



**PEER REVIEWERS' RECOMMENDATIONS AND NSI OF BULGARIA IMPROVEMENT  
ACTIONS IN RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

## Peer reviewer's recommendations and improvement actions in response to the recommendations

- 1. The Statistics Act should be amended so that the obligations of the President of the National Statistical Institute are specified. The President of the National Statistical Institute and the heads of the Other National Authorities producing European statistics should have sole responsibility for deciding on statistical methods, standards and procedures, and content and timing of statistical releases. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 1.4.)***

### **Current situation:**

The responsibility of the President of the NSI for deciding on statistical methods and national classifications is set up in Article 9, item 9 of the Statistics Act. However, according to the legal phrasing ('...either independently or with the bodies stipulated by a normative act...'), the mandate may involve limits to professional independence.

According to the law, statistics activities shall be carried out in compliance with the principle of professional independence. This principle, to which the activity of the President is subject, is defined under the supplementary clauses within the Statistics Act. Nevertheless, the sole responsibility of the President of the NSI for deciding on statistical methods, standards and procedures, and on the content and timing of statistical releases are not explicitly set up in law. In practice, the timing of statistical releases is stated in the release calendar, which is approved by the President of the NSI.

Emphasising in the law the responsibility of the President of the NSI for ensuring that statistics are developed, produced and disseminated in an independent manner would address the responsibility more precisely.

The Statistics Act stipulates binding principles for all producers of European statistics and defines duties of the President of the NSI. It does not define responsibilities of the heads of the ONAs. Amendments to the law by describing the duties and responsibilities of heads of all ONAs would help setting uniform standards across the NSS. Until the current moment no actions have been taken for the amendment of the Statistics Act in order to stipulate that the President of the NSI and the heads of Other National Authorities have the sole responsibility for deciding statistical methods, standards and procedures, and content and timing of statistical release.

### **Improvement action 1**

A draft of the Statistics Act has been made in 2013 which amend the procedure of the appointment and the requirements of the top management of the NSI. It will be updated according to latest amendments of Regulation (EC) No 223/2009 on European statistics and to stipulate that the President of the NSI and the heads of Other National Authorities have the sole responsibility for deciding statistical methods, standards and procedures, and content and timing of statistical release. NSI will take the initiative to submit a bill for the amendment of the Statistics Act in the National Assembly.

### **Timeline:**

31.12.2016

**2. *The Statistics Act should be amended so that the appointment of the President of the National Statistical Institute and heads of Other National Authorities producing European statistics shall be based on professional competence only. The law should stipulate clear selection criteria and a transparent procedure of competition for the appointment of top management (President and Deputy-Presidents) of the National Statistical Institute. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 1.8.)***

**Current situation:**

According to article 8, paragraph. 2 of the Statistics Act the President and the Deputy Presidents of the National Statistical Institute shall be appointed by the Prime Minister. It does not stipulate clear selection criteria and transparent procedure of competition and appointment of the top-management. NSI may only take the initiative to submit a bill for the amendment of the Statistics Act in the National Assembly (the legislative body in Republic of Bulgaria). The same article stipulates that the NSI is managed by a President and three Deputy-Presidents who are appointed by the Council of Ministers for a term of seven years and for no more than two terms. It also regulates the termination of incumbency during a term.

Given the existing regulations for appointing the President and the Deputy-Presidents of the NSI, a more transparent appointment procedure and clearer criteria for appointment designed to secure the necessary impartiality and high degree of professionalism of the top management should be established. The amended Statistics Act should state that the appointment of the top management (the President and Deputy-Presidents) of the NSI shall be based on professional competence only.

Appointment of the heads of ONAs is subject to the internal procedures of the respective organisations. Also for them, professional qualifications should be the basis for appointment. To ensure this, a respective clause in the Statistics Act should be used.

The functions and powers of the President of the NSI and the heads of Other National Authorities are stipulated in the Statistics Act. The required amendments which have to be made in the legal act could be made only by the National Assembly of Republic of Bulgaria as a sole legislative body of the state.

**Improvement action 2**

A draft of the Statistics Act has been made in 2013 which amend the procedure of the appointment and the requirements of the top management of the NSI. It will be updated according to latest amendments of Regulation (EC) No 223/2009 on European statistics. NSI will take the initiative to submit a bill for the amendment of the Statistics Act in the National Assembly.

**Timeline:**

31.12.2016

**3. *The practice of privileged access to press releases prior to publication should be more visible on the National Statistical Institute website. The concordance of the Dissemination Policy with the Statistics Act in this regard should be analysed. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 6.7.)***

**Current situation:**

The Rules for dissemination of statistical products and services of NSI were revised immediately following the Peer Review visit on 13-17 October 2014. Some changes were made in order to fulfil the recommendation of the Peer Review's team. The updated Rules for dissemination of statistical products and services of NSI came into force on 02.12.2014 and are published on the web site of NSI.

**Improvement action 3**

According to the Rules:

The press releases showing the results of the most important and sensitive statistical surveys are sent to the President, the Prime Minister and the President of the National Assembly by courier one hour before their official announcement under strict embargo of disclosure of data (Art.7, Par. 6 of Rules for dissemination of statistical products and services of the National Statistical Institute).

The list of the press releases is approved annually by the President of NSI – (Art.7, Par. 7 of Rules for dissemination of statistical products and services of NSI, come in force on 02.12.2014)

Rules for dissemination of statistical products and services of NSI are published on the web site of NSI.

**Timeline:**

02.12.2014

**4. Access by the tax agency to the business data collected for statistical purposes should be stopped or permission for use of statistical data for administrative purposes from respondents obtained. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 5.)**

**Current situation:**

The National Statistical Institute (NSI) does not provide any data collected for statistical purposes to the National Revenue Agency (NRA).

According to the Accountancy Act, the Corporate Income Tax Act, the Income Taxes on Natural Persons Act and the Statistics Act, the enterprises shall provide common accounting data to NSI and NRA. For this reason a Single Entry Point has been set up to establish a Common Accounting Database for both institutions. Each institution uses the common accounting data for its own purposes - NSI for statistical purposes, and NRA for fiscal purposes. Specific statistical data are collected and used only by NSI and are not provided to other users.

In addition, according to the Commercial Register Act, the enterprises shall publish their annual accounting reports on the website of the Registry Agency.

The joint Ordinance between the National Statistical Institute and the National Revenue Agency, regulating the set-up of the Common Accounting Database, is published in Bulgarian State Gazette.

**Improvement action 4**

NSI of Bulgaria has a divergent view on this recommendation and therefore no improvement action is foreseen.

**Timeline:**

N.A.

**5. A quality management system inspired by the concepts of the European Foundation for Quality Management should be established. The head of the unit responsible for quality should play the role of Quality Manager, and a cross-organisational Quality Committee should be established to support him/her (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 4.1.)**

**Current situation:**

The tasks included in the NSI Quality Management Programme (2008, updated in 2011) are referred to the principles of the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) Excellence Model: Leadership, Strategy, People, Partnerships and Resources, Processes, Customer Results, People Results, Society Results and Key Results. The preconditions or so-called "Enablers" are Leadership, Strategy, People, Partnerships, Resources and Processes. The "Enablers" determine what an organisation does and how it performs the tasks in order to achieve the desired results.

The conducts of quality projects that are planned in the Strategy for Development of the National Statistical System of the Republic of Bulgaria, 2013–2017 have the highest priority. According Priority 2.3, a Systematic Approach for Quality Management and Control in National Statistical System is intended to be implemented.

In 2014 the NSI of Bulgaria has launched a project under Operational Programme Administrative Capacity (OPAC) for building a system for quality management. The main goal of the project is to improve the quality and reliability of services for citizens and businesses by building a system for quality management for the e-services in the National Statistical Institute according to the ISO 9001:2008 standard. The specific objectives for achieving the final result are the improvement of policies, procedures, instructions and guidelines of the National Statistical Institute. Within project's framework a Quality Committee is intended to be established.

**Improvement action 5**

Improvement action 5.1: Establish a quality management system based on EFQM model.

Improvement action 5.2: Establish a Quality Committee which supports the Quality Manager. The quality committee will composed by directors and head of departments directly subordinated to the NSI President in the Head Office.

**Timeline:**

Timeline for improvement action 5.1: 31.12.2017

Timeline for improvement action 5.2: 31.12.2016

**6. The National Statistical Institute should adopt quality guidelines that describe in detail the implementation of quality management within the statistical production processes based on the Generic Statistical Business Process Model or another equivalent model. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 4.1 and 4.2.)**

**Current situation:**

Starting in 2008, the NSI has elaborated a number of documents related to quality management: the Quality Management Programme, describing the tasks and monitoring indicators related to quality dimensions of the EFQM model; the Guidelines on Quality Criteria in the NSS of Bulgaria, describing a quality assurance framework and providing guidelines for the improvement of the statistical products quality, following the CoP; and Guidelines for Quality Assessment in the NSI (2010, updated in 2011), containing a description of the statistical processes, processes quality indicators, and special features of the quality components by type of survey and structure and recommendations for the quality report.

The NSI management is well aware of the fact that the production of high quality products is essential for the good reputation of and the trust of the public in official statistics. Each department is responsible for quality monitoring and assurance of its own statistical processes, with support from the methodological and IT departments. Handbook on internal quality audits of statistical processes and products was established and published on the NSI website.

**Improvement action 6**

The existing Guidelines for Quality Assessment in the NSI will be complemented with detail description of the quality management implementation within the statistical production processes based on the Generic Statistical Business Process Model (GSBPM).

**Timeline:**

31.12.2017

**7. Both metadata reports and quality reports, which follow a uniform and standardised format for all statistics and provide users with all relevant metadata and quality indicators, should be available on the National Statistical Institute website. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 4.3, 6.4, 15.5 and 15.6.)**

**Current situation:**

On the NSI website, conceptual and methodological information is available for most statistical products, helping the users to understand and assess the quality of the statistics. Quality reports are available for some statistical products, for example for the results from the Community Survey on ICT in Households 2013. The NSI of Bulgaria elaborates producer oriented quality reports for different statistical domains on the basis of subject-domain EU legislation or requirements. At present the quality reports structure is not harmonised among statistical domains (by Eurostat), the structure of each quality report is identical with the structure required by Eurostat for particular domain.

User-oriented metadata reports, compiled by the NSI and designed according to the Euro-SDMX Metadata Structure (ESMS), are already available in Bulgarian and English on the website of the NSI. At the end of November 2014 under the project framework "Horizontal and vertical integration project: Implementing of technical and statistical standards in the European Statistical System", NSI was implemented ESMS structure and developed National Reference Metadata Database.

**Improvement action 7**

7.1. Review of availability of the quality reports in line with ESQRS (ESS Standard Quality Report Structure) in the NSI of Bulgaria.

7.2. Development of quality reports (required by Eurostat) following the ESQRS format (in Bulgarian and English) for all statistical domains applying step by step approach.

7.3. Publish the user oriented quality reports on the NSI website as soon as they are ready.

**Timeline:**

Timeline for improvement action 7.1.: 31.12.2015

Timeline for improvement action 7.2.: 31.12.2017

Timeline for improvement action 7.3: 31.12.2017

8. ***The Generic Statistical Business Process Model or another equivalent model should be used consistently in the National Statistical System to define the business processes needed to develop and produce official statistics. The benefit would be a more strategic approach to the delivery of the requirements of the European Statistical System. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 8.1–8.8.)***

**Current situation:**

At present there are available partial descriptions, covering different phases of the business process. There is no survey, for which is described overall business process of producing statistics. For surveys that are conducted on the base of European regulation, a part of the process is described in the quality reports. This information will be used as a basis for description of the entire process. For surveys that use information systems, business process is described largely as systems cover the entire process of collecting primary data, encoding rules, processing and validation and preparation of output data.

**Improvement action 8**

Description of the business process of production of statistical information for all surveys on the base of Generic Statistical Business Process Model or another equivalent model.

**Timeline:**

Fourth quarter 2017

**9. A central methodological unit of the National Statistical Institute should take on the role of providing to Directorates of the National Statistical Institute standardised methodological solutions that are compliant with the needs of the European Statistical System and are aimed at improving cost-effectiveness. The unit should also be proactive in undertaking a rolling programme of methodological reviews and ensuring the maintenance of the appropriate metadata jointly with compilers of European statistics. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 7.)**

**Current situation:**

The newly established General Methodology and Analysis of Statistical Surveys Department serves the subject matter units in providing advice on generic methodological issues and is proactive in undertaking a rolling methodological review programme focusing on non-compliance with the CoP and also on enhancement of the quality of the output.

**Improvement action 9**

According to the resources availability (experts, budget, etc.) the methodological unit of the NSI will provide appropriate timely solutions to the actual methodological issues in compliance with the ESS and European statistics practice. In order to provide cost-effective services and products the methodological unit will periodically provide internal educational courses in general and specific fields of statistical theory and practice by the use of available resources (premises, equipment, lecturers, etc.) and by the means of the internal computer network. The usage of computer assisted interviews and internal digital documents would provide not only lower and effective costs but also they will ensure better environment protection. Because of the serious budget reduction and the limited methodological personnel in the NSI only one process will be assessed annually.

**Timeline:**

31.12.2015

**10. The response burden on businesses should be monitored and reported to the top management of the National Statistical Institute on a regular basis. The central methodological unit should take responsibility for ensuring that the burden on business is kept to a minimum. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 9.)**

**Current situation:**

The NSI conducts many business surveys and make extensive use of electronic data gathering. The use of the website to collect data from enterprises in a secure environment using electronic signatures and passwords and available over a 24-hour period, seven days a week is seen as a positive step for data providers, which makes data submission easier for them and thus reduces the form-filling burden.

**Improvement action 10**

The methodological unit of NSI in cooperation with the statistical departments will periodically (annually) organise feedback surveys to find out main drivers of respondents burden in order to lower the latter and to help formulating an adequate strategy for the data collection in the most appropriate for the both sides (NSI and respondents) form. The latter should be extensively based on the internet data collection approach considering the secure environment requirements. The feedback surveys shell be organised annually.

**Timeline:**

2015-2017

**11. The data collection system for agricultural statistics operated by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food should be improved by an appropriate Information Technology application, which is compatible with the Information Technology systems of the National Statistical Institute. Development should be performed with the help and involvement of Information Technology specialists from the National Statistical Institute. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 10.2, 10.4 and 8.4.)**

**Current situation:**

The Information System (ASNS) was developed and implemented in 2005 for Agrostatistics department. The purpose of the system is to store data for conducted product surveys, structural surveys, and censuses with the possibility for further data processing and preparation of reports, publications, creating new surveys using a sample based on previous surveys.

The system is based on NET, MS SQL Server, ArcGIS. ASNS consists of four main and one additional module. Module S-1 for control and management of administrative components; module S-2 for sampling for new surveys; module S-3 for creating and managing of surveys; module S-4 for archive, and data storage of conducted surveys and for data dissemination and reports; additional module S-5 used as data source to past and current surveys. The module S-5 is built on MS Access and is destined for dialling/ input of data obtained from the questionnaires.

Between the additional module and the central system is built bilateral data exchange. The most used module of the system is S3 – DECIDE, which only works with MS Access 2002 and cannot be run with newer versions of MS Office. Practically the information system is outdated and does not support advanced features for on-line operations with the system for entering and processing data, and preparation of an aggregations. The system is built on the local network of Agrostatistics department and there is no external access (internet).

Data collection is done by surveyors through interviews with farmers and the collected information is filled on a hard copy. The processing of the data is done by the experts with personal computers (PC), running operating system Windows 7 and applications of MS Office 2010.

**Improvement action 11**

The Ministry of Agriculture and Food has announced public procurements for developing an information system for agro statistics and information system for Farm Accountancy Data Network activities. The results of the procurements will be announced by the end of February 2015. Upon signing contract expectation are those IT-systems to be built by the end of 2015 and next year to continue with tests for commissioning. The links for data exchange with NSI from MAF and vice versa will be built. The NSI will provide the necessary assistance for project implementation in order to ensure that the new application will be compatible with the NSI systems.

**Timeline:**

31.12. 2016

**12. In the context of administrative data used by the National Statistical Institute and the Other National Authorities producing European statistics, a legal mandate, appropriate procedures, control and influence over the definitions, coverage, quality and overall relevance should be ensured. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 2.2, 8.1 and 9.4.)**

**Current situation:**

The NSI access to individual and aggregate data from administrative registers maintained by the statistical authorities and other public administrations is clearly regulated in the Law on Statistics (art.4, para. 3 and para. 4, art. 20 (6), art. 29 (2)).

However, there are problems with access to data and in particular to individual data. The main reason is the different legal requirements for access to administrative records in various laws governing these registers. Therefore, the exchange of data between individual institutions is usually governed by agreements or in cases where there is no agreement by requesting the information by a formal letter. The Law on Statistics does not regulate the NSI role to control the scope, definitions, nomenclatures, quality of data in developing new or existing administrative registers. Coordination and communication between the institutions in this regard is not at the required level. This raises questions for quality of data that are derived from administrative registers and used for the production of statistical information. Very often data in administrative registers are not of sufficient quality and scope (different units, definitions, classifications, lack of input control, and lack of main variables) and their use for statistical purposes requires the application of appropriate methods or a combination of data from different registers.

**Improvement action 12**

A legal mandate is clearly regulated in the Law on Statistics and NSI of Bulgaria will review the existing agreements, initiating new and updating existing agreements. The agreements with the National Revenue Agency, National Social Security Institute, Ministry of Interior, National Center of Public Health and Analyses, Registry Agency (Trade register) will be updated. An agreement with Ministry of Education and Science will be concluded.

**Timeline:**

Fourth quarter 2017

**13. An organisational review of the National Statistical Institute should be undertaken focusing on the benefits of a more centralised structure based on the statistical value chain: statistical design; data collection; data compilation and estimation; and computation, analysis and dissemination. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 10.4.)**

**Current situation:**

Cost-effectiveness relies on an efficient organisational structure. In noting the creation of a central unit for methodology, Peer Reviewers felt that the opportunity should also be taken to review the organisation of other parts of the NSI with a view to restructuring the NSI towards a more centralised organisation. This would help solve resource problems and improve the efficiency of the organisation and the quality of its statistical products. In this connection, there are many benefits that can accrue from a structure according to the statistical value chain: statistical design; data collection; data compilation and estimation; and computation, analysis and dissemination. Such a structure can exploit the skills of specialist staff to maximum effect and thereby increase statistical capacity across the organisation as a whole: it can contribute to the effective use of resources.

**Improvement action 13**

A review of the NSI organization targeting a more centralised structure will be implemented in the mid of 2015.

**Timeline:**

End of June 2015

**14. A more empowering management style should be introduced in the National Statistical Institute to better exploit the knowledge and enthusiasm of staff. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 7.5 and 7.6; Principle 10.)**

**Current situation:**

The Peer Review team was left with the strong impression that more junior staff felt that they had little opportunity to contribute to the development of statistics. There was no formal or well tested system whereby junior staff could make suggestions for improvements in the statistical design or production of statistics, for instance as inputs into quality reviews or as part of a regular system of staff meetings.

**Improvement action 14**

A plan for the HR development in NSI in accordance with the upcoming reorganisation the NSI will be implemented in the mid of 2015.

**Timeline:**

End of June 2015

**15. Project management arrangements and tools should be put in place and an action plan drawn up to take forward the strategic plans relating to 2013–2017. A Project Management Board should take responsibility for the monitoring and delivery of the strategic plans and should provide regular reports to top management of the National Statistical Institute. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 3.1 and 10.1.)**

**Current situation:**

There is an Action Plan, which is linked to the implementation of the Strategy for Development of NSS, 2013-2017. The objectives and priorities formulated in the Strategy for Development of the NSS of the Republic of Bulgaria, 2013-2017 are not translated into a set of realistic actions, and the implementation of these actions are not controlled by comprehensive project management tools and reports and a clear upward reporting process to a management committee and ultimately to the President of the NSI.

**Improvement action 15:**

15.1. The Action plan on implementation of the Strategy for Development of the NSS of the Republic of Bulgaria, 2013-2017 will be complemented and published on the NSI website.

15.2. Regular control of the Action plan implementation by the Planning, Projects and Coordination Department on the base of constant follow-up and description of the main deliverables and projects progress.

15.3. Annual Report to the NSI top Management.

**Timeline:**

Timeline for improvement action 15.1.: 30.06.2015

Timeline for improvement action 15.2. : according the timetable specified in the Action plan.

Timeline for improvement action 15.3. : 30.11.2015; 30.11.2016; 30.11.2017.

**16. Information Technology projects in particular should be carefully designed and managed and be realistic in terms of their delivery. To facilitate this, the National Statistical Institute should take on an Information Technology coordination role across the National Statistical System. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 10.1, 10.2 and 10.4.)**

**Current situation:**

On 01.09.2014 the “Information Systems and Infrastructure” Directorate, with three departments, was re-established.

**Improvement action 16**

Development of projects related to the information systems and IT - infrastructure in accordance with long-term NSI strategy, such will be the Information System “Infostat” – to provide the on-line information services to the respondents; Information System “Single Entry Point” between National Statistical Institute (NSI), National Revenue Agency (NRA) and Registry Agency (RA).

**Timeline:**

Fourth quarter 2017 (Permanently for each projects, systems and etc.)

**17. A more systematic and proactive approach to training should be introduced. The National Statistical Institute should build up the relevant staff skills and regularly check the availability of those skills it needs, offering training to fill the skill gaps, if needed. Arrangements should be put in place for internal skills transfer and assistance from academia. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 7.6.)**

**Current situation:**

The peer Review team saw only limited evidence of a structured approach to staff development and the building of statistical capacity. For instance, personal development plans, listing an individual's training needs to bridge their skills gaps, need to be not only drafted but used proactively to build the competences of individuals.

**Improvement action 17**

A yearly training plan of the staff taking in consideration specific needs and existing skill gaps will be implemented in 2015. Conducting a needs assessment of certain knowledge for expert staff and their harmonization with the opportunities offered by external training institutions and training programs including leading methodologists from NSI. If necessary, usage of internal mobility among experts in knowledge sharing.

**Timeline:**

End of March 2015

**18. *The National Statistical Institute should have the appropriate human resources policies in place to recruit and retain, in the longer term, experts with the relevant and essential skills. This applies especially to Information Technology staff. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 3.1 and 7.6.)***

**Current situation:**

During discussions it became apparent that the salaries of NSI staff were not competitive compared with other state organisations including the Bulgarian National Bank (BNB), which is a direct competitor for recruiting staff with numerical, statistical and analytical skills. Whilst the Peer Review team found no evidence of retention problems this is likely to be influenced, in part, by the current economic climate. Moreover, the retention of experienced staff within the NSI will become more critical as the organisation enters a further period of change. Recruitment and retention needs to be more closely monitored and human resources policies need to be in place to deal with issues that arise. This applies especially to IT staff.

**Improvement action 18**

A plan for the HR development in NSI will be implemented in accordance with the upcoming reorganization. Special measures apply to IT staff for its adequate assessment and its integration with stimulating change. The same approach is laid down in the concept of attracting leading experts.

**Timeline:**

End of 2016

**19. An intensified communication with and consultation of users should be institutionalised in the National Statistical Institute in the form of technical working groups for all relevant topics. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 11.1, 11.3 and 15.6.)**

**Current situation:**

In Bulgaria, the most important communication channel between the NSI and the users of its statistical products is the National Statistical Council (NSC). Meeting agendas focus on issues of general interest like the Annual Statistical Programme or the preparation of the European Statistical System Committee (ESSC). Not much space is given in the NSC meetings to more technical issues like statistical processes and statistical products. The annual user satisfaction surveys, conducted since 2009, are important communication channels.

A more intensive communication with and consultation of users should be institutionalised. Technical working groups that include users should be established for all relevant topics as an effective instrument for collecting user feedback on statistical products, for informing users about metadata and quality reports and for promoting other topics for discussion. User feedback should be the basis for identifying potential for improvement.

**Improvement action 19**

Technical working groups that include different users will be established. The composition of the working groups will be the follow: representatives from business, scientific and academic society, students and citizens. Technical working groups will be on two general topics: statistical process (in particular the dissemination process) and statistical products (statistical information provided by all domains on the NSI web site by automatically defining and implementing requests for statistical information). The frequency of the meetings of the technical working groups will be once a year or when required. The two working groups will be established at the same time as a part of Operational Programme Administrative Capacity (OPAC) project in August 2015.

**Timeline:**

End of 2017

**20. Users should have the possibility of self-tabulating statistical data on the National Statistical Institute website. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 15.2.)**

**Current situation:**

The NSI website contains a wide range of statistical results, tables and figures. While the number of available breakdowns is limited, they probably satisfy users in many cases. More detailed results can be ordered and the provision of such further calculations requires payment.

Currently NSI is implementing a project under OPAC which is aimed at building a service system for citizens and businesses by automatically defining and implementing requests for statistical information. Users will be able to define and implement online applications through the website of the National Statistical Institute and to generate tables. The project started on 02.04.2014. Its duration is 18 months.

**Improvement action 20**

In order to better meet user needs and comply with recognised international dissemination practice, the NSI will give users the possibility to define and implement online applications, and to generate tables through the NSI website.

**Timeline:**

March 2016

**21. *The practice of custom-designed analyses should be improved in the National Statistical Institute by simplifying the price list and by informing the general public about custom-designed analyses conducted. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 15.3.)***

**Current situation:**

As a special service, the NSI offers to analyse data that are available to it in order to answer questions in directions which it does not routinely foresee. For such custom-designed analyses, the user has to pay for labour and materials, and a price list is available that is used as a basis for such calculations. This price list is very detailed, and the calculation of the charge for a custom-designed analysis must be elaborated and costly. This complication may reduce the attraction of this valuable service both for potential customers and for the NSI.

Currently NSI is implementing a project under Operational Programme Administrative Capacity (OPAC) which is aimed at building a service system for citizens and businesses by automatically defining and implementing requests for statistical information. The project started on 02.04.2014. Its duration is 18 months. The price list will be revised after the project's implementation.

**Improvement action 21**

The NSI will inform general public and to offer a revised price list after the OPAC project implementation.

**Timeline:**

March 2016

**22. *Projects contracted outside of the National Statistical Programme should follow criteria that ensure that the project theme is related to official statistics and the general public should be informed about contracted surveys. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 15.3.)***

**Current situation:**

As a special service for users, the NSI offers to conduct surveys which are not an element of the National Statistical Programme (NSP). Such projects have a legal basis in the Statistics Act, but the law does not regulate the details under which such surveys can be conducted.

**Improvement action 22**

The contracted projects conducted outside of the NSP will follow the European statistics quality criteria. The information to user will be presented in a clear and understandable form. The contracted surveys will be conducted on the base of signed contract between NSI and users. The general public will be informed about contracted surveys by press releases published on the NSI website. Basic information and a summary of the survey will be provided in the press releases..

**Timeline:**

End of 2017

**23. Interest in using anonymised microdata for research purposes should be raised and the National Statistical Institute should improve the possibilities of accessing microdata. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 15.4.)**

**Current situation:**

Most of the procedures for statistical disclosure control on the current NSI data are applied manually which is time and resources consuming. The application for access to anonymised microdata files for research purposes in NSI is a paper based one and requires a contract signing and a short survey completion.

**Improvement action 23** In order to lower the time and human resources loss and to answer the current methodological needs new tools for statistical disclosure control will be implemented. Software products such as  $\mu$ -ARGUS and  $\tau$ -ARGUS will provide an adequate and cost-effective control over the tabulated and micro data for statistical purposes. New and optimised rules for microdata access and dissemination will be introduced in order to provide better possibilities for data access. An online based questionnaire would provide a faster and cost-effective approach for the microdata access application. When developing this improvement action account will be taken of Commission regulation (EU) No 557/2013 on access to confidential data for scientific purposes and the new implementation guidelines. During the implementation period firstly the new and optimised rules for microdata access will be introduced in 2015, meanwhile (starting 2015) the  $\mu$ -ARGUS and  $\tau$ -ARGUS software products will be studied and implemented where they are applicable (ending 2017).

**Timeline:**

2015-2017

**24. A formal procedure for correction of errors discovered in published statistics should be established and published on the National Statistical Institute website. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 6.3.)**

**Current situation:**

The Rules for dissemination of statistical products and services of NSI were revised immediately following the Peer Review visit on 13-17 October 2014. Some changes were made in order to fulfil the recommendation of the Peer Review's team. The updated Rules for dissemination of statistical products and services of NSI came into force on 02.12.2014 and are published on the web site of NSI.

**Improvement action 24**

According to the Rules:

In case of discovered errors or changes in the disclosed statistical information the NSI's employees shall inform in writing the Director of the relevant Directorate. With a memorandum, the Director of the Directorate, in consultation with the responsible Deputy President, Director of the "Multi-Domain Statistics and User Services" and "Press centre" department informs the President of the NSI for errors and changes in the published statistical information. The President of the NSI provides the manner and date of notification of changes in the published statistical information, as well as ways of informing users (with official letter or e-mail; the web site of the NSI or other appropriate ways). (Art. 9, Par. 1, 2 and 3 of Rules for dissemination of statistical products and services of NSI, came into force on 02.12.2014)

The provisions of Par. 1, 2 and 3 shall not apply to cases where the changes are due to the application of new methodological requirements, regular data review or obvious technical errors.

**Timeline:**

02.12.2014

**25. A formal procedure for informing about changes of a release date should be established and published on the National Statistical Institute website. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 6.5.)**

**Current situation:**

The Rules for dissemination of statistical products and services of NSI were revised immediately following the Peer Review visit on 13-17 October 2014. Some changes were made in order to fulfil the recommendation of the Peer Review's team. The updated Rules for dissemination of statistical products and services of NSI came into force on 02.12.2014 and are published on the web site of NSI.

**Improvement action 25**

According to the Rules:

The statistical information is disseminated according to the Release Calendar, which is approved annually by the President of the NSI within 10 days after the adoption of the National Statistical Programme (NSP) by the Council of Ministers. The results of statistical surveys are published on the web site of NSI at 11.00 am on the date specified in the Release Calendar. The Release Calendar may be updated during the year by the President of the NSI by a proposal of the directors of the statistical directorates, in consultation with the responsible Deputy President, due to changes in the NSP or due to unexpected objective changes in the production of statistical information (Art. 7, Par. 1, 2 and 3 of Rules for dissemination of statistical products and services of NSI).

Changes in the Release Calendar are published on the NSI web site (Art.7, Par. 4 of Rules for dissemination of statistical products and services of NSI, came in force on 02.12.2014)

Rules for dissemination of statistical products and services are published on the NSI web site

**Timeline:**

02.12.2014

**26. Members of the National Statistical System should establish common dissemination guidelines and procedures (including a release calendar and regular reporting of data transmissions) in the National Statistical System. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 6.3 and 6.5–6.8; Principles 13 and 15.)**

**Current situation:**

Coordination of activities related to the dissemination of European statistics deserves more attention. Other National Authorities producing European statistics (ONAs) should adopt similar principles and procedures for dissemination as those practiced by the NSI. Internal NSI Rules for Dissemination could serve as point of departure for ONAs and the NSI should establish supervision of these processes.

Members of the National Statistical Council should establish common dissemination guidelines and procedures (including a release calendar and regular reporting of data transmissions) in the National Statistical System.

**Improvement action 26**

Guidelines on dissemination in the National Statistical System of Bulgaria will be developed by Relations with Users and e-Services Department. NSI of Bulgaria will consult the Guidelines with ONAs and will submit it for consideration by the National Statistical Council.

**Timeline:**

November 2016

**27. *The National Statistical Institute and Other National Authorities producing European statistics should disseminate the whole set of European statistics in a common statistical database of the National Statistical Institute. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 15.2, 15.5, 15.6 and 15.7.)***

**Current situation:**

The NSI and ONAs should consider disseminating the whole set of European statistics in a common statistical database of the NSI. ONA European statistics should be available on the NSI website, making this website a portal of official statistics.

**Improvement action 27**

On the basis of new elaborated Guidelines on dissemination in the National Statistical System of Bulgaria, that will provide detailed description of procedures for dissemination of the whole set of European statistics in a common statistical database, the European statistics produced by ONAs will be available on the NSI website, making this website a portal of official statistics.

**Timeline:**

June 2017

**28. *The National Statistical Institute should monitor and publish activities and accomplishments of objectives set out in the Strategy for Development of the National Statistical System of the Republic of Bulgaria, 2013–2017. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 1.5.)***

**Current situation:**

The NSI monitors goals set up in the Strategy for Development of the National Statistical System of the Republic of Bulgaria, 2013-2017 (see Part III. Resources, organisation and monitoring of the implementation of [the Strategy 2013-2017](#)). The implementation of activities and accomplishments of objectives set out in the Strategy 2013 – 2017 are discussed at the National Statistical Council meetings. In the Annual report on the implementation of the National Statistical Programme and the NSI activity there is a chapter named “Implementation of the horizontal priorities of Strategy 2013 - 2017” where the implemented as well as outstanding activities are reported. The annual report is adopted by Council of Ministers and is publicly available on the NSI website.

**Improvement action 28**

NSI of Bulgaria has a divergent view on this recommendation and therefore no improvement action is foreseen.

**Timeline: N.A.**