DELIBERATION No. 55 OF THE STATISTICAL COUNCIL

ON THE ASSESSMENT REPORT OF THE NATIONAL STATISTICAL SYSTEM 2017-2019

The National Statistical System (NSS) Law establishes that the Statistical Council (hereinafter referred to as the Council), until the end of each mandate, shall prepare an assessment report on the status of the NSS (article 15, no. 4 of Law no. 22/2008, of 13 May).

Considering that, following the methodology approved by the Standing Section of Statistical Coordination (Portuguese acronym SPCE), the preparation of this Report involved extensive work, involving the Vice-Chairman of the Council, the Presidents and Vice-Chairs of the Council Sections, the members of the SPCE, the Statistical Authorities and the Council Secretariat, to assess the results achieved over the period 2017-2019 and to identify future challenges for the NSS.

Considering that this report covers the period 2017-2019, but that it is essential to keep in mind in its preparation, in particular concerning the challenges facing the NSS in the future, the COVID-19 pandemic which, from March 2020, has had a significant and abrupt impact on the production of official statistics.

Considering that the Report:

- Provides an overall positive assessment of the functioning of the NSS, although some of the constraints pointed out in the previous Report remain, notably those related to human resources and especially new constraints determined by new ways of producing and reporting statistics.

- Identifies the challenges facing the NSS in particular:

  1. The access to new sources of information, namely administrative and data integration (Big Data; Legal Entity Identifier (LEI)), safeguarding the fundamental rights enshrined in the Constitution.

  2. The production of statistics relevant for decision-making, particularly in areas where statistical information gaps remain, especially social statistics, namely on social inequalities and family living conditions, health, international and internal migration.

  3. In overcoming obstacles in the access to administrative information for use in the production of statistics, namely in health and social security.

  4. The confirmation of the essential role of official statistics to society through their high quality compared to other available information.

  5. A better adaptation of the processes of dissemination and communication of official statistics to new technologies and user needs.

6. The pursue of actions to promote statistical literacy at all levels of society, to stimulate the intensive and appropriate use of available statistical information.

7. The continued strengthening of cooperation with public and private entities, for the sharing of information, promoting an extension of the thorough production and dissemination of official statistics.

8. The adequacy of the profile and skills of human resources, working for the NSS entities, to new technological challenges and scientific advances related to innovative approaches to the statistical production process (e.g. data science).

– The success in overcoming these challenges depends on:

   a. The strengthening of the statistical culture in society, both by strengthening the "value" and the notoriety of official statistics as a public good and by raising awareness of the civic and legal responsibility of all citizens, enterprises, and other entities, to collaborate with the Statistical Authorities (SA) in responding in a timely and appropriate manner to their requests, including the provision of administrative data, for statistical purposes.

   b. Ensuring adequate financial resources to produce current and emerging official statistics as well as providing the SA with up-to-date technological resources to meet the challenges of the digital transformation present in all areas of society.

   c. The increase of a more intense, active, and interested involvement of the members of the Council, the users of official statistics and others, in its activities.

Under Articles 3(2) and 15(4) of Law 22/2008 of 13 May, **at the plenary meeting of 13 November 2020**, the **Statistical Council**, after a favourable opinion from the Standing Section of Statistical Coordination, **has decided**:

1. Approve the Assessment Report of the National Statistical System 2017-2019;

2. To approve the actions whose development and follow-up within the NSS are considered to be priorities, which are annexed to this deliberation as an integral part of it;

3. That the Assessment Report of the National Statistical System 2017-2019, and in particular those actions whose development and monitoring within the framework of the NSS should be considered as priorities, be considered of interest to the media and widely disseminated to society.

Lisboa, 18 November 2020

The Vice-Chairman of the Statistical Council, *Francisco Lima*

The Executive Secretary of the Statistical Council, *Maria da Graça Fernandes Caeiro Bento*

ANEXX

ACTIONS WHOSE DEVELOPMENT AND MONITORING WITHIN THE NATIONAL STATISTICAL SYSTEM (NSS)

SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AS PRIORITIES

A. Within the scope of the work of the Statistical Council

a. Continuing the development of awareness-raising actions among Public Administration bodies to intensify the use of administrative data for statistical purposes with a view to their integration into official statistics, while allowing a reduction in the statistical burden on respondents (citizens, enterprises, and other entities).

b. Effectively alert the entities holding the administrative data to comply with the legal obligation to make them available to the SA, ensuring their participation in the design of mechanisms that originate administrative data, to guarantee the possibility of their use for statistical purposes, namely in terms of concepts, nomenclatures, and quality.

c. Implementation of solutions to ensure the continuity of the submission of draft legislation that creates statistical services or contains rules on statistical activity and the prior consultation of the Council, following the NSS Law.

d. Introducing adjustments, under the Eventual Section for revision of the NSS Law, to the draft bill establishing the NSS Law, approved in 2017, so that that proposal reflects the changes to be made to the NSS, adapted to the present time.

e. Continuation, within the scope of its powers, of the monitoring of compliance with the principles enshrined in the NSS Law and the respective monitoring at the level of the SA.

f. Gradual extension of the evaluation of the quality of official statistics to all its dimensions considering the good results resulting from the monitoring of "punctuality" and "accessibility"[1].

g. Continuation, within the limits of its powers, of the monitoring of the preparation, implementation, data output, and evaluation of the 2021 Census.

h. Continued reflection, analysis, and monitoring of broad and cross-cutting themes of statistical areas relevant for decision support where statistical information gaps persist, bearing in mind the objectives defined in the GGOSA for the period 2018-2022.

i. Continued efforts to create a Business Register for use within the NSS, an indispensable tool for harmonisation, rationalisation of means, and quality of official statistics.

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[1] Dimensions of statistical quality (contained in the European Statistics Code of Practice and in the European System of Central Banks' Public Commitment on European Statistics): relevance, accuracy, timeliness, punctuality, accessibility and clarity, comparability, coherence, and consistency.

j. Further reflection on cooperation between members of the NSS (Council and Statistical Authorities) and between Statistical Authorities and Public Administration bodies and monitoring of developments.

k. Continued promotion of the sharing of good practices and knowledge, both through the monitoring of methodologies and the presentation of projects by producers of official statistics and through studies and work carried out by users of statistical information.

l. Intensifying the use of communication channels to promote improved levels of statistical literacy.

m. Reflection on the model for the functioning of the Council, seeking to better adapt its structure and functioning to the needs of the NSS and creating internal mechanisms to make the decisions and recommendations of the Council more effective, calling for the active participation and intervention of its members.

B. Within the scope of the activity of the Statistical Authorities

a. Strengthening and consolidating the conditions necessary for the strict compliance by all SA with the principles and competencies enshrined in the NSS law, the European Statistics Code of Practice, and the European System of Central Banks' Public Commitment to European Statistics.

b. Monitoring the production and dissemination process and the quality of official statistics, namely through statistical audits.

c. Further interinstitutional cooperation, in particular by strengthening the use of administrative information, the possible joint development of statistical operations, the sharing of statistical unit files, the assessment of the quality of basic information and the elimination of redundancies at the various levels of statistical production, establishing for this purpose the mechanisms for collaboration and strengthening partnerships, appropriate for the performance of their tasks within the NSS.

d. Identification of areas of complementarity between the activities of the SA, based on their respective legal competences, aiming at the rationalisation of resources and the satisfaction of the society's statistical information needs, taking into account the objectives of the GGOSA for the period 2018-2022 and the principle enshrined in the NSS Law that "official statistics are considered a public good and must satisfy the needs of users in an efficient manner".

e. Enhancing the gathering of quality administrative data for the production of official statistics, namely in the areas of health, social security, public employment, modernisation of procedures for the transmission of data on accidents at work, labour costs and others, reporting possible difficulties within the scope of the work of the Council to make recommendations to facilitate their access;

f. Extending the production of statistics to areas relevant for decision-making, in particular to those where gaps prevail and which have already been identified in the Council's recommendations, through the adoption of new models of statistical production and dissemination, the

exploitation of administrative data and the sharing of technological and operational infrastructures.

g. The rise of new challenges resulting from the information age, namely through access to new sources of information and data integration in several areas - Big Data, Legal Entity Identifier (LEI) mobile telecommunications, social networks, and others which may allow their use for statistical production or as auxiliary information.

h. Anticipating new statistical production needs and providing a timely response to them.

i. Provision of information to the Council whenever major methodological changes are involved in statistical operations with a major economic and social impact, leading to breaks in series or discontinuity of variables.

j. Intensified collaboration with the scientific community and the necessary simplification of the current procedures for the accreditation of researchers for access to confidential statistical data, respecting the principle of statistical confidentiality.

k. Improvement of communication channels and dissemination of official statistics to new technologies and information needs, contributing to the increase of statistical literacy, adapting differentiated communication strategies to the various user segments, and changes in the functionalities of research and access to statistics.

l. Increasing the responsiveness of SA to the growing and differentiated needs of users of statistical information, in terms of speed, efficiency, and quality, while respecting confidentiality rules at national and European level.

m. Increasing information availability, namely regarding the long series.

n. Further increase the geographical breakdown for relevant indicators, ensuring the balance between relevance and cost.