

REPORT ON THE WORK OF ELSTAT

AUGUST 2010 – AUGUST 2011



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Over the past twelve months, the Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT) took significant steps, as a matter of priority, to enhance the reliability of Greece's official statistics and to regain the confidence of users at national, European and international level, in the statistics and in the role of ELSTAT as the National Statistical Institute of Greece.

The main pillars of this effort were:

- a) Improving the quality and reliability of statistics, by unswervingly observing the principles of the European Statistics Code of Practice and by restructuring the processes and more generally the approach for the production of statistics.
- b) Focusing on good governance in the Statistical Institute, by applying a rules-based system, which enhances, inter alia, the effectiveness of statistical operations.
- c) Closer cooperation with the users of statistics and response to their needs, as well as coordination and cooperation with other producers of statistical data with a view to improving the quality of statistics.
- d) Intensive cooperation with the European and the international statistical community.

ELSTAT has been implementing the Joint Overall Statistical Greek Action Plan (JOSGAP). This Action Plan was elaborated in 2010 by the European Commission and the Greek authorities, on the basis of the findings of the Commission's Report of January 2010 on Greek government deficit and debt statistics. Its goal has been to address the problems in Greek government finance statistics and, more generally, to help restore the reliability of the statistics of Greece. The actions of the plan are implemented in close cooperation with Eurostat and with the assistance of other experts from the European Statistical System.

As a result of the actions taken by ELSTAT over the past twelve months, there has been a strong recovery in the reliability and credibility of the statistics of Greece. In this context, significant progress has been achieved in regaining the confidence of Eurostat, the other National Statistical Institutes in the European Statistical System, the European Commission, the European Central Bank, the International Monetary Fund and other international partners, as well as of the international markets.

A. Improving the quality and reliability of statistics

ELSTAT took a significant number of steps in order to enhance the quality of the statistics produced, in the framework of the implementation of the Joint Overall Statistical Greek Action Plan.

Important actions and achievements:

- **Fundamental reengineering of the processes and more generally of the overall approach to the production of government finance statistics—deficit and debt statistics—in line with:**
 - the strict observance of the principles of the European Statistics Code of Practice (focusing on the principle of professional independence, the principle of quality commitment and the principle of impartiality and objectivity),
 - the results of the European Commission's Report on Greek government deficit and debt statistics (1/2010),
 - the rules of the European System of Accounts (ESA 95).
- **Release without any reservations by Eurostat of the annual government finance statistics of Greece (for the years 2006-2010), twice successively—in November 2010 and in April 2011.**
- **Revision of the Register of General Government Institutions, with a priority view to addressing quality problems with the debt and deficit figures of Greece on account of, inter alia, the misclassification outside General Government of some large institutions that had the capacity to incur debt.**
- **Upgrading of the questionnaires (annual, quarterly, monthly) used to collect the data of General Government institutions.**
- **Development of web applications designed for the transmission of data of General Government institutions to ELSTAT.**
- **Training of the statistical correspondents appointed in General Government institutions on topics pertaining to the sound provision of the necessary primary data, through the updated questionnaires and the implementation of the new methods of data collection.**
- **Signing of memoranda of cooperation between ELSTAT and all the government Ministries, the General Accounting Office and the Bank of Greece, with a view to ensuring the transparent, reliable and timely production of government finance statistics.**
- **Recompilation of quarterly government finance statistics, from 2009 onwards, by using data from primary sources and with a methodology fully harmonized with ESA 95, so as to depict more accurately fiscal developments from quarter to quarter.**
- **Implementation of a project for the revision of the annual national accounts (GDP) 2000-2010, in close cooperation with Eurostat.**
- **Improving the quality of regional accounts (GDP) and implementation of a project for the completion of the upgrading of the statistical data by December 2011, in close cooperation with Eurostat.**
- **Improving the quality of external trade statistics and initiation of a project for further modernization of the data collection and data processing system, as well as for cooperation with other agencies, by mid-2012.**
- **Reinforcement, in terms of human resources, of the Division of ELSTAT, which is competent for the compilation of government finance statistics and the national accounts of Greece, and training of its staff.**

- **Conduct of a Post-Enumeration Survey for the 2011 Population-Housing Census on a large and representative sample of 20,000 households from across the country with a view to assessing the exhaustiveness and quality of the Census data, including at low administrative level (municipality).**
- **Use of optical readers and automated checks for the processing of the data of the Agricultural-Livestock Census.**
- **Establishment of a new system for programming and monitoring the statistical surveys and statistical works of ELSTAT (including the development of a relevant computerized application), in order for ELSTAT to fully meet its national and European obligations, both in terms of timeliness and high quality.**
- **Simultaneous and equal access of all users, without exception, to the statistical data.**

B. Good governance by implementing a rules-based system

Starting from the principle that there cannot be sustainable production of reliable statistics, compiled in compliance with statistical rules and standards, when rules are not observed in every operation of the Statistical Institute, special emphasis was given to the implementation of rules and to transparency in the operations and management of ELSTAT. This is expected to have a positive effect on the quality of the statistical production, which is a function of the transparency of the management processes followed by the Statistical Institute (e.g. processes for the selection of private associates for the conduct of surveys).

Important actions and achievements:

- **Selection of temporary survey workers for the conduct of the General Population-Housing Census (Heads of Census Sectors and Enumerators) through transparent, standardized procedures and according to meritocratic criteria.**
- **Creation of an electronic register for all temporary survey workers who are employed by ELSTAT for the collection of statistical data in the numerous statistical surveys conducted every year. Elaboration of a ranking system for these survey workers, based on rules, transparent processes, impartiality and meritocratic criteria.**
- **Rationalisation of the remuneration method for the temporary survey workers of ELSTAT, according to the statistical questionnaires they fill in, and elaboration of a rules-based system for assigning surveys to these survey workers.**

C. Closer cooperation with producers and users of statistical data

One of ELSTAT's main concerns is the production of statistics that meet the needs and requirements of users at national, European and international level, as well as the cooperation with agencies in Greece that collect and produce statistical data and the coordination of their activities, with a view to enhancing statistical production within the Hellenic Statistical System.

Important actions and achievements:

- Establishment and operation of the Council of the Hellenic Statistical System. The Council is composed of: representatives of agencies involved in statistical surveys, studies and analysis representatives of the national authorities of the Hellenic Statistical System, which are responsible for the development, production and dissemination of European statistics, and representatives of Eurostat and the Union of ELSTAT's employees.
- Elaboration of the annual statistical programme of ELSTAT, for the year 2011, and of the 3-year statistical programme of the Hellenic Statistical System (2011-2013), which are both addressed, mainly, to the users of statistics.
- Redesigning the system for publishing the Press Releases issued by ELSTAT, with a view to ensuring the simultaneous, equal and timely access of all the users to the statistical data; upgrading the content of the Press Releases, in order to enhance their quality and newsworthiness.
- Organisation of the first "Users Conference" in October 2010.
- Organisation in ELSTAT of a Conference, in December 2010, in the framework of the "European year on combating poverty and social exclusion.
- Signing of a memorandum of cooperation between ELSTAT and the Ministry of Health and the Kapodistrian University of Athens on the development of the System of Health Accounts (SHA).
- Creation of the Digital Library of ELSTAT and relevant promotion on the internet; the Digital Library includes 3,443 books and magazines and 6 atlases. Some of the digitised publications date back to 1859.

D. Intensive cooperation with the European and international statistical community and undertaking of actions

ELSTAT strives to be a full partner in the workings and evolution of the European Statistical System. In this framework, during 2010, ELSTAT put a lot of emphasis on full cooperation with Eurostat and the other Services of the European Commission, as well as the National Statistical Institutes of the other EU Member States.

Important actions and achievements:

- Joint organisation by ELSTAT and the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies of France (INSEE), in June 2011, of a high-level conference with the topic "The European Statistics Code of Practice: enhancing the credibility of official statistics." Among the participants at the conference were senior officials of Eurostat and other European National Statistical Institutes, members of the Greek government and senior officials of the public administration, representatives of the business community and the labor unions, members of the Council of the Hellenic Statistical System, as well as executives and senior officials of ELSTAT.
- Undertaking by ELSTAT of the organisation of the "European Conference on Quality in Official Statistics (Q2012)," to be held in May 2012 in Athens. The conference has already been established at European and international level as the traditional top-level meeting of statisticians, academics and representatives of national and international agencies and organisations mainly involved in quality of statistics issues.

E. Aspects of statistical production

- **Conduct of the Agricultural-Livestock Census, Buildings Census, and Population-Housing Census.**

In the framework of its scheduled regular surveys, ELSTAT carried out three major census surveys, which are conducted every ten years and serve as the basis for policy making at national and Community level: the Agricultural-Livestock Census, the Buildings Census, and the Population-Housing Census.

The purpose of the Agricultural-Livestock Census is to record all the agricultural and livestock holdings in the country and to collect data on their structure and on the population employed in them. The Census results are expected to be published by the end of the current year.

The purpose of the Buildings Census is to collect data on the buildings of the country.

The purpose of the Population-Housing Census is to collect statistical data on the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the population, as well as on the composition of households and their housing conditions. The 2011 Census focused on recording the Resident Population of the country in contrast to previous Censuses, which were designed to record the de facto Population (i.e. individuals who were present at the site of the enumeration). More generally, the methodology of the 2011 Census differs significantly in several respects from that of previous Censuses, such as the duration of the Census, the enumeration of individuals at their place of usual residence, etc.

The Population-Housing Census was conducted in compliance with Regulation (EC) No 763/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council, as well as with the methodological and organisational principles stipulated in the Conference of European Statisticians Recommendations for the 2010 Round of Population and Housing Censuses, which are the outcome of the cooperation between UNECE and Eurostat. In addition, the fully updated methodology and the large sample of the Post-Enumeration Survey that was conducted will render the planned assessment of the results of the Census very reliable. Finally, the 2011 Census was the first to be conducted by fully and formally meeting all requirements for personal data protection.

- **Release, from January 2011 onwards, of the new Revised Consumer Price Index, with new base year 2009.**

The Hellenic Statistical Authority, devoted to its mission, shall continue, through the efforts and the work of its staff, to safeguard and continuously improve the quality of the Greece's statistics, by following in all areas the highest European and international standards of statistical practice, as well as by unswervingly observing the rules and responsibilities it is committed to.

