, to the greatest extent possible, users' needs. He underlined the need to exploit administrative data and big data for the production of official statistics, and he stressed the commitment of ELSTAT to ensure the quality of statistics, by observing the principles of the European Statistics Code of Practice (CoP) and the UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, as well as to foster the statistical literacy in Greece.

Subsequently, according to the Agenda of the User Conference, four (4) presentations were made to the participants.

Mrs Benaki presented the redesign of the European system of intra-EU trade (Redesign of Intrastat). She referred to the SIMSTAT pilot project of the European Union (EU) for a new data collection system of international trade in goods. This project is part of the ESS Vision 2020 portfolio of projects of the European Statistical System (ESS Vision 2020) and aims at reducing the administrative burden on enterprises arising from Intrastat reporting obligations, while maintaining the quality of intra-Community trade statistics. This programme proposes that only intra-EU export data for all countries are to be collected and such data will be transmitted to/exchanged among the relevant countries, thus abolishing, totally or partially, the collection of intra-EU import data.

Furthermore, Mrs Benaki presented the actions of ELSTAT as regards the processing of tax data of enterprises which were transmitted by the Ministry of Finance to ELSTAT in May 2016, for the updating of the Statistical Business Register and the production of structural business statistics.

Mr Moschakis presented the changes planned by ELSTAT as regards the access of users to survey microdata, aimed at improving users' accessibility to the above microdata, while enhancing the usefulness of these data for users. These changes will take place in response to a relevant recommendation of the Report of the Peer Review, which was conducted in Greece in November 2014, in the framework of respective Peer Reviews conducted in all EU Member States and the countries of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), with a view to assessing the compliance of the national statistical systems of these countries with the principles of the CoP.

The Head of the Division of Statistical Information and Publications, Mrs Akrivi Nikolakopoulou, presented the results of the 2015 User Satisfaction Survey.

The comments and requests that were made are outlined below by participating agency and representative.¹

- **Ministry of Rural Development and Food**

(Mr Stylianos Kokkidis)

- Mr Kokkidis requested the assistance of ELSTAT so that the competent services of the Ministry could have unhindered access to the data collected by the Directorates of Rural Economy and Veterinary.

- **Centre of Planning and Economic Research (KEPE)**

(Mr Prodromos Prodromidis)

- Mr Prodromidis stressed the importance of participating in European projects such as SIMSTAT and suggested continuing this effort in the future.
- He requested the collection by ELSTAT of data on qualitative characteristics of imported and exported products, in addition to the already collected data on their value and quantity, such as the quality and packaging of the product, the professionalism of the counter-parties, etc., in order to study the factors that attract the traders in selecting a product. He acknowledged the success of ELSTAT to gain access to tax data of enterprises.
- He highlighted the need of availability of an updated Statistical Business Register in mid-2017, as well as of the availability of business statistics at the level of Region and of manufactured product.

¹ Please note that the comments of the representatives do not represent, in all cases, the positions of their agencies.

- He requested the acceleration of the procedures for the access of regular users to microdata of ELSTAT's statistical surveys.

- **Ministry of Economy and Development**

(Mrs Maria Kostopoulou)

- Mrs Kostopoulou stressed the need of availability of more up-to-date statistical data at the level of Region, for the needs of the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF), as well as of availability of data at a level below the Department.

(Mr Ioannis Plemmenos)

- Mr Plemmenos argued that the reduction of the administrative burden of exporters, although it may result in a lesser reduction of the overall administrative burden, is expected to lead to greater growth, and suggested the elaboration of a study on the impact of the reduction of the administrative burden of exporters on GDP.
- He highlighted the need to take into account the particular needs of the very small exporters, which have a disproportionately greater administrative reporting burden under the SIMSTAT programme.

- **Ministry of Finance — Council of Economic Advisers (SOE)**

(Mrs Eirini Andriopoulou)

- Mrs Andriopoulou acknowledged the success of ELSTAT to gain access to tax data of enterprises.
- She highlighted the need of definition, in the administrative forms, of the fields that are necessary for statistical purposes and of their preservation on the forms.
- She proposed the conduct by ELSTAT of an analysis, by combining data on tax debt with data on the debt to social security funds.

- **Centre for the Development of Education Policy (KANEP) of the Greek General Confederation of Labour (GSEE)**

(Mr Nikolaos Paizis)

- Mr Paizis highlighted the need to set up social indicators for the inputs and outputs of the education system in Greece.

- He underlined the need to capture the educational indicators in relation to GDP, at the level of Regional Unity.
- He expressed the will of KANEP to assist with its researchers ELSTAT to cover urgent needs in education statistics.
- **University of Athens**
(Mr Ioannis Yfantopoulos)
 - Mr Yfantopoulos highlighted the need to develop a platform for health statistics which will integrate macroeconomic and microeconomic data.
 - He proposed to ELSTAT to request access to the electronic system for data collection from health units, “ESY-net”, and to combine these data with mortality and productivity indices.
- **Athens University of Economics and Business**
(Mr Georgios Gounaris, postgraduate student)
 - Mr Gounaris requested the availability of files on ELSTAT’s website in tsv/csv format, apart from xls format, in order to be “read” by specific statistical econometric programs.
 - He asked to know the percentage of statistics that are available as open data.
- **University of Thessaly**
(Mr Vyron Kotzamanis)
 - Mr Kotzamanis asked the acceleration of the procedures for granting access to anonymised microdata of statistical surveys.
 - He underlined the need for ELSTAT to use the experience of regular users, on issues pertaining to data collection and production of statistics.
 - He requested the organisation of one-day conferences for targeted user groups.
- **Harokopio University of Athens**
(Mr Thomas Maloutas)
 - Mr Maloutas acknowledged the progress made by ELSTAT in the dissemination of statistics and in strengthening its extroversion during the last years.

- He underlined the very good cooperation with ELSTAT for the development of the application “Panorama of Greek Census data, 1991-2011”.
 - He acknowledged the correctness of the approach followed by ELSTAT as regards administrative data.
 - He suggested to ELSTAT to develop cooperation with the Harokopio University of Athens in the framework of the designing of the next Population — Housing Census.
- **Foundation of Economic and Industrial Research (IOBE)**
(Mr Michail Vasiliadis)
 - Mr Vasiliadis acknowledged the reduction of ELSTAT’s response time to users’ requests and requested the existence of a pre-approval from the Statistical Confidentiality Committee for users who are “certified” and stable users.

ELSTAT, from its part, provided answers and clarifications, where appropriate, to the questions and comments of users, as well as information on its response time to specific users’ requests.