

**NATIONAL STATISTICAL SYSTEM SITUATION ASSESSMENT REPORT**  
**| 2008-2011 |**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This Report conveys an overall favourable assessment of the evolution of the National Statistical System (NSS), most notably in the past three years, following the entry into force of Law No 22/2008 of 13 May.

In fact, the following **factors of progress** were identified:

- Intensification of the actions and intervention of the *Conselho Superior de Estatística* (Statistical Council, hereinafter referred to as the Council), namely at the level of statistical coordination and the functioning of the operational structure, as a consequence of the adoption of a swift and efficient operation model;
- Widening of statistical production in particularly relevant areas and improved supply of statistical information, characterised by greater accessibility;
- Increase in the quality of official statistics, most notably as regards compliance with the release calendar and the credibility of general government statistics;
- Considerable modernisation of the statistical production process in general, and in particular as regards the collection stage, associated with a reduction of the burden on respondents, particularly enterprises, through a more efficient use of administrative data for statistical purposes, stress being laid on the Simplified Business Information and the Information System for the Portuguese Classification of Economic Activities;
- Increased efficiency and effectiveness in the use of human and financial resources available for the production of official statistics.

In parallel, a number of **constraints** are identified, which have conditioned NSS actions:

- Minor participation and contribution of a few Council members;
- Insufficient cooperation of some public entities, which were supposed to make access to administrative data easier, with a view to gauging the possibility of their appropriation for statistical purposes;
- Shortage of skilled human resources available for the production of official statistics;
- Low level of statistical literacy of society in general.

**Hence, taking into consideration the findings of this Report**, as well as considerable changes in the legal framework governing the European statistical system, it is possible to identify the following **major challenges** that the NSS is likely to face in the near future:

- To revise the current NSS Law, aiming at rendering it suitable to the new European regulatory context and at the inclusion of mechanisms to facilitate official statistical production;
- To prompt the intervention and participation of Council members, so that all may fully take on their responsibilities and powers, by exercising active and effective intervention;
- To identify and invigorate the analysis and monitoring of relevant statistical areas for decision-making, particularly those where a number of weaknesses prevail;

- To intensify the assessment of the quality of official statistics in its different dimensions;
- To reinforce the conditions for the appropriation of administrative data for statistical purposes;
- To ensure that the NSS is endowed with skilled resources that meet the needs of the production of quality official statistics;
- To foster and support actions aimed at promoting statistical literacy across the whole society.

## 1. OVERVIEW

The National Statistical System (NSS) includes, among other entities, the Statistical Council, which is the Government body that oversees and coordinates the NSS. **Annex I** includes the current organisational chart of the Council.

This NSS Situation Assessment Report complies with the provisions of Article 15 (4) of the NSS Law, which sets forth that "Before the end of each term of office, the Statistical Council shall prepare a situation assessment report for the NSS".

Current Council members have started their mandate subsequently to the entry into force of the new NSS Law – Law No 22/2008 of 13 May – which will thus end in 29 August 2011. Entities and respective representatives that over the past three years have ensured the activities carried out by the Council are included in **Annex II**.

**In addition to reflecting the assessment of NSS evolution as at the end of the last three-year period, this Report also shows an interim assessment of the implementation of the General Guidelines of National Statistical Activity for the 2008-2012 period.**

Prepared within the scope of the Standing Section of Statistical Coordination (*Secção Permanente de Coordenação Estatística* in Portuguese), the editorial staff of this Report included the section chairperson and the Secretary of the Council. It also benefited from the contributions of the chairpersons of all other Council sections, in a meeting presided over by the Vice-Chairperson of the Council.

## 2. ASSESSMENT OF THE NATIONAL STATISTICAL SYSTEM IN THE 2008-2011 PERIOD

**The assessment of the situation of the National Statistical System took into consideration:** an analysis of the degree of implementation of the recommendations issued in the latest Situation Assessment Report in the 1999-2001 period; an appraisal of the level of development of priority actions set out in the interim assessment conducted in June 2009; the findings of the Workshop held in October 2010 on official statistics;

**and an interim assessment of the degree of accomplishment of the General Guidelines of National Statistical Activity defined by the Council for the 2008-2012 period (Deliberation No 331 of the Council).**

## **2.1. Analysis of the degree of implementation of recommendations issued within the 1999-2000 Situation Assessment Report**

Although the latest Situation Assessment Report refers to the 1999-2001 period, i.e. more or less a decade ago, its recommendations continued to be up-to-date until 2008. Therefore, a "Follow-up Report on the Council recommendations of the 1999-2001 Situation Assessment Report" was prepared thereon (in **Annex III**), making it possible to stress:

- The results achieved until May 2008, date of publication of Law No 22/2008 of 13 May (NSS Law); and
- The developments observed from the publication of the NSS Law to date.

Stocktaking leads to the conclusion that there was a high degree of implementation of the recommendations issued in the latest Situation Assessment Report, with remarkable progress having been achieved, such as the publication of a new NSS Law in 2008, and particularly in 2008-2010 the establishment of the principles of delegation of powers and subsequently the signature of seven protocols for the delegation of powers by Statistics Portugal to public services and the presentation of the dissemination policy of Statistics Portugal. Some of the initiatives in those recommendations are scheduled for 2011, and are still not fully implemented, namely as regards the use of administrative data for statistical purposes, the principle of statistical confidentiality and also human resources training.

## **2.2. Monitoring of priority actions in the NSS Situation Assessment – June 2009**

Out of the series of actions prioritised by the Council in the "NSS Situation Assessment – June 2009" (in **Annex IV**), reference should be made to the following results:

- Extremely positive developments in **compliance with deadlines for availability of statistics** by part of the overwhelming majority of entities composing the National Statistical System. When appraising the quality of official statistics, particularly when these are made available, timeliness/punctuality is given particular relevance, without prejudice to data reliability. This is due to its being one of the relevant dimensions of statistical quality. Data made available on the due date in Statistics Portugal and other entities intervening in national statistical production as a whole rose from 75% in 2007 to approximately 91% in 2010 (in the former case from 76% in 2007 to 95% in 2010). Over these years Banco de Portugal complied strictly with the deadlines envisaged in its release calendar, which translated into a rate of availability on the due date of 100%, i.e. with no delay whatsoever. The Statistical Services of the Autonomous Regions of the Azores and Madeira

also showed extremely positive developments, wherefore the rate of availability on the due date now stands close to 100%. The Council paid special attention to this subject and monitored it on a regular basis through its Standing Section of Statistical Coordination. The progress observed also had a contribution from the monitoring of the degree of implementation of the "Action Plan for compliance with deadlines for availability of Portuguese statistics" approved by the Council in 2008. Therein, various specific activities were conducted by entities producing official statistics, aiming at full compliance with deadlines;

- Creation of mechanisms to safeguard **compliance with the principle of statistical confidentiality**. A methodology was defined, as well as the procedures that should be observed in terms of requests made and compliance with rules on confidentiality by entities to which information subject to statistical confidentiality is provided. These procedures went on to be implemented in the assessment of requests involving access to confidential statistical data, with the necessary updates in criteria, incorporated in the respective deliberations and undertakings of confidentiality that ensure the safeguard and confidentiality of data treatment. Case-law was made in this domain, as regards international trade statistics and the statistical treatment of self-employed persons, considered as natural persons;
- Establishment of protocols for the **delegation of powers** to produce and disseminate official statistics by Statistics Portugal to seven entities<sup>1</sup> that went on to be represented in the Council in their capacity as statistical authorities. These protocols followed the model protocol of delegation of powers submitted by Statistics Portugal, which had the favourable opinion of the Council; and
- Definition of the principles on which the **dissemination of statistics within the NSS** should be based. The Council discussed and assessed these guiding principles in a specialised section, recommending approval to the Council's plenary session.

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<sup>1</sup> Directorate General of Fisheries and Aquaculture of the Ministry Agriculture, Rural Development and Fisheries, Directorate General for Energy and Geology (Ministry of Economy, Innovation and Development), Office of Education Statistics and Planning (Ministry of Education), Knowledge Society Agency (Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education), Planning, Strategy, Assessment and International Relations Office (Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education), Strategy and Planning Office (Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity) and Directorate General of Justice Policy (Ministry of Justice).

### **2.3. Preliminary examination of the degree of accomplishment of the General Guidelines of National Statistical Activity for 2008-2012**

With the purpose of making an initial analysis of the degree of accomplishment of the "General Guidelines of National Statistical Activity and respective priorities for 2008-2012" (in **Annex V**), an attempt was made to identify the main measures implemented – as more than half the period under review has elapsed – and their consequences to Council activities and NSS general performance.

#### **(a) Objective 1: To improve the quality of statistics produced within the NSS, especially as regards compliance with deadlines for data availability and accessibility.**

In this domain, as already mentioned, it is worth highlighting the results achieved as regards compliance with deadlines for availability of official statistics.

It is also important to underline the following initiatives:

1. Promotion of actions to raise awareness to the relevance of statistics in society;
2. Creation of mechanisms, notably public consultations and other, allowing for greater attention to society's concerns and addressing them whenever the quality of official statistics and Community obligations are not put at stake;
3. Implementation of procedures to intensify the use of administrative data, especially developments in the exploitation of information available in the context of the Simplified Business Information, a proposal to create a structure to coordinate the Simplified Business Information, the setting-up and development of the Information System for the Portuguese Classification of Economic Activities, a database gathering information on the Portuguese Classification of Economic Activities of legal persons and similar entities, the recent re-activation in 2010 of the Working Group of the Single File for the National Statistical System, with a mandate to contribute to the construction of a single statistical units file for all NSS entities, and the setting-up of a Working Group on Business Statistics;
4. Consolidation of integrated processes for managing data collection and the respondent management function, with a reduction of the statistical burden on respondents, in particular through greater use of administrative data and the use of data characterising respondents in various surveys, thus avoiding the duplication of inquiries;
5. Intensification of the electronic collection method, introduction of the telephone collection method and modernisation of data collection processes by statistical authorities;
6. Adoption and implementation of dissemination policies and revisions for official statistics;
7. Development of the statistical metadata system to interlink the various perspectives of statistical variables, Methodological Documents, concepts and classifications, including the preparation of quality reports on statistics;

8. Reshaping and development of new contents and facilities on the websites of statistical authorities, namely through the availability of dissemination databases;
9. Intensification of partnerships with the scientific society, namely through an increase in the number of protocols signed with universities and general government bodies, and also an improvement in access to anonymised statistical data by accredited researchers (123 new processes were requested by researchers in the 2008-2010 period);
10. Promotion of initiatives to raise awareness to statistical literacy and release of statistical data to enhance it, especially activities related to the expansion of the ALEA Project (ALEA – Local Action of Applied Statistics), and various actions with the school population; and
11. Maintenance of regular inquiries by statistical authorities on the satisfaction of official statistics users.

**(b) Objective 2: To optimise the functioning of the NSS through reinforcement of institutional coordination and cooperation mechanisms and human resources development.**

Within this objective, reference should be made to the delegation of powers by Statistics Portugal to other entities, based on a new stricter and more demanding model, particularly as regards observance of the principles enshrined in the NSS Law and the European Statistics Code of Practice.

On the other hand, it is also worth mentioning the following initiatives:

1. Implementation of a new Council structure, regulation and operating model, in the wake of the powers laid down in the new NSS Law; this translates, inter alia, into the setting-up of new sections, new working groups, and the appointment of new representatives of the different entities. For the preparation of all strategic documents for the Council, meetings of section chairpersons were held and action plans approved for all Council sections, with a focus on the submission of sectoral projects and methodologies;
2. Dissemination of knowledge and information through seminars, workshops and other initiatives on matters of interest to the NSS;
3. Submission and monitoring of business plans and respective annual implementation reports of statistical authorities, at the level of the Standing Section of Statistical Coordination, and issue of opinions by the Council's plenary session;
4. Regular monitoring of statistical areas delegated by Statistics Portugal, with a focus on the possibility to conduct quality audits to official statistics, which is provided for in protocols for the delegation of powers by Statistics Portugal;
5. Improvement of activities to develop and apply sampling techniques, aimed at reducing the burden on respondents, through the optimisation and coordination of samples, use of

administrative sources, quality control of sampling techniques, integrated management of populations and samples;

6. Development of activities within the Eurogroups Register, and EGR network data exchange and validation, in a liaison between all Member States and Eurostat (EGR Central);
7. Organisation and conduct of the Peer Review on the implementation of the European Statistics Code of Practice in Statistics Portugal in early 2008. This was led by Statistics Portugal, with the participation of other entities producing national statistics, the Council and a considerable number of Statistics Portugal staff members, respondents and customers, and also representatives from various economic sectors; and
8. Intensification of institutional cooperation and vocational training activities at national and international level, both within the framework of Portugal's participation in Community activities and technical support, especially to Member States of the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries (CPLP in Portuguese).

**(c) Objective 3: To ensure statistical production in areas of special interest to the understanding of current societies, by placing particular emphasis on spatial data.**

As regards this objective, reference should be made, inter alia, to the following results:

1. Increased efficiency and improvement of statistical data production and dissemination methods, namely through the modernisation of collection processes and the integration of new administrative sources;
2. Widening of statistical coverage to relevant areas from the social and welfare viewpoint: with regard to Education, release of results for the first edition of the "Adult training and education survey – 2007"; with regard to Population, availability of a set of standardised mortality rates and potential years of life lost (2002 to 2009), and production of long series of life tables for Portugal, a long series of the average life expectancy; and with regard to Income and Living Conditions, the first-time release of results on material deprivation and housing deprivation (2004 to 2009);
3. Development of an indicator system to monitor the context in which public policies evolve;
4. Development of a regional development composite index, in a partnership between Statistics Portugal and the Prospective and Planning Department of the Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Regional Development, making it possible to summarise the developments recorded at NUTS 3 level in terms of competitiveness, cohesion and environmental quality;
5. Development and consolidation of the production of sectoral and environmental economic statistics, notably with the survey on environmental goods and services;
6. Recovery of deadlines for availability of annual national accounts, start of a regular 45-day release of quarterly national accounts, change in the national accounts base (base 2006), and creation of a national accounts dedicated area on the website of Statistics Portugal;



7. Resuming of the production of tax revenue statistics, consistent with national accounts base 2006, for the 1996-2006 period;
8. Production of satellite accounts on tourism, health and non-profit institutions, and launch of the foundations for the preparation of the social economy satellite account;
9. Completion of the process of re-engineering business statistics based on the Simplified Business Information, and presentation of early results on entrepreneurship in Portugal, in the context of business demography;
10. Conduct of the first editions of the Portuguese social housing survey, the survey on ICT usage in hotels and the survey on energy consumption in households.

### **3. PRIORITY ACTIONS TO BE DEVELOPED IN THE NEAR FUTURE WITHIN THE NATIONAL STATISTICAL SYSTEM**

Taking into account:

- This Report's description of developments in the National Statistical System;
- The implementation of deliberations and recommendations issued by the Council;
- The initiatives still necessary for full achievement of the Vision projected for the NSS in 2012: *"In 2012 the National Statistical System will be an integrated, dynamic and efficient system that develops its activity in observance of the highest standards of statistical quality, with a concern with the burden on data suppliers and the endeavour to provide a service to society"*;
- The findings of the Workshop held in October 2010 on official statistics;
- The "Peer Review on the implementation of the European Statistical Code of Practice" for Portugal (16-18 January 2008);
- Statements by renowned persons incorporated in the book entitled "O INE: Desafios do Passado, Desafios do Futuro" (Statistics Portugal: Challenges from the Past, Challenges for the Future);
- The developments under way in the European Union and Commission decisions – namely at the level of new strategies (that pose new challenges to European statistics) and statistical quality – that will be implemented through changes in the European legal framework governing statistics and in the European Statistics Code of Practice, already approved or at an advanced stage of preparation;
- The Memorandum of Understanding on Specific Economic Policy Conditionality recently established within the framework of the Financial Assistance Facility Agreements with Portugal, establishing new statistical information requirements;

**The priority actions to be developed and monitored in the near future within the National Statistical System are hereby identified.**

**Note:**

**These actions are included as a recommendation in Deliberation No 22 of the Council's plenary session.**