

European Commission's Progress Report, 2021

Chapter 18: Statistics

EU rules require that Member States are able to produce good quality statistics in line with the principles of the European statistics Code of Practice and based on professional independence, impartiality, reliability, transparency, and confidentiality. Common rules are provided for the methodology, production and dissemination of statistical information.

The country has a **moderately prepared** in the area of statistics. **Good progress** was made, especially in preparatory work and conduct of the population census, officially launched in September 2021, for which the legal framework and methodology were adopted. The census operation, the first since 2002, was completed on 30 September 2021. Improvements are noted in all statistical areas and further aligning of sectoral statistics with EU standards. Continued efforts are needed to improve the scope and data quality of macroeconomic and social statistics. As last year's recommendations were partially carried out, in the coming year, the country should in particular:

- process and publish the results of the population census;
- continue to align financial accounts and quarterly national accounts with the European System of Accounts 2010 (ESA 2010);
- ensure adequate staffing and sufficient financial resources for the State Statistical Office.

The legal framework for **statistical infrastructure** is broadly in line with the European Statistics Code of Practice. The Statistical Council has met regularly in 2020. Regarding other main statistics producers, the central bank is fully committed to the statistical standards' code of practice. The Ministry of Finance has not yet appointed a head of statistics. The IT systems of the State Statistical Office (SSO) have been upgraded to increase interconnectivity, storage capacity and protection with the setup of a backup system at the national disaster recovery centre in Prilep from October 2021 onwards. Dissemination of statistical data was realised in accordance with the Advanced Release Calendar for data publishing. The Office adopted a pro-active communication approach to inform citizens about the Census of Population, Households and Dwellings, including the creation of a dedicated website as well as social media profiles. Despite the COVID-19 situation, most main statistical surveys were carried out. For the first time, the SSO adopted a Handbook for Internal Quality Audit of all processes and products. Human resources of the state statistical system need to be further increased and vacancies filled.

On **classifications and registers**, the main classifications comply with the EU *acquis* and are updated regularly. Progress was noted in the use of administrative data sources, including for piloting the population census. The Office finalised the logical design of the new Statistical Business Register including updated statistical definitions in line with the latest EU regulation, as well as a new delineation of enterprise groups. The Statistical Farm Register was updated by using data from the administrative register of agricultural holdings. Data availability and quality improved but still need to further comply with new requirements. Data transmission to Eurostat further increased but remains incomplete.

The country made good progress on **macroeconomic statistics**. GDP by production and expenditure approach at current and constant prices are regularly produced and transmitted to Eurostat. The timeliness of the publication and transmission of GDP on annual level based on quarterly calculations improved. Seasonal and calendar-adjusted data are revised based on methodological improvements. Annual sector accounts are produced in accordance with ESA 2010. Improvement of the compilation of Quarterly National Accounts (QNA) in accordance with ESA 2010 is ongoing. QNA for the government sector were compiled on an experimental basis for two years (2017 and 2018). The supply and use tables for 2017 in accordance with ESA 2010 were published. Progress was made in improving the government finance statistics (GFS) and the excessive deficit procedure (EDP) notifications. The SSO transmitted the October 2020 EDP notification, although not fully filled in. The timeliness of preliminary data on gross value added (GVA) and gross domestic product (GDP) by region and activities was improved. In the area of financial accounts statistics, the National Bank published for the first time the annual financial accounts

data and made regular transmission of annual financial accounts stock data to Eurostat, with improved methodology and coverage for certain financial instruments. The National Bank produces statistics on the balance of payments and foreign direct investment according to the latest standards. It transmitted to Eurostat detailed FDI data for 2019, by activity and geographical breakdown.

Structural **business statistics** and short-term statistics for the industry and construction sectors are well developed. On foreign affiliates statistics (FATS), data for 2018 were published for inward data, but not transmitted to Eurostat. Statistics on research and development and on ICT are sufficiently aligned. For services statistics, turnover indices are regularly produced, disseminated and transmitted to Eurostat in accordance with the regulation. The prices of services' survey was piloted for transport services, and postal and telecommunication services. The harmonised index of consumer prices data are transmitted to Eurostat monthly. The survey on International Trade in Services Statistics has been developed but without a detailed geographical breakdown.. Preliminary work to set up tourism satellite accounts showed good progress. Transport statistics are produced in accordance with the EU *acquis*.

Good progress was made on **social statistics**. Particularly relevant is the progress made to prepare and conduct the Census of Population, Households and Dwellings. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the census was postponed from April to September 2021. After almost 20 years, the census was officially launched on 5 September and the data collection process lasted until 30 September 2021. The Law and the Methodology for preparing, organising and conducting the Census were adopted. They are broadly compliant with the relevant standards defined in the European Union's statistical legislation. The survey on income and living conditions is regularly carried out. Progress was achieved with improvements in social protection statistics. Migration statistics need to be further improved. Labour market statistics are largely aligned with the EU *acquis*. Activities are under way to improve statistics on crime, education and public health statistics.

Agricultural statistics are partly in line with the EU *acquis*. The farm structure survey was postponed due to COVID-19. For the annual crop statistics, the EU methodology for surveys and the data-editing procedure was tested. The forecast and estimation models for the animal production statistics were developed. The questionnaire for fishery statistics was revised and aligned to EU standards. Agro-monetary statistics are produced in line with the EU *acquis*.

Energy and environment statistics are mostly in line with the EU *acquis*, including environmental protection expenditure statistics, waste statistics, water statistics, and environment-related taxes' statistics. Compilation work has begun for air emission accounts and physical energy flow accounts. Material flow accounts are generated, although material flow balances are not yet included. The country also provides short-term energy statistics and energy balances. The Sample Survey for energy consumption in households was conducted in compliance with the EU Regulation 1099/2008.