

ELSTAT

Annual Report

2014

A. INTRODUCTION

In this Annual Report, ELSTAT accounts for its activities in 2014. Besides the activities concerning the statistical surveys and tasks outlined in the 2014 Statistical Work Program, the chapters of this Annual Report also contain information about the major issues in the area of statistics in 2014.

In 2014, ELSTAT continued to put emphasis on the following 4 main pillars:

- a) Improving and continuously ensuring the quality and reliability of statistics, by unswervingly observing the principles of the national and European legislation on statistics in force and by following the highest European and international statistical standards.
- b) Good governance in the National Statistical Institute by continuously upgrading the processes for the production of statistics through the implementation of clearly defined and transparent rules.
- c) Responding to users' needs, as well as carrying on the cooperation with other statistical producers with a view to improving the quality of statistics.
- d) Intensifying the cooperation with the European and the international statistical community and undertaking of actions in the above mentioned framework.

In 2014, ELSTAT continued the implementation of actions aiming at securing and further improving the quality of produced statistics and at maintaining the confidence of users in them, by unswervingly observing the principles of the national and European legislation on statistics. Many of these actions were carried out in the framework of the Joint Overall Statistical Greek Action Plan (JOSGAP). However, it should be noted that the securing and further improving of the quality of statistics could have been facilitated through the full observance of the Commitment on Confidence in Statistics signed by the Greek Government in February 2012.

Among the major events that took place in 2014 are the following: a) the assumption, by ELSTAT, of the Presidency of the Council Working Party on Statistics (CWPS) in January 2014 and the successful accomplishment of the relevant tasks, b) the implementation of an extensive project, with the support of Eurostat, for the implementation of the new European System of Accounts, ESA 2010, and the publication of the new results in October 2014, and c) the coordination, at national level, by ELSTAT of the activities for the conduct in Greece, in November 2014, of the peer review on the implementation of the principles of the European Statistics Code of Practice (CoP), in the framework of respective peer reviews organized by Eurostat in all EU Member States, with the aim of assessing the degree of compliance of the Statistical Authorities of Member States that produce European statistics with the principles of the European Statistics Code of Practice. In addition, two other noteworthy events are the continuation, by ELSTAT, in 2014, of the process of certification as "official" of the statistics produced by the other agencies of the Hellenic Statistical System (ELSS) by conducting the 2nd pilot certification exercise and the initiation of the works concerning the internal process for assessing the Divisions of ELSTAT on their compliance with the principles of the European Statistics Code of Practice.

Given the above, 2014 was one more successful year for ELSTAT regarding the implementation of its statistical works and the assurance of their quality, as well as the consolidation of users' confidence in its statistical output and the establishment of its active role within the European Statistical System, despite the continuing adverse conditions ELSTAT was confronted with in its external environment.

B. IMPROVING THE QUALITY AND RELIABILITY OF STATISTICS

1. Conduct of a peer review on the implementation of the European Statistics Code of Practice

Eurostat is organizing during August 2014 – July 2015 a second round of peer reviews, following the first round conducted in 2007 – 2008, in all EU Member States, with the aim of assessing the degree of compliance of the Statistical Authorities that produce European statistics with the 15 principles of the European Statistics Code of Practice. There are three main differences between the peer reviews of the second round and the ones of the first round:

- a) among the Statistical Authorities to be reviewed, apart from the National Statistical Institutes, are Other National Authorities – ONAs (up to 3) producing European statistics,
- b) the compliance of reviewed Statistical Authorities with all the CoP principles is assessed and
- c) the coordinating role of the National Statistical Institutes within the respective national Statistical Systems, as well as the cooperation within the European Statistical System are also assessed.

In this context, during 17 – 21 November 2014 a relevant peer review was conducted in Greece by a team of reviewers of the European Statistical System. Apart from ELSTAT, three Other National Authorities, namely the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Welfare, the Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change and the Ministry of Finance, participated in the peer review.

The preparatory work for the peer review was successfully coordinated, at national level, by a special coordinating team, established in ELSTAT. This team took care of: a) the collection and transmission to the reviewers of all the necessary material (self-assessment questionnaires of ELSTAT and of the three National Authorities mentioned above; questionnaire on the coordination in the ELSS; questionnaire on the cooperation within the ESS; any other supporting documentation), and b) the support for the completion of the agenda of the mission of the peer review visit to Greece.

During its five-day visit in ELSTAT for the conduct of the peer review, the peer review team had meetings with the senior management of ELSTAT, as well as with other competent officials and newly-hired personnel of ELSTAT. It had also meetings with representatives of the three reviewed National Authorities, with various categories of users of ELSTAT's statistics, such as representatives of public entities, Greek and international media, research and academic community, international and European institutions, as well as with representatives of the main data providers to ELSTAT for the production of statistics.

2. Certification as "official" of statistics produced by the ELSS agencies

Following the process for the certification as "official" of statistics produced by ELSS agencies initiated in 2013, with the conduct of the 1st pilot certification exercise for 3 Divisions of the Ministry of Rural Development and Food, in 2014 ELSTAT conducted the 2nd pilot certification exercise for the Ministry of Finance, with the technical assistance of an expert in assessment and certification of statistics (from the competent Authority of the United Kingdom – UK Statistics Authority).

On the basis of the experience gained from the two pilot certification exercises, in 2014 ELSTAT completed a final draft of the main document for the certification entitled "Statement of principles and procedures for the certification of ELSS statistics", which was presented during the meeting of the Council of the Hellenic Statistical System (SYELSS), which took place in December 2014.

3. Internal assessment of ELSTAT

In 2014, ELSTAT initiated the works for assessing the implementation of the principles of the European

Statistics Code of Practice by the Divisions of ELSTAT and the first assessments were conducted. The process was initiated with the Divisions of the General Directorate of Statistical Surveys of ELSTAT. The self-assessment questionnaire, to be filled in by the Divisions under assessment, was compiled, and seven (7) six-member assessment teams—one team per Division— were set up, which undertook this work.

In carrying out the assessments, the above teams took into consideration the answers provided by the Divisions in the self-assessment questionnaire, the documentation that accompanied the questionnaire and the clarifications and additional information provided to the teams by the competent employees of the Divisions during the scheduled, for this purpose, visits of the teams to the Divisions.

The work of each assessment team was completed with the compilation of an Assessment Report and the presentation of this Report to the Committee for Monitoring and Managing the Quality of the Statistical Works of ELSTAT (see Chapter C), in order to discuss and decide on the undertaking of the necessary improvement actions, as appropriate.

4. Commitment on Confidence in Statistics

With the Commitment on Confidence in Statistics, signed in February 2012, after having been adopted by the Hellenic Parliament and enshrined in Law 4051/2012⁽¹⁾, the Greek Government committed itself to take all the necessary measures to ensure that ELSTAT is independent and the statistics are accurate, reliable and fully meet European and international quality standards.

Among the measures that the Greek Government committed itself to take are: a) to provide the ELSS with human and financial resources sufficient to deliver high quality statistics to users in accordance with all their obligations at both national and European level, and b) to ensure full and timely access to administrative data sources and to the delivery of administrative data in accordance with the Statistical Law.

In addition to the aforementioned measures, the Greek Government committed itself to:

- fully respect international and European standards for statistical data quality, in particular the principles of the European Statistics Code of Practice,
- guarantee and defend the professional independence of the Hellenic Statistical System, and in particular of ELSTAT, and promote it to the public through appropriate communication actions,
- support ELSTAT in upholding public confidence in the statistics of Greece and to defend them against any efforts to undermine their credibility.

Nevertheless, the above commitments of the Greek Government continued not to be adequately respected during 2014. More specifically: the commitment concerning the provision of ELSTAT with adequate human and financial resources continued not to be fully met in practice; obstacles to the access to critical data of administrative sources continued to exist; and in addition an obstacle arose as regards the provision of data of the General Government entities. At the same time, events in the external environment of ELSTAT that seriously undermine its professional independence and the public confidence in its statistics continued to occur, without the provision—as envisaged in the Commitment on Confidence in Statistics— of support and defense by the Greek Government. A capital position among these events had the ongoing and lengthy judicial proceedings against the President of ELSTAT and two senior officials within the Authority, regarding the alleged inflation, "with Eurostat's consent", of the Greek

(1) http://www.statistics.gr/portal/page/portal/ESYE/BUCKET/General/Annex_signed_CoC.pdf
http://www.statistics.gr/portal/page/portal/ESYE/BUCKET/General/Law4051_2012_06082014.pdf

fiscal deficit figures of 2009. These proceedings, initiated in 2011, also continued in 2014, despite the fact that the relevant statistical data had repeatedly (nine times until the end of 2014) undergone the quality controls implemented by the competent European agency, pursuant to EU Regulation 479/2009, in order to ensure full compliance with EU legislation, and they are fully accepted both by European and international institutions and markets.

The need for the observance by the Greek Government of its commitment on: a) full implementation, in practice, of the professional independence of ELSTAT, through the explicit and active support of the Government, b) removing all obstacles for granting ELSTAT full access to administrative data, and c) provision of ELSTAT with adequate human and financial resources for the implementation of its Annual Statistical Work Program and ensuring its autonomy in managing and allocating the above resources, is stressed, inter alia, in the 2014 annual report of the Good Practice Advisory Committee⁽²⁾ of the Hellenic Statistical System (and in the relevant report for 2013⁽³⁾ as well).

The need for fully supporting the professional independence of ELSTAT by the Greek Authorities is pointed out, inter alia, in the Opinion of the European Statistical Governance Advisory Board (ESGAB), issued in March 2015⁽⁴⁾ and in the Statement of the Members of the European Statistical System (ESSC), issued in May 2015⁽⁵⁾ (as it had happened in their relevant statement issued in February 2013⁽⁶⁾).

5. Joint Overall Statistical Greek Action Plan

In 2014, ELSTAT continued its works for the implementation of the actions of the Joint Overall Statistical Greek Action Plan (JOSGAP), as these have been amended after the addition, in 2012, of the improvement actions that are included in the Commitment on Confidence in Statistics.

Many of the actions under pillars A, B and C of the JOSGAP had already been implemented by the end of 2013. Among the remaining actions, progress has been achieved for some of them in 2014, whereas the progress recorded for some other actions was not as expected, mainly, on account of exogenous factors.

More specifically, as regards the remaining actions under pillar C of JOSGAP, which focus on improving the quality of the government finance statistics of Greece, all the actions under the competency of ELSTAT were completed in 2014, except for one action concerning the classification of the Legal Entities under Private Law that are supervised by the Local Government, which depends on the provision of data by the involved agencies to ELSTAT. The result of the implementation of the actions of pillar C was the consolidation, already since 2012, of the technical conditions for the production of quality and reliable government finance statistics, which had as a consequence **the publication, in October 2014, without any reservations by Eurostat, in the framework of the biannual Excessive Deficit Procedure (EDP), for a ninth consecutive time** since November 2010, of the Annual Government Finance Statistics of Greece. The publication, since November 2010, of the deficit and debt statistics of Greece by Eurostat without reservations, demonstrates the steady and well established acceptance of the public finance sta-

(2) http://www.statistics.gr/portal/page/portal/ESYE/BUCKET/General/report_adv_2014_GR.pdf
http://www.statistics.gr/portal/page/portal/ESYE/BUCKET/General/report_adv_2014_EN.pdf

(3) http://www.statistics.gr/portal/page/portal/ESYE/BUCKET/General/report_adv_2013_GR.pdf
http://www.statistics.gr/portal/page/portal/ESYE/BUCKET/General/report_adv_2013_EN.pdf

(4) http://www.statistics.gr/portal/page/portal/ESYE/BUCKET/General/Opinion_%20ESGAB_24032015_GR.pdf
http://www.statistics.gr/portal/page/portal/ESYE/BUCKET/General/Opinion_%20ESGAB_24032015_EN.pdf

(5) http://www.statistics.gr/portal/page/portal/ESYE/BUCKET/General/NWS_ESSC_27052015_EN_0.pdf
http://www.statistics.gr/portal/page/portal/ESYE/BUCKET/General/NWS_ESSC_27052015_GR.pdf

(6) http://www.statistics.gr/portal/page/portal/ESYE/BUCKET/General/ESS_STATEMENT_GREECE_2013_GR.pdf

tistics compiled by ELSTAT as statistics that fully meet the rules and requirements of European Regulations and are compiled in line with international statistical standards, more broadly. It also reaffirms the systematic efforts that have been made by ELSTAT to produce consistently reliable statistics. This fact constitutes an important series of successes for Greece and has contributed to the creation of a very important and unprecedented "track record" for the reliability of the government finance statistics of Greece.

As regards the remaining actions under pillar A of JOSGAP, which are aimed at enhancing the institutional framework of the ELSS, further progress was achieved in the establishment of the new Organization of ELSTAT, although at a slower pace than was desirable, because of the great shortage of human resources. More specifically, in 2014 ELSTAT prepared an advanced draft of the new Organization, taking into consideration, inter alia, the results of the work accomplished by the Coordination and Programming Section of ELSTAT pertaining to the recording of all the duties and responsibilities of ELSTAT's employees, as well as of the corresponding average time (in hours) spent in their daily work during a 12-month period.

Nevertheless, some other actions of pillar A, under the competency of the Government, which concern the continuous implementation of the Commitment on Confidence in Statistics and refer to the enduring support of the operation of ELSTAT, showed inadequate progress in 2014, as mentioned above.

As regards the actions under pillar B of JOSGAP, which aim at improving the processes and capacity for the production of statistics in Greece, mostly, through a program of medium-term technical assistance provided to ELSTAT by Eurostat, in 2014, for some of these actions, there was a continuation of the provision of technical assistance to ELSTAT by experts of the European Statistical System. This concerns the actions pertaining to: improving the quality of Structural Business Statistics; improving the statistical Motor Vehicles Register of ELSTAT; certification as "official" of the statistics of the ELSS agencies (see Paragraph 2 above); upgrading the Sector National Accounts and the Quarterly and Annual National Accounts; improving price and volume measures and finally improving the quality of Foreign Trade Statistics. In addition, for some of the actions under pillar B (for improving the Farm Register and enhancing the quality of Environment Statistics) some progress was achieved in the area of cooperation with the agencies that own administrative data sources, as well as with other producers of statistics.

More specifically, in 2014 the progress that was achieved, in terms of the aforementioned actions under pillar B, was as follows:

- As regards the project **for assessing and improving the quality of Business Statistics** produced by ELSTAT, several Sections and Divisions of ELSTAT cooperated in the framework of a large-scale exercise for assessing the quality of all the Structural Business Statistics (SBS).

As regards the improvement of Business Statistics through the access of ELSTAT to tax data of enterprises, the situation was as follows:

Since November 2011, the access of ELSTAT to tax data of enterprises, which are necessary for the compilation of more timely and of better quality business statistics was still pending, despite the provisions stipulated, inter alia, in the Greek Statistical Law and the relevant memorandum of cooperation signed in November 2011 between ELSTAT and the Ministry of Finance. Due to the invocation of the Tax Law (on tax secrecy) by the Ministry of Finance for not granting ELSTAT access to such data, during the 2nd quarter 2014, the Tax Law was finally amended so as to explicitly allow ELSTAT to have access to confidential tax data exclusively for statistical purposes. At the same time, in April 2014 an updated memorandum of cooperation was signed by ELSTAT, the General Secretariat for Public Revenue (GSPR), the General Secretariat for Information Systems (GSIS) and the Social Insurance Institute (IKA) for the transmission of data to ELSTAT.

In this context, ELSTAT promptly put forward the preparatory works for the receipt of data, by elaborating: a) an Implementation Plan, as provided for in the Annex of the updated memorandum, after having received the comments of the agencies involved, b) a Regulation on the use of administrative data for the production of statistics and a security policy. At the same time, ELSTAT, assisted by an expert, prepared all the steps in order to be ready for the production of Structural Business Statistics on the basis of the tax data. Subsequently, ELSTAT submitted a request to the Ministry of Finance (GSIS and GSPR) for the provision of information on the technical characteristics of the data (size, volume, etc.), in order to create the special database to ensure the secure receipt, storage and processing of the data. Despite the many efforts of ELSTAT, since August 2014, the Ministry of Finance did not respond to the above request, calling, instead, explicitly, into question the right of ELSTAT to have access to tax data under the tax legislation in force, despite the amendment of the relevant law in April 2014 specifically to ensure this access. This evolution is clearly not consistent with the obligation assumed by the Government to observe the Commitment on Confidence in Statistics.

- In the framework of the action aiming at **improving the Statistical Motor Vehicles Register**, which had been launched in 2013 and continued in 2014 with the technical assistance of an expert of the European Statistical System, ELSTAT was supplied, in response to its relevant request, with the database of the Ministry of Infrastructure, Transport and Networks, in order to create a Motor Vehicles Register, on a pilot basis as a "snapshot", with the aim of studying the processing rules and developing the necessary IT applications. The purpose of the operation of the Motor Vehicles Register is to compile statistics on the vehicle fleet in accordance with the international definition, as well as to make available an updated sampling frame to be used for the surveys of the competent Section of ELSTAT. For the receipt of the database, ELSTAT has created a secure environment for the safekeeping of confidential data. At the same time, given the envisaged provision of data to ELSTAT by the General Secretariat for Public Revenue (GSPR) at regular intervals for the updating of the Motor Vehicles Register, ELSTAT requested the necessary data from the GGPR, which however were not provided on account of reservations expressed by the Ministry. It should be noted that furthermore in 2014 the GSPR discontinued the provision of the regularly transmitted data to ELSTAT pertaining to the contact details data (postal code and telephone number) of lorry owners for the update of the sample of the survey on Road Freight Transport. The above do not comply, as well, with the observance, at a satisfactory level, of the Commitment on Confidence in Statistics.
- In 2014, ELSTAT continued the works for **upgrading the Sector National Accounts**. The Structural Business Statistics data, that had derived following the quality assessment exercise (see above), were integrated in the accounts of the years 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011. Moreover, an expert of the European Statistical System provided ELSTAT with technical assistance with the aim of upgrading its Sector Accounts in full compliance with the new European System of Accounts ESA 2010 and in coordination with the implementation of the above System in the Annual and Quarterly National Accounts. In the 4th quarter of 2014, ELSTAT published two Press Releases concerning the data of Quarterly and Annual Non-Financial Sector Accounts for the periods Q1 2006 – Q2 2014 and 2006 – 2013, respectively. These data were produced in accordance with ESA 2010 and were consistent with the data of the Annual National Accounts, Quarterly National Accounts and Government Finance Statistics.

However, it should be noted that the non-provision of ELSTAT by the General Accounting Office (GAO) and the Public Debt Management Agency, in time within 2014, as requested since January 2014, with the whole set of historical data for the period 1995 – 2005 on the General Government sector, resulted to the non-compilation and provision by ELSTAT to Eurostat (and subsequently to users) of seasonally adjusted data on Quarterly Sector Accounts in September 2014, as provided for in Regulation (EU) 549/2013 of the European Parliament and the Council on the European System of National and Regional Accounts ESA 2010. In addition, on account of the non-provision of ELSTAT with the above data it was not possible, in September 2014, to meet the requirements stipulated in

Regulation 549/2013 concerning the transmission to Eurostat of government finance statistics for the period 1995 – 2005. The above problems faced by ELSTAT for having access to data of the General Government Entities do not comply with sufficient observance of the Commitment on Confidence in Statistics.

In 2014 ELSTAT completed successfully the works for upgrading the Annual National Accounts pursuant to the new European System of Accounts ESA 2010. In the 4th quarter of 2014, ELSTAT published a Press Release concerning the data of Annual National Accounts for the period 1995 – 2013 in accordance with the new ESA 2010 standards. It should be noted that Greece is among the few countries that requested minimum derogations from Regulation (EU) 549/2013 of the European Parliament and the Council on the European System of National and Regional Accounts – ESA 2010. ELSTAT fully responded to its commitments on the implementation of ESA 2010 since the very first provision of National Accounts data, in September 2014, to Eurostat (and subsequently to users) in line with ESA 2010. For the completion of the above works, an expert of the European Statistical System provided ELSTAT with technical assistance and quality control of the works.

- With the aim of **improving the Quarterly Accounts**, in 2014 the works for the production of seasonally adjusted data on quarterly GDP and its components were completed. It should be stressed that the release of seasonally adjusted data had stopped since 2011, because the quarterly data of General Government with the appropriate methodology, which was applied by the newly-established ELSTAT in 2010, with reference period starting in 2009, were only available for a very short period of time, from 2009 onwards. Thus, the seasonal adjustment method could not be successfully applied and give reliable results⁽⁷⁾. The production of correct seasonally adjusted data took place in 2014 in full compliance with ESA 2010 requirements, when the quarterly General Government data had been produced with the appropriate methodology for a fairly long period after 2009 and, at the same time, the fiscal aggregates prior to 2009 that present a strong seasonality (such as salaries and pensions) had been recalculated. In the context of these ELSTAT's efforts, a mission of Eurostat took place in ELSTAT for the provision of technical assistance and the conduct of quality control as regards the production of seasonally adjusted quarterly GDP data. In November 2014, ELSTAT issued, for the first time, two Press Releases with data (flash estimate and provisional data, respectively) of the seasonally adjusted quarterly GDP and its components.
- For the implementation of the action on **improving the price and volume measures** and their alignment with the requirements of ESA 2010, in 2014 the necessary works were carried out in order for Eurostat to lift its reservations on the Gross National Income. As a result, all the required tables were transmitted to Eurostat in accordance with ESA 2010, within the set deadline. In this context, in 2014, missions of experts took place with the aim of providing technical assistance and performing quality control of the works and results.
- In 2014, ELSTAT continued the actions aimed at further **improving the quality of the produced statistics in the area of international trade in goods**, by adopting the most modern methodological approaches, in line with the standards of the European Statistical System. In this work ELSTAT was assisted by an expert of the European Statistical System. In December 2014, a technical mission of Eurostat took place in ELSTAT with the purpose of a total evaluation of the Action Plan. Eurostat's representatives stressed the improvements achieved in the quality of the international trade in goods statistics of ELSTAT and the fact that these statistics are compiled according to the European standards.

(7) Before 2010, the practice followed by the former National Statistical Service of Greece (NSSG) was to produce the quarterly data of General Government by dividing the annual forecasts or annual accounting data by four, thus eliminating the seasonality of data. As a result of this practice on the financial data, the implementation of seasonal adjustment systems on the aggregate GDP data (including financial data) resulted to the production of non-reliable seasonally adjusted quarterly GDP data.

- With the aim of **improving the quality and timeliness of the Farm Register** of ELSTAT and given the impossibility to finance the project through the current National Strategic Reference Framework, during the 3rd quarter 2014, ELSTAT secured the necessary funding through a grant agreement from Eurostat. ELSTAT cooperated with the Hellenic Payment and Control Agency for Guidance and Guarantee Community Aid (OPEKEPE) with the aim of connecting the statistical Farm Register of ELSTAT with the Register of Beneficiaries of OPEKEPE. In this context, it was agreed to add in the formal application for the beneficiaries of OPEKEPE additional questions on behalf of ELSTAT. During the 4th quarter 2014, following a call for proposals, two national experts were selected in order to assist ELSTAT in the materialization of this project.
- In the context of the action **for improving Environmental and Water Statistics**, in February 2014 a Working Group was established consisting of competent employees of ELSTAT and of the Special Secretariat for Water of the Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change, with the aim of improving the coverage and quality of water statistics. The outcome of this cooperation was the transmission to Eurostat, by ELSTAT, of Water Statistics data, pursuant to European Regulation 2150/2002.
- In addition, in 2014 ELSTAT continued the preparations regarding the **upgrading of the existing infrastructure of the services provided by ELSTAT in the area of Information and Communications Technology (ICT)**.

ELSTAT completed the elaboration of the specifications for the 8 sub-projects of this project:

1. Redesign and upgrade of the statistical works sub-system of the Integrated Information System
2. Upgrade of the portal services for the dissemination of statistics
3. Evaluation and implementation of security policies
4. Contingency Planning
5. IT Service Management
6. E-mail Archiving
7. Central printing system
8. Human Resources Management System.

From the above 8 sub-projects, during the 4th quarter 2014: one sub-project was completed (sub-project 6), two were at the stage of public debate (sub-projects 3 and 8), for three sub-projects (sub-projects 1, 4 and 5) contract agreements were concluded, and two sub-projects were at the stage of calls for tender (sub-projects 2 and 7).

- Following the information provided to ELSTAT, in 2014, concerning the impossibility to finance **the program for the training of ELSTAT staff** through the National Strategic Reference Framework, ELSTAT decided to fund through its own resources the training series that were included in the above program for the three-year period 2013 – 2015 and which, because of their specialized character, could not be covered by the Training Institute of the National Centre of Public Administration and Decentralization. In this context, ELSTAT started in the 2nd quarter of 2014, the preparatory works for carrying out 7 out of the above training series by experts of the European Statistical System (ESS). Until the end of 2014, the appropriate trainers were identified for 3 out of the 7 training series, which were planned to take place within the first semester of 2015.

Nevertheless, in 2014 no progress was recorded as regards two actions of pillar B, on account of the non-identification of the appropriate experts for the materialization of the relevant projects. It concerns the project for redesigning and upgrading the Statistical Business Register of ELSTAT and the project for the creation and update of the Dwellings Register.

C. GOOD GOVERNANCE BY UPGRADING THE PROCEDURES FOR THE PRODUCTION OF STATISTICS THROUGH IMPLEMENTATION OF A TRANSPARENT RULES-BASED SYSTEM

In 2014, ELSTAT continued its efforts for further improving the processes for the production of statistics through the implementation of clearly defined and transparent rules. In this framework the compilation by ELSTAT of the following circulars, by chronological order, is included:

- **Circular on the granting of access to confidential data for scientific purposes and provision of anonymized microdata of statistical surveys**

This circular lays down the conditions under which ELSTAT grants access to confidential data for scientific purposes and provides anonymized microdata of statistical surveys.

- **Circular on the Committee for Monitoring and Managing the Quality of Statistical Works of ELSTAT**

The Committee for Monitoring and Managing the Quality of Statistical Works has been established in ELSTAT with the aim of monitoring the materialization of the statistical work in accordance with the Annual Statistical Work Program and the Hellenic Statistical Program, and ensuring its quality, through the systematic monitoring of statistical processes and the exploration and routing of measures for enhancing the statistical output, where necessary. This circular sets out: the work and the composition of the Committee for Monitoring and Managing the Quality of Statistical Works, the organization of its meetings and the application that has been developed for planning and monitoring the progress of statistical surveys/works.

- **Circular on the Security Policy of Information Systems for Digital Data Protection**

This Circular sets out and establishes guidelines that must be followed by anyone who has access to the information produced, amended and transferred through the IT systems of ELSTAT.

- **Circular on the Pricing Policy of Statistical Products**

This circular outlines the policy implemented by ELSTAT as regards the pricing of its statistical products (survey microdata, digital and analogue maps, special processing of data, etc.).

- **Circular on the Policy for Managing Security Incidents of ELSTAT**

This circular provides a framework with clear and consistent guidelines for managing, reporting and recording any incidents of data security, loss and alteration, as well as any incidents referring, generally, to security.

- **Circular on the Quality Guidelines of ELSTAT**

This circular contains guiding principles and best practices for ensuring quality in the various stages of the statistical production process in ELSTAT, in order to provide users with high quality statistical products and services meeting their needs.

D. ENHANCED RESPONSIVENESS TO USER NEEDS AND CLOSER COOPERATION WITH PRODUCERS OF STATISTICAL DATA

One of ELSTAT's main concerns since its establishment has been the production of statistics adapted to the needs and requirements of users, at national, European and international level. In this context, ELSTAT gathers the comments and interventions made by the participants in the User Conferences that ELSTAT has established on a yearly basis, as well as the results from the User Surveys it conducts, with

the aim of improving its statistical products and services provided, as well as identifying new needs and requirements for the production of statistics. In order to achieve this objective, ELSTAT also takes into consideration the comments and interventions made by the members of the Council of the Hellenic Statistical System (SYELSS), in which participate representatives of the agencies that are important users of data produced by ELSTAT.

In the above framework are also included the activities of ELSTAT aiming at improving various aspects of the layout and content of ELSTAT's portal, as well as at enhancing the other dissemination modes for statistics, by following the developing international standards in order to fulfill, to the maximum extent possible, user needs for timely and reliable information, both at national and international level.

• **Undertaking of actions, in 2014, responding to the conclusions of the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th User Conferences**

On the basis of the comments and suggestions made during the 4 User Conferences that took place during 2010 – 2013, ELSTAT included, among others, in its Annual Statistical Work Programs the following:

1. Conduct of a Time Use Survey, in cooperation with the General Secretariat for Gender Equality.
2. Development of a System of Health Accounts (SHA) at national level, in cooperation with the Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity and the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens; undertaking of actions for compiling long time series for National Accounts; production of seasonally adjusted quarterly GDP data; development of additional statistical data in the areas of tourism, environment, health, and use of renewable energy sources; production of statistical data on mental health, social support of vulnerable groups of population and provision of informal care to them.
3. Gradual increase of the size of the samples that are used for the conduct of sample surveys in order to improve the reliability of the results at the level below the Country level.
4. Improving accessibility to analytical primary data of its surveys and to statistical information, in general, by ensuring, at the same time, the observance of statistical confidentiality and statistical ethics.
5. Enhancing the quality and timeliness of the results of the Annual Agricultural Survey and of other ELSTAT's statistical products.

As regards the aforementioned works, in 2014, the following progress was achieved:

– *Compilation of time series for National Accounts*

In the framework of the implementation of ESA 2010, ELSTAT compiled and released long time series for National Accounts for the period 1995 – 2013, with harmonized methodology and without breaks. For the production of data in line with ESA 2010, special surveys and studies have been conducted, so that the methodology followed for the implementation of the new system is fully consistent with its requirements.

– *Compilation of a time series for Seasonally Adjusted Quarterly GDP Data*

ELSTAT compiled and published a relevant time series.

– *Publication of the results of the Time Use Survey*

In December 2014, ELSTAT published the results of the Time Use Survey with reference period March 2013 – February 2014.

– *Compilation of Health Accounts*

After the compilation, in 2013, of Health Accounts for the years 2009, 2010 and 2011, in March 2014 ELSTAT compiled Health Accounts with reference year 2012 and the relevant Press Release was published.

– *Tourism Statistics*

In the framework of the memorandum of cooperation between ELSTAT and the Ministry of Tourism, data on characteristic for tourism branches and specific for tourism product groups were processed. These data are to be used for the compilation of the Satellite Tourism Account by the Ministry of Tourism.

– *Statistics on mental health, social support to vulnerable groups of population and provision of informal care to them*

For the production of the above statistics relevant questions were added to the questionnaire of the 2014 Health Survey.

– *Environmental Statistics*

Cooperation of ELSTAT with the Special Secretariat for Water of the Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change was developed, with the aim of improving the coverage and quality of Water Statistics (see Chapter B, Paragraph 5: "Project for enhancing the quality of Environmental Statistics").

– *Improvement of the quality and timeliness of the results of the Annual Agricultural Survey*

In the framework of the cooperation between ELSTAT and the Ministry of Rural Development and Food, the Annual Agricultural Survey has been redesigned. An electronic questionnaire has been designed and developed, which is to be filled in by Agronomists – Statistical Interviewers. For the selection of the appropriate Statistical Interviewers, a pilot Register was created on the basis of the standardized Register of External Survey Workers, which will be kept at ELSTAT and renewed every 8 months. The questionnaire will be completed by utilizing the administrative sources of the Ministry.

– *Redesigning of the questionnaire of the Sea Fishery Survey*

The questionnaire of the Sea Fishery Survey was redesigned so as to become processable through an Optical Character Reader (OCR), with the aim of reducing the time needed for data processing and improving the timeliness of the results

– *Completion of feasibility studies for the production of new statistics in the Transport sector:*

- a) Feasibility study for the compilation of statistics on the road network of Greece.
- b) Feasibility study for the compilation of statistics on road transport by buses and coaches and on transport via pipelines of natural gas.
- c) Feasibility study for the compilation of passenger mobility statistics.
- d) Feasibility study for the compilation of statistics on road traffic for the compilation of vehicle-kilometers (VKM).

– *Implementation of the "chain-linking" method for the revised Consumer Price Index with base year 2009=100.0*

With the aim of depicting the economic reality in a more accurate and timely manner through the Consumer Price Index (CPI), in 2014 the methodology for compiling this index changed. Until December 2013, the Consumer Price Index was a fixed-base index with base year 2009=100.0. The CPI

weights were based on the results of the 2008 Household Budget Survey (HBS) adjusted to 2009 prices. Since January 2014, the revised CPI follows the "chain linking" method, where the new weights are integrated annually, with each year having as a base the month of December of the previous year, and they are estimated according to the latest available data of HBS, which is now conducted on a yearly basis. The revised CPI that is published is re-calculated by linking the previous and the new time series in December 2013 with base year 2009=100.0, in order to maintain the continuity of the time series.

– *Revision of economic indices with base year 2010=100.0*

In 2014 the revision of the following indices was completed: i) Cost Index for the Factors of Agricultural and Livestock Production, ii) Services Producer Price Indices for new branches with base year 2010=100.0, iii) Turnover and Volume Index in Retail Trade, iv) Turnover Index in Wholesale Trade, v) Turnover Indices in Motor Trade, vi) Index of the number of Persons Employed in Retail Trade, vii) Industrial Production Index, Turnover Index in Industry, viii) Production Index in Construction with new base year 2010=100.0.

– *Cooperation with administrative data sources for improving the quality and timeliness of the Farm Register*

In the context of improving the quality and timeliness of the Farm Register, ELSTAT cooperated with the Hellenic Payment and Control Agency for Guidance and Guarantee Community Aid (OPEKEPE) and the Ministry of Rural Development and Food for the provision of data. More specifically, on the basis of a relevant study, it was proposed the addition of specific variables in the formal application for beneficiaries of OPEKEPE.

– *Initiation of a project for improving the quality of the data of the European Integrated System of Social Protection Statistics (ESSPROS)*

In 2014, ELSTAT initiated an extensive project aiming at the review and fundamental revision of the data of the European Integrated System of Social Protection Statistics (ESSPROS) as it had been put in place in 2000. The project, which is conducted in cooperation with Eurostat, involves corrections in methodology and updates in data sources, resulting in a major revision, while at the same time implementing a new benefits-based, instead of the previous institution-based, list of ESSPROS schemes. The revised statistics are planned to be released in the last quarter of 2015.

– *Production of statistics at a level below the Country level*

In this framework, in 2014 ELSTAT continued to explore the possibilities to increase the size of the used samples in order to enhance the reliability of the results at a level below the Country level and at the same time to further increase accuracy of results at the level of the Country (reducing statistical error). More specifically the following steps were taken:

1. Augmenting the sample of the 2014 Household Budget Survey (HBS), the 2013 Survey on Income and Living Conditions of Households (EU-SILC), the 2013 Health Survey and the 2013 Vacation Survey, in order to improve the accuracy of their results at the level of Region (NUTS 2).
2. Further augmenting the samples of the Survey on Income and Living Conditions of Households (EU-SILC) of the years 2014 and 2015.
3. Designing the 2013 Surveys on Structural Business Statistics with augmented samples of enterprises, in order to enhance the accuracy of their results at the level of Region (NUTS 2).

– *Improving accessibility to statistical information*

(See Paragraph "Upgrading the portal of ELSTAT" in the same Chapter below).

- **Development of a GIS web tool for geographical display, correlation and dissemination of statistical information**

This work was accomplished in the framework of the project funded by Eurostat entitled "Merging statistics and geospatial information in Member States". In the framework of implementing the relevant grant agreement, ELSTAT undertook to elaborate a mosaic map of Greece depicting the Resident Population of Greece for 2001 in a cell of 1x1 km² and subsequently to carry out a respective work for the 2011 population data (Resident Population). For this purpose, in 2014, it undertook the following actions:

- Creation of a database and processing of population data from the city/census blocks of 1,142 settlements (oikismos) under Kallikratis Plan.
- Creation of a polygonal geodatabase with the city/census blocks of the 1,142 settlements (oikismos) under Kallikratis Plan.
- Checks and corrections in the file containing the positional location of the settlements (oikismos) by using the applications provided by the Hellenic Cadastre and Google Earth.
- Digitization of the surface of the 424 newly-created settlements (oikismos) under Kallikratis Plan and creation of a polygonal geodatabase of the surface of 12,406 settlements.

- **Compilation of the 2015 Annual Statistical Work Program and of the 2013 Annual Report**

In May 2014, ELSTAT completed the compilation of the 2015 Annual Statistical Work Program and of the 2013 Annual Report.

- **Participation of ELSTAT in Eurostat's Census Hub project concerning the dissemination of the 2011 Population – Housing Census**

In 2014, ELSTAT completed the actions pertaining to the dissemination of the 2011 Population – Housing Census results through Eurostat's Census Hub application, in the configuration of which ELSTAT actively participated.

The Census Hub is a new mode for disseminating the 2011 Population – Housing Census results of the EU Member States and the EFTA countries. The basic purpose of this application is to disseminate in a harmonized way the data and metadata of Member States. The aim of the Census Hub is to extend the possibilities for data analysis and processing and to allow the easy and effective access of users to the harmonized data on the 2011 Population – Housing Census of the EU Member States and the EFTA countries.

The Census Hub interface consists of 60 data hypercubes which include multidimensional tables (up to 7 cross-tabulations of various topics) and 35 hypercubes of qualitative metadata. Statistical Disclosure Control (SDC) methods have been applied to the data hypercubes of the Census Hub to ensure statistical confidentiality.

The Census Hub began operating in December 2014. Eurostat informs the users on Census Hub and its operation through the following link:

http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/population_and_housing_census/introduction

- **Digitization of the census – administrative boundaries of the Local Government Organizations (OTA), as they were derived from the 2011 Population – Housing Census**

The digitization (location – name) of the cartographic maps (scale 1: 50,000) for the settlements (oikismos) of Greece, on the basis of the 2011 Population – Housing Census, was completed.

In addition, the following works pertaining to digitization took place:

- Digitization of 1,142 settlements (oikismos) of Greece at the level of city blocks and road axes, on the basis of the 2011 Population – Housing Census.
 - Digitization of cartographic maps of 520 settlements (oikismos), at the level of census sectors of the 2011 Population – Housing Census.
 - Digitization of the historic cartographic archive of the 1961 Population Census.
- **Completion and provision to users through the portal of ELSTAT of the Interactive Map concerning the 2011 Population Census**

This Interactive Map includes population data (Resident, de facto and Registered Population), data on the dwellings and socioeconomic variables (employment, unemployment, marital status, gender, educational level, citizenship, and age groups), as well as data on buildings, at the level of Municipality and it was made available to users through the following link:

<http://www.statistics.gr/portal/page/portal/ESYE/PAGE-interactive-census-map>

- **Cooperation actions of the Library of ELSTAT concerning the dissemination of statistics**

Following the cooperation of the Library of ELSTAT with the National Documentation Centre, the Digital Library of ELSTAT was included in the Greek digital libraries search engine "openarchives" of the National Documentation Centre.

In addition, the Library of ELSTAT cooperated with the Greek Research Infrastructure Network for the Humanities (DYAS) in the context of the DARIAH – GR project "Development of the Greek Research Infrastructure for Humanities". Among the agencies participating in this network are: the Academy of Athens, "Athena" Research Centre, the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens – Faculty of History and Archaeology, the National Technical University of Athens, the Athens School of Fine Arts and the Foundation for Research and Technology. The cooperation of ELSTAT with DYAS will result to the presentation of all the statistical themes of the Digital Library of ELSTAT on the website to be prepared by DYAS concerning the humanities.

- **Organization of the 5th Annual User Conference**

In the framework of implementing its 2014 Annual Statistical Work Program, ELSTAT convened, on 10 December 2014, the 5th User Conference on its premises in Piraeus. During the Conference, ELSTAT provided an overview of its work and the major pillars for its operation from the date of its establishment until the present time. Moreover, ELSTAT presented the tasks undertaken so as to satisfy users' needs as these had been expressed during the four previous User Conferences. Subsequently, users commented on the statistical output and the services provided by ELSTAT in relation with the satisfaction of their needs.

On the basis of the comments and observations made by the participants in the 5th User Conference, as well as in the other four User Conferences, ELSTAT recorded and processed the needs of users. Satisfying such identified needs is already, to a large extent, reflected in ELSTAT's priorities for the three-year period 2014 – 2016, as they have been integrated into the Hellenic Statistical Program for 2014 – 2016. ELSTAT has prioritized the aforementioned needs on the basis of their importance to users and how critical the satisfaction of such needs is for the statistical product, and has begun to explore the possibility of satisfying these needs, taking into account its available resources and its national and international obligations.

Box 1. Pointings of users during the 5th Annual User Conference

Users pointed out, inter alia, the need for:

- i) compiling interactive tables with foreign trade data broken down by product and country, following the standards of Eurostat's database,
- ii) producing seasonally adjusted short-term indices (Industrial Production Index, Retail Sales Index, etc.),
- iii) producing long-time series for National Accounts (GDP) including for the years prior to 1995,
- iv) producing statistical data on the number of employed persons by branch of economic activity, on the basis of quarterly National Accounts,
- v) producing statistical data on the permanent employees in the public sector,
- vi) producing statistical data on tourist expenditure(structure) at a lower geographical level,
- vii) investigating the discrepancy observed in the results of ELSTAT's survey on tourist arrivals and overnight stays compared with the results of the Border Statistical Survey conducted by the Bank of Greece,
- viii) producing statistics on energy consumption and ensuring their quality,
- ix) creating a "hub" on ELSS education statistics, including also national statistics beyond European ones and producing statistics on post secondary no-tertiary education for the years after 2008,
- x) producing statistical data on education expenditure, analytically for all education levels, as well as data on consumption expenditure and living costs of students living in a different city than the place of their permanent residence,
- xi) addressing the discrepancies observed among the statistical data produced by several agencies and establishing cooperation between the producers of statistics, within ELSTAT and also among the ELSS agencies, with ELSTAT as coordinator, with the aim of ensuring comparability of statistics,
- xii) recording suicidality and suicide attempts in Greece and estimating the Country's direct and indirect economic cost due to suicides, and
- xiii) upgrading the database on the portal of ELSTAT in terms of presentation of the results by statistical survey/work, according to Eurostat standards.

• **Upgrading the portal of ELSTAT**

ELSTAT aims at continuously improving various aspects of the layout and content of its portal and of the other dissemination modes for its statistics, with a view to adapting them to users' needs, both at national and international level.

A project that will also contribute significantly to the achievement of the aforementioned objective is the project for improving and upgrading the existing ICT infrastructure and the corresponding services provided (see Chapter B, Paragraph 5) which will significantly upgrade the portal of ELSTAT by incorporating new tools and technologies. The works for redesigning the portal of ELSTAT and for enriching its content are included in the first two sub-projects of this project.

The main webpage of ELSTAT receives a large number of visitors on a daily basis. In 2014, the main webpage had 435,798 unique users visits, which correspond to the number of unique computers that visited the webpage, recording an increase of 10.5% in comparison with 2013. A similar increase of 10.4% was observed in the total number of connection periods, i.e. the time period during which a user is actively connected to the webpage, which in 2014 amounted to 756,587. It is noted that the Statistical Data Dissemination Section and the Library Section of ELSTAT served 4,942 user requests in 2014.

In 2014, the following actions were carried out for enriching the website of ELSTAT (both the Greek and English version of the website):

- Posting of the Pricing Policy of Statistical Products of ELSTAT on the special webpage concerning the statistical data request.

- Continuing the work of updating the tables and covering the gaps in the time series of data posted on ELSTAT’s website, as well as enriching the website with the metadata for all the statistical surveys and works after having adjusted them to the European Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange System (ESMS). Until the end of 2014, metadata according to the ESMS system had been posted on ELSTAT’s website for about 76% of the conducted statistical surveys/works.
- Increasing the number of Press Releases on statistical data issued by ELSTAT from 285 Press Releases in 2009 to 328 in 2014 (an increase of 15%), so as to provide users with an increasingly larger part of the results of the statistical works of ELSTAT and, more generally, broader and more comprehensive statistical information.
- Posting on ELSTAT’s portal of tables on various statistical themes and for a number of years for which there was insufficient information.
- Converting the excel-type data tables to pdf-type with the aim of better serving users’ needs. This work encompassed the conversion and checking of hundreds of tables and lasted several months.
- Compiling and then releasing on the website of procedures, fully compatible with European standards, concerning the access of researchers to microdata of ELSTAT’s statistical surveys, while fully preserving the confidentiality of data of households and enterprises.

In addition, during 2014, ELSTAT continued the works for developing web applications that could enable the direct access to, management, correlation and mapping of the data from the Population – Housing Censuses of the years 1991, 2001 and 2011 in the framework of the memorandum of co-operation signed in August 2012 between ELSTAT and the National Centre for Social Research (EKKE). The above memorandum aims at facilitating free dissemination of geospatial data to demanding and specialized users but also to the general public, while at the same time fully ensuring statistical confidentiality of personal data of the people enumerated during the Census.

In the context of the assumption by Greece of the Presidency of the Council of the European Union during the first semester 2014, ELSTAT created on its portal a specialized website,

<http://eu2014presidency.statistics.gr/eu2014/index.php/en/>

which contained information on the activities of the Council Working Party on Statistics (CWPS), the progress of the legislative statistical dossiers and any other relevant information, including links giving access to relevant documents and websites, as well as other basic contact information. In 2014, the Greek Presidency website had 3,744 visits of users—new and returning users. The total number of the connection periods of users amounted to 6,508 in 2014.

The special edition of the publication "Greece in figures, Special Edition", containing key statistics and comparative data of the EU Member States, was disseminated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the framework of the Greek Presidency.

- **Fostering statistical education**

In the context of the project of ELSTAT "Fostering statistical education", in 2014 sixteen (16) guided tours of secondary education pupils were organized on the premises of ELSTAT. Five hundred fifty-two (552) pupils, accompanied by forty-two (42) teachers visited the premises of ELSTAT and the Library of ELSTAT, they were informed on the tasks and the work of ELSTAT, the statistical material they can retrieve from the portal of ELSTAT, as well as on the services provided to users by the specialized Library of ELSTAT (the Library’s electronic catalogue, Digital Library, European Statistical Data Support Centre – ESDS).

- **Participation of ELSTAT in the 79th Thessaloniki International Fair**

In 2014, ELSTAT participated in the 79th Thessaloniki International Fair (6 – 14 September 2014)

with its own stand, with the aim of informing the citizens and the private sector on the work it has accomplished and it continues to undertake, and which aims at continuously improving the quality of the official statistics of Greece and consolidating their reliability at national, European and international level.

The visitors to ELSTAT's stand had the opportunity to be informed about the Mission of ELSTAT, its work during 2010 – 2014, the Hellenic Statistical Programs of 2011 – 2013 and 2014 – 2016, the Annual Statistical Work Programs for the years 2014 and 2015 and the Annual Reports of the Statistical Work Programs of the years 2012 and 2013, the Regulation on the Statistical Obligations of the ELSS agencies, the European Statistics Code of Practice, the Declaration on Professional Ethics of the International Statistical Institute (ISI), the Special Edition and the information leaflet of ELSTAT for the Greek Presidency, and the Press Release Calendars of the years 2014 and 2015. Moreover, visitors to ELSTAT's stand were also provided with the following publications in electronic and paper form: the latest updated editions of the publications "The Greek Economy" and "Living Conditions in Greece", the information publication "Greece in figures, 2014", as well as thematic publications with statistics from various statistical surveys/works of ELSTAT (results of the 2011 Population – Housing Census, labour force statistics, agriculture, livestock and fishery statistics, intra-EU and extra-EU trade statistics, tourism statistics, and data on the National and the Harmonized Index of Consumer Prices). Furthermore, at the stand of ELSTAT there were presentations of statistical data and other information in the form of "infographics".

The opening ceremony for ELSTAT's stand took place on 7 September 2014, in the presence of the President of ELSTAT, Mr. Andreas V. Georgiou. Material on the presence of ELSTAT in the 79th Thessaloniki International Fair is available at the following link on the portal of ELSTAT:

<http://www.statistics.gr/portal/page/portal/ESYE/PAGE-EXPO79>

- **Meeting of the Council of the Hellenic Statistical System (SYELSS)**

In 2014, two meetings of the Council of the Hellenic Statistical System (SYELSS) were realized on the premises of ELSTAT.

The first of the above meetings was held on 29 May 2014. The purpose of this meeting was:

- the presentation of the 2013 Annual Report of ELSTAT;
- the presentation of the draft 2015 Annual Statistical Work Program of ELSTAT;
- the information of the SYELSS members on: a) the comments expressed by users of statistics during the User Conference held in 2013, b) the basic steps for the certification of statistics produced by the ELSS agencies, c) the preparatory works for the peer review in Greece, in the light of its planned conduct in November 2014.

The second meeting of the SYELSS in 2014 was held on 17 December 2014. The purpose of the meeting was:

- the presentation of the principles and procedures for the certification of statistics produced by the ELSS agencies;
- the presentation of the 2014 Annual Report of three National Authorities of the ELSS (Ministry of Rural Development and Food, Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change) by their representatives in SYELSS;
- the information of the SYELSS members on: a) the comments expressed by users of statistics during the User Conference held in 2014, b) the peer review that took place in Greece.

- **Exploiting administrative data sources for the production of statistics**

With the aim of improving its statistical products, while at the same time saving human and financial resources and reducing the burden on respondents, ELSTAT, since its establishment, integrated in its Statistical Work Programs actions intended for the closer cooperation with producers of statistics and the better use of administrative data sources. The obligation to grant ELSTAT access to all administrative data sources and to primary data, including confidential data, is clearly stipulated in the Greek Statistical Law (article 2, paragraph 3 and article 8, paragraph 2), as in force, in the Regulation on the Statistical Obligations of the agencies of the Hellenic Statistical System (article 8, paragraph 4) and in the Commitment on Confidence in Statistics.

In this context, the following actions of ELSTAT were carried out in 2014:

- a) Signing of an updated memorandum of cooperation, in April 2014, between ELSTAT, the General Secretariat for Information Systems (GSIS), the General Secretariat for Public Revenue and the Social Insurance Institute (IKA) pertaining to the provision of ELSTAT with the necessary information for the production of Business Statistics and National Accounts (see Chapter B, Paragraph 5, above).
- b) Signing of a memorandum of cooperation between ELSTAT and the National Documentation Centre (EKT) pertaining to the jointly conduct of the surveys on Innovation and Research and Development with immediate utilization of the results by ELSTAT for compiling National Accounts in compliance with ESA 2010 and by the EKT for fulfilling obligations arising from EU Regulation.
- c) Initiation of the cooperation of ELSTAT with the Division of Road Traffic Police of the Hellenic Police, with a view to utilizing the data to be collected through the Integrated Information System of the Hellenic Police for covering the needs of the Survey on Road Accidents.
- d) Initiation of the cooperation with the Ministry of Justice, Transparency and Human Rights, aiming at preparing the electronic collection of statistical data on justice from the supervised entities of the Ministry.

- **Increased use of new technologies for data collection**

In this context, the following actions of ELSTAT are included, which were launched in 2014:

- Development of an electronic questionnaire for collecting, via e-mail, data for the compilation of the Production Index in Construction from the surveyed enterprises.
- Pilot conduct of the follow-up interviews of the Labour Force Survey by using the CATI method for data collection.
- Conduct of the Sea Fishery Survey with Optical Character Reading (OCR) capabilities.
- Development of a web questionnaire for the Annual Agricultural Survey.
- Development of web questionnaires for the statistics on Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Education and for the surveys on Repatriated and Foreign Pupils.
- Upgrading the web application for the submission of data on the arrivals and overnight stays in hotels and rooms-for-rent.

E. INTENSIFYING COOPERATION AND UNDERTAKING OF ACTION IN THE EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL STATISTICAL COMMUNITY

ELSTAT, with the objective to be established as an active member of the European Statistical System, continued in 2014 to put special emphasis on the excellent cooperation with Eurostat and the other Agencies of the European Commission, as well as with the National Statistical Institutes of the other EU Member States. In this context, in 2014 there was continuation of the assiduous, coordinated and effective

participation of ELSTAT staff in Eurostat Working Groups and of the President of ELSTAT in the meetings of the European Statistical System Committee (ESSC), the ESSC Partnership Group⁽⁸⁾, the Bureau of the European Statistical Forum⁽⁹⁾ and the Editing Board of the European Statistical System Report, in which organs the President of ELSTAT was a member in 2014. In addition, in the context of pursuing the cooperation and active role of ELSTAT and of Greece in the international statistical fora, there was continuation of the active participation by ELSTAT in the meetings and workings of international statistical agencies, such as the Conference of European Statisticians, the UN Statistical Commission, and the International Statistical Institute (ISI).

- **Assumption by ELSTAT of the Presidency of the Council Working Party on Statistics (CWPS)**

Greece assumed the Presidency of the Council of the European Union (EU) during the first semester of 2014. In this context, ELSTAT took the chair of the Council Working Party on Statistics (CWPS) in January 2014. The Council Working Party on Statistics, chaired by the EU Member State holding the Presidency, drafts proposals for legislative acts in order to reach a common position at the Council concerning the legislative act proposed by the European Commission. On the basis of the text of the proposed legislative act agreed at the Working Party, the Presidency had informal trilogues with the European Parliament (EP) and the European Commission, aiming at achieving an agreement and adoption of the legislative act by the above two co-legislators (European Parliament and Council).

The overall priorities of the Greek Presidency were set out in the Program of the Presidency Trio of Ireland – Lithuania – Greece. In this context, the Greek Presidency committed to continue the work under way for achieving the goal of providing relevant and high-quality official European Statistics to underpin the development, implementation and monitoring of European Union policies. It also committed to pay particular attention to enhancing confidence in official statistics, based on Community Law on statistics, commitment of national governments and compliance with the principles of the European Statistics Code of Practice.

In order to respond to the most urgent statistical needs of the European Union, the Greek Presidency gave high priority to advancing the Proposal on amending Regulation (EU) No 223/2009 on European Statistics, the Statistical Law of the European Union, on the basis of the efforts of the previous four Presidencies. The advancement of the Proposal for a Regulation on the Provision and Quality of Statistics for the Macroeconomic Imbalances Procedure (MIP) of the EU was also among the priorities of the Greek Presidency. Furthermore, other open legislative dossiers were also advanced, which on account of various reasons were priorities.

The conduct of the elections for the new members of the European Parliament, during the first semester of 2014 (May 2014), was an additional factor setting out the framework of the work of the Greek Presidency. More specifically, the time available to negotiate with the European Parliament, which is co-legislator in the aforementioned Proposals, was limited and predefined, inasmuch as all the negotiations had to be completed by the end of March 2014.

During the Greek Presidency four legislative Proposals were concluded and the relevant legislative acts (Regulations) were published in the Official Journal of the European Union. This was on account

(8) The mission of the Partnership Group of the European Statistical System Committee (ESSC) is to further the development of the European Statistical System at the highest level, notably through ensuring the effective functioning of the ESSC.

(9) The European Statistical Forum (ESF) is the governance body in the relations between the European Statistical System (ESS) and the European System of Central Banks (ESCB). The purpose of the ESF Bureau is the effective functioning of the ESF by preparing the meetings of the Forum and monitoring the actions agreed within its framework.

of the efforts made by the Greek Presidency so that agreement can be reached with the European Parliament and the willingness of all involved parties to advance these legislative Proposals.

The aforementioned Regulations, which pertain to amendments of existing Regulations, are the following:

- Regulation (EU) 538/2014 on European Environmental Economic Accounts.
- Regulation (EU) 545/2014 on the organisation of a Labour Force Sample Survey.
- Regulation (EU) 659/2014 on statistics relating to trading of goods between Member States – Intrastat.
- Regulation (EU) 378/2014 on Farm Structure Survey (FSS) and the Survey on Agricultural Production Methods.

The processing of the following dossiers was initiated under the Greek Presidency and progress was achieved in reaching agreement at the level of the Council Working Party:

- Statistics relating to external trade with non-Member Countries (Extrastat).
- Rail transport statistics, as regards the collection of data on goods, passengers and accidents.
- Statistics of goods transport by inland waterways.

In addition, the important dossiers of the Regulation on European Statistics (223/2009) and the Regulation on the Provision and Quality of Statistics for the Macroeconomic Imbalances Procedure (MIP) became the focus of significant efforts on the part of the Greek Presidency. Despite the time pressure, due to the end of the Parliamentary term, significant progress was achieved on these dossiers under the Greek Presidency. More precisely:

- As regards Regulation (EU) 223/2009 on European Statistics, after the recast by the Greek Presidency of the long-contested (over the four previous presidencies) controversial text aiming at finding common ground and achieving a robust Statistical Law for the Union, a text, as a basis for negotiation and agreement with the European Parliament, was made available to the Italian Presidency.
- As regards the Regulation on the Provision and Quality of Statistics for the Macroeconomic Imbalances Procedure (MIP), significant progress was achieved after the recast by the Greek Presidency of this also controversial text.

The Presidency Team of ELSTAT consisted of 8 members in total. The Team was headed by the President of ELSTAT, who was also the Chair of the Council Working Party on Statistics during the Greek Presidency. The Presidency Team had the necessary support by ELSTAT's Divisions throughout the course of its work.

On 24 June 2014, the Presidency Team of ELSTAT handed over the Presidency baton to its colleagues of the Italian Statistical Office (ISTAT) during a handover ceremony that took place in Zappeion Megaron, in Athens, where the Greek Presidency presented its work and the state of progress of the dossiers, and shared its experience and lessons learnt from this important project. The ceremony was attended by delegations from the Statistical Offices of the countries of the outgoing Trio (Ireland – Lithuania – Greece) and the upcoming Trio (Italy – Latvia – Luxembourg).

F. HUMAN RESOURCES OF ELSTAT

1. ELSTAT personnel

In 2014, there was a continuous decrease in the number of ELSTAT staff, in comparison with 2013, due to the retirement of employees, while at the same time there were delays in the hiring of new staff by ELSTAT or the deployment of staff to ELSTAT from other government agencies. More specifically, on 31 December 2014, the total number of ELSTAT staff amounted to 769 employees: the permanent staff numbered 728 employees (268 men and 460 women) and the staff working under Private Contract of Unlimited Duration numbered 41 employees (14 men and 27 women). The total number of ELSTAT staff, on 31 December 2013, was 791 employees: the permanent staff numbered 765 employees (277 men and 488 women) and the staff working under Private Contract of Unlimited Duration numbered 26 employees (7 men and 19 women). In 2014, 57 employees retired and 3 employees were redeployed, while 1 new employee was hired and 37 employees were redeployed to ELSTAT from other government agencies. Thus, in 2014 the total number of ELSTAT staff decreased by 2.8%.

In comparison with 2009 (31 December), when ELSTAT staff numbered 1,007 employees, a net decrease by 238 employees (23.6%) had been recorded in the number of ELSTAT staff by the end of 2014. This drastic decrease in the number of ELSTAT staff has created particularly difficult conditions for the timely implementation of the actions that have been planned in the framework of the Annual and Three-year Programs of Statistical Works of ELSTAT.

As it is stipulated in the Hellenic Statistical Program for 2014 – 2016, the implementation of the above program presupposes the reinforcement of ELSTAT with the required and appropriate human resources. ELSTAT has calculated the minimum human resources that are necessary for the fulfillment of its obligations as the National Statistical Institute, amounting to approximately 930 employees. The Commitment on Confidence in Statistics expressly lays down commitments for the Greek Government to provide ELSTAT with adequate human resources, in order for ELSTAT to provide users with high-quality statistics, in accordance with all obligations at national and European level. It is obvious that the Commitment is not respected in this regard, since the human resources of ELSTAT at the end of December 2014 fell short by 161 employees from the above minimum human resources. The inadequate observance of the Commitment is also demonstrated by the following:

In 2014, following the continuous pressure of ELSTAT to the competent agencies, there has been some progress, but far below the needed progress, in hiring new staff. More specifically, 46 employees were redeployed to ELSTAT during the first semester 2014. Nevertheless, this development took place with considerable difficulties and long delays, which had an impact on the number of employees that finally reinforced ELSTAT. It is noted the long duration, over 12 months, of this procedure; the delays were due to the lack of real cooperation on the part of the Government to advance the process through appropriate measures and the unwillingness on the part of some Government Ministers to release staff designated to redeployment.

Following the —delayed— completion of the effort for the above deployments, ELSTAT sought to hire of 67 additional staff from outside the public sector. In July 2014 the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Administrative Reform and Electronic Government formally approved the procedure for the hiring of 33 out of the above staff. Nevertheless, until the end of 2014 the process moved very slowly and was not completed. As regards the hiring of the remaining 34 employees, the Ministry of Finance should have passed a legal provision creating the respective number of positions in ELSTAT. However, by the end of 2014 there was no progress on this issue by the Ministry.

On the issue of hiring of the 10 specialized scientific personnel, that is provided for in article 20 of the Greek Statistical Law 3832/2010, there was no progress during 2014. This issue remained pending due to

the refusal of the Supreme Council for Civil Personnel Selection (ASEP) to recognize the right of the President of ELSTAT stipulated in the Statistical Law to define the fields of specialization of the above personnel (e.g. national accounts, demography, etc.) on the basis of ELSTAT's needs, as well as ELSTAT's right, pursuant to the above article, to issue the notice for hiring this personnel.

It should also be added to the above the continuing stagnation, since 2012, on the issue of the approval by the Government of using funds from the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) for the 2-year secondment of 8 statisticians from other National Statistical Institutes of the European Statistical System, which ELSTAT had requested with the aim of supporting its work in several statistical areas.

On 31 December 2014, out of the 769 employees of ELSTAT, 558 worked in the Central Office and 211 employees worked in the Regional Statistical Offices.

The following table depicts the allocation of ELSTAT staff, by gender and education level, in 2013 and 2014 (31 December):

Table 1. ELSTAT staff, by gender and education level: 2013 and 2014									
Education level	Men			Women			Total		
	2013	2014	Change %	2013	2014	Change %	2013	2014	Change %
University	166	173	4.2	216	221	2.3	382	394	3.1
Technical	25	26	4.0	56	56	0.0	81	82	1.2
Secondary	88	78	- 11.4	231	206	- 10.8	319	284	- 11.0
Obligatory	5	5	0.0	4	4	0.0	9	9	0.0
Total	284	282	- 0.7	507	487	- 3.9	791	769	- 2.8

G. ELSTAT BUDGET EXECUTION

ELSTAT's expenses for 2014 are classified in the following categories:

- a) Labour cost (wages and salaries of ELSTAT permanent staff, including basic salary, allowances, social security contributions, additional and incidental benefits for the permanent staff, etc.).
- b) Expenses related to the staff's travel within Greece and abroad: travel and subsistence expenses for the permanent staff of ELSTAT travelling for the purpose of conducting statistical surveys in the field or participating in meetings, seminars, etc. abroad, as well as expenses related to the transfer or detachment of ELSTAT employees to other agencies in Greece or abroad.
- c) Other operating expenses, including expenses related to ELSTAT's buildings (Central and Regional Offices), such as rents, heating, communication, water supply, security, cleaning and maintenance costs, as well as expenses related to advertising and public relations, subscriptions, expenses for the provision of consumables (paper, stationery, medical and pharmaceutical supplies including materials for the maintenance and repair of premises and equipment), fuel, etc. In the same category are also included expenses for the provision of capital formation (furniture, PCs, printers, photocopiers and other office equipment).
- d) Expenses for the conduct of the Buildings, Population – Housing, and Agricultural – Livestock Censuses.
- e) Projects financed by Eurostat, including expenses in the context of the conduct of statistical works financed by Eurostat.
- f) Investment through the Public Investment Program.

The following table presents the allocation of ELSTAT's expenses in 2014, by type of expenditure, as well as the comparison with the corresponding expenses in 2013 (final data):

Table 2: ELSTAT expenses, by type of expenditure: 2013 and 2014		
Type of expenditure	Amount paid (in euro)	
	2013	2014
Labour cost	23,464,959.11	22,777,554.95
Expenses related to staff travelling within Greece and abroad	303,106.47	445,624.57
Other operating expenses and cost for capital formation	4,203,579.18	4,310,645.41
Expenses for the conduct of the Buildings, Population – Housing and Agricultural – Livestock Censuses	1,085,471.35	447,252.00
Projects financed by Eurostat	261,448.57	1,564,678.05
Investment through the Public Investment Program	0.00	29,333.04
Total	29,318,564.68	29,575,088.02

The decrease observed in the expenses paid in 2014, in comparison with 2013, as regards the item "Labour cost", is due to the decrease of ELSTAT personnel on account of retirements and of the non-completion of procedures for the necessary hiring of personnel.

The increase recorded as regards the item "Expenses related to staff travelling within Greece and abroad" for 2014 is, mostly, on account of ELSTAT employees' travelling at the end of 2013 for the purpose of conducting the Farm Structure Survey in the field, which resulted to the payment of the relevant amounts in 2014. Moreover, it is also due, to some extent, to the travelling of the Presidency Team abroad during the first semester 2014, in the context of the assumption, by ELSTAT, of the Presidency of the Council Working Party on Statistics (CWPS) in January 2014.

The decrease observed as regards the item "Expenses for the conduct of the Buildings, Population – Housing and Agricultural – Livestock Censuses" is on account of the fact that during the processing of the 2011 Censuses data, every possible effort was made by ELSTAT for the greatest possible automatization of the management of data by using the available modern technologies both for the purpose of avoiding human errors—that may arise from the non-automated management of data—and for the purpose of significantly decreasing the required cost, which is borne by ELSTAT's budget.

The increase of expenses as regards the "Projects financed by Eurostat" for the conduct of surveys through grant agreements is, mostly, due to the conduct of the Farm Structure Survey in 2013.

Pursuant to the Greek Statistical Law 3832/2010, as in force, ELSTAT enjoys operational independence, administrative and financial autonomy, and it is not subject to the control of any governmental body or other administrative authority. The operation of ELSTAT is subject to the control of the Greek Parliament in accordance with its rules. Nevertheless, both in 2013 and in 2014, some incidents occurred that put to the test this provision of the Law. More specifically, during the above years there were attempts by the Ministry of Finance to introduce to ELSTAT preventive controls in the execution of its budget. This is in full contradiction with the Commitment on Confidence in Statistics according to which the Greek Government committed to "decouple the budget of ELSTAT from the budget of the Ministry of Finance and to introduce budget planning, execution and monitoring in line with the existing procedures involving the Hellenic Parliament and the Court of Audit".

Furthermore, in 2014 ELSTAT continued to appear on web applications and tables of the Ministry of Finance as a supervised entity of the Ministry. During the 3rd quarter 2014, following objection raised by ELSTAT, the Ministry of Finance, as a gesture of goodwill, amended a web application and tables, correctly displaying ELSTAT as an Independent Authority. However, the appearance of ELSTAT on other official documents of the Ministry as an entity supervised by the Ministry of Finance continued.

Despite the provisions stipulated in the Commitment on Confidence in Statistics and the Statistical Law 3832/2010, as amended for fulfilling this Commitment, the relatively envisaged autonomy of ELSTAT continued in 2014 not to be fully implemented in practice. In this context, one should also notice the refusal of the Court of Audit to authorize ELSTAT's payments only on the basis of non-consent with the Administrative Decision of ELSTAT concerning its need for being supported by an external expert during the 2011 Population Census or on the basis of non-approval of the right of ELSTAT's President to hire the Legal Advisor of ELSTAT, in accordance with the special provisions of the Statistical Law 3832/2010, as in force in 2014.