



STATISTICAL OFFICE OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

**PEER REVIEWERS' RECOMMENDATIONS AND STATISTICAL OFFICE OF THE  
REPUBLIC OF SERBIA (SORS) IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS IN RESPONSE TO THE  
RECOMMENDATIONS**

## Peer reviewers' recommendations and improvement actions in response to the recommendations

### *Consolidate the institutional and legal framework (recommendations 1-5)*

- 1. The relevant Serbian authorities should arrange that the process governing the recruitment of the Director of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia is more transparent and that the reasons for which the incumbency of the Director can be terminated are clearly specified in law and can never compromise professional independence. (European statistics Code of Practice, Indicator 1.8)***

#### **Current situation:**

The hierarchical level of the Director of SORS is comparable to that of the highest ranking public servant. Civil servant posts in Serbia are designated as either appointed positions (because the Government makes appointments to these positions) or executive positions. Within SORS, the Director and Assistant Directors are appointed positions. When a vacancy arises in an appointed position, an internal competition is held (internal to the civil service); if that fails, an open competition is held. The selection procedure is implemented by a Commission in charge of the appointment. The Commission members are appointed by the High Civil Service Council to include experts in relevant domains. When the selection procedure is completed, the Commission creates a shortlist of up to three candidates. This shortlist is passed to Government, who then makes the final selection. The head of a special organisation, such as the Director of SORS, is appointed for a five-year term, which is renewable. In Serbia, the reasons for dismissal of a civil servant in an appointed position are set out in Article 78 of the Civil Servants Act. These provisions apply to all civil servants at this level, and they make no reference to professional independence.

***Improvement action 1.1: SORS will submit for adoption by the Serbian Government the draft Law on Amendments to the Official Statistics Law including articles governing the recruitment of the Director of the SORS and the reasons for which the incumbency of the Director can be terminated.***

SORS prepared draft Law on Amendments to the Official Statistics Law. The process governing the recruitment of the Director of the SORS and the reasons for which the incumbency of the Director can be terminated are clearly specified in the draft Law. SORS will send this draft Law to the Serbian Government in order to be adopted.

#### **Timeline:**

Q4/ 2018

**2. The relevant Serbian authorities should arrange that the Director of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia and, where appropriate, the heads of the statistical departments of other producers of official statistics, should be clearly assigned in law the sole responsibility for deciding on statistical methods, standards and procedures, and on the timing and content of statistical releases. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 1.4)**

**Current situation:**

Professional independence is referred to in Article 5 of the Official Statistics Law. This states that “Official statistics are based on common standards, official definitions and basic principles”, one of these principles being the principle of professional independence which “means that the decisions on the definitions, methods of collection, processing and dissemination of official statistics are exclusively in charge of the producers of official statistics”. Article 10 states that “The Director of the Office is obliged to protect the professional credibility of official statistics from all kinds of unprofessional influence”.

**Improvement action 2.1: SORS will submit for adoption by the Serbian Government the draft Law on Amendments to the Official Statistics Law including an article related to the responsibility of Director of SORS**

SORS prepared draft Law on Amendments to the Official Statistics Law. Director of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia is clearly assigned in the draft Law as well as his/her responsibility for deciding on statistical methods, standards and procedures, and on the timing and content of statistical releases. SORS will send this draft Law to the Serbian Government in order to be adopted.

**Timeline:**

Q4/ 2018

**3. The relevant Serbian authorities should amend the provisions in the Official Statistics Law relating to the Statistical Council. The Council should be a relatively small advisory group operating at a strategic level with members representing the users, providers and producers of official statistics; members should be appointed for fixed terms; the Director of SORS should be an ex officio member; and the Council sessions should be chaired by an external member. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 11)**

**Current situation:**

According to Official Statistics Law apart from the Director of SORS, the Statistical Council consists of 16 members: nine representing various government ministries, two from the National Bank of Serbia, one from the Chamber of Commerce of Serbia, three professionals from scientific research and educational institutions, and one from the Statistical Society of Serbia. Members are not appointed for fixed terms. Council sessions are chaired by the Director of SORS.

**Improvement action 3.1: SORS will submit for adoption by the Serbian Government the draft Law on Amendments to the Official Statistics Law with changes related to the Statistical Council**

SORS prepared draft Law on Amendments to the Official Statistics Law that contains changes related to Statistical Council. According to the draft Law the Statistical Council will be small advisory group consisting of nine members. The Director of SORS will be an ex officio member; and the Council sessions will be chaired by an external member. SORS will send this draft Law to the Serbian Government in order to be adopted.

**Timeline:**

Q4/ 2018

- 4. The relevant Serbian authorities should amend the provisions in the Official Statistics Law relating to statistical confidentiality: penalties should be prescribed for breaching confidentiality; and the provisions stating that enterprise employment, production, etc are not confidential should be removed. (European statistics Code of Practice, Indicators 5.1 and 5.3)**

**Current situation:**

The penalty provisions relating to confidentiality in the Official Statistics Law are quite weak. Article 53 prescribes a fine for an “Authorised producer of official statistics in case they fail to stipulate in a special act the measures and procedures to secure the confidentiality of data”, but no penalty is prescribed in case a member of staff breaches confidentiality. In the document “Guidelines on Measures of Data and Information Protection in the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia”, an article states that “disciplinary or criminal proceeding against him/her can be initiated” if a person breaches statistical confidentiality. In the Law on the Census of Population, Households and Dwellings 2011 (Article 31), a fine is prescribed for “enumerators, coordinators, supervisors and other direct participants in the Census if they [...] act opposite to the confidentiality obligation”, but this is a rather narrow provision. In SORS staff has to sign legal confidentiality commitments on appointment.

In Article 45 of the Official Statistics Law states that:

“The following information shall not be regarded as confidential:

Number and structure of the hired and permanently employed with legal and physical persons, not including their personal data;

Production range, i.e. products manufactured, processed, forwarded, stored, purchased and sold by an entrepreneur, enterprise, i.e. other organisation and institution, as well as all services rendered to public or enterprises, i.e. other organisations or institutions;

Data on damage or environmental effects caused by the activities of an entrepreneur, enterprise, i.e. other organisation or institution”.

In practice all such data are treated as confidential irrespective of this provision. Nonetheless, SORS management think that the provision should be removed from the Official Statistics Law.

**Improvement action 4.1: SORS will submit for adoption by the Serbian Government the draft Law on Amendments to the Official Statistics Law with provision on statistical confidentiality**

SORS prepared draft Law on Amendments to the Official Statistics Law including the provisions on statistical confidentiality. The provision stating that enterprise employment, production, etc. are not confidential are removed from the draft Law. SORS will send this draft Law to the Serbian Government in order to be adopted.

**Timeline:**

Q4/ 2018

**5. *The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia should concentrate methodological services and consultation in one methodological unit; this unit should provide services at all stages of the statistical production process and should play a central role in the development of statistical methods and competencies. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 7)***

**Current situation:**

SORS has sample methodology unit, which receives requests for sample selection from subject-matter specialists responsible for particular surveys. This unit is responsible for sample design, sample selection and estimation methods for all surveys that are based on random samples, and it calculates sampling weights, standard errors and confidence intervals. The Unit also provides guidelines, recommends appropriate methodologies, and periodically examines these procedures. Apart from sampling, each statistical department develops their own guidelines and methodology, and implements their own methods for data validation, editing, imputation, etc. There is no central methodology unit, and the function of such a unit is performed by Board of experts consisting of the assistant directors and some experts from particular areas. Significant methodological changes, such as the modification of a questionnaire, are submitted to this Board for approval.

**Improvement action 5.1: *Establishment of centralized methodological unit***

With the next change of organization SORS is planning to establish a new centralized methodological unit. This unit will provide services at all stages of the statistical production process. Full implementation of this activity depends on adequate number of staff.

**Timeline:**

Q4/ 2018

**Increase resources and improve cost-effectiveness (recommendations 6-12)**

- 6. *The relevant national authorities should ensure that the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia is provided with the necessary human and financial resources to ensure that they can meet all priority national and international statistical needs, particularly those required to comply with the EU statistical acquis. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 3)***

**Current situation:**

SORS financial and human resources have been reduced over the last few years in line with budget cuts, and the Government has imposed restrictions on the recruitment of staff to the public sector in Serbia. These restrictions make not only the recruitment of new staff very difficult but also the substitution of retired staff. The reduction of resources contrasts with the growing demand for statistics and the need for modernisation of the statistical infrastructure. To overcome its shortage of resources, SORS is developing greater use of administrative sources, and is making cost-effective improvements to the methods for data collection, data editing and the documentation of metadata. However, several statistical domains still need to be further developed relative to the EU standards, and in some areas much work needs to be done.

**Improvement action 6.1: *Presenting information about human and financial resources in SORS to the relevant national authorities and asking them to provide SORS with necessary human and financial resources***

SORS will continue to report the status of available human and financial resources to responsible Serbian authorities, comparing them to increasing volume of tasks and mandatory results expected in official statistics, with the emphasis on EU statistics and to ask relevant national authorities to ensure that the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia is provided with the necessary human and financial resources.

**Timeline:**

Q4/ 2018

- 7. *The relevant national authorities should consider the easing of current restrictions on the ability of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (a) to apportion its budget and (b) to make decisions concerning its own internal organisation. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 3)***

**Current situation:**

SORS financial and human resources have been reduced over the last few years in line with budget cuts, and the Government has imposed restrictions on the recruitment of staff to the public sector in Serbia. These restrictions make not only the recruitment of new staff very difficult but also the substitution of retired staff. The reduction of resources contrasts with the growing demand for statistics and the need for modernisation of the statistical infrastructure. To overcome its shortage of resources, SORS is developing greater use of administrative sources, and is making cost-effective improvements to the methods for data collection, data editing and the documentation of metadata. However, several statistical domains still need to be further developed relative to the EU standards, and in some areas much work needs to be done.

**Improvement action 7.1: SORS will get a right to be more flexible with its own budget.**

SORS will place the request to the Ministry of Finance as regards the amendments to the Law on the Serbian budgetary system in the part relating to the income that SORS would gain on the market based of engaging their own resources, both human and material, out of the scope of its authorization envisaged by the Law on Ministries.

**Timeline:**

Q2/ 2019

**Improvement action 7.2: SORS will get a right to make decisions concerning its own internal organisation**

Following the adoption of the new Official Statistics Law which will change its status ( SORS would report to Parliament rather than to Government), SORS will be in a position to make decisions concerning its own internal organisation.

**Timeline:**

Q2/ 2019

**8. The relevant national authorities should ensure that the proportion of the staff of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia that are permanent, as opposed to temporary, is increased in order to ensure business continuity. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 3)**

**Current situation:**

SORS financial and human resources have been reduced over the last few years in line with budget cuts, and the Government has imposed restrictions on the recruitment of staff to the public sector in Serbia. These restrictions make not only the recruitment of new staff very difficult but also the substitution of retired staff. The reduction of resources contrasts with the growing demand for statistics and the need for modernisation of the statistical infrastructure. To overcome its shortage of resources, SORS is developing greater use of administrative sources, and is making cost-effective improvements to the methods for data collection, data editing and the documentation of metadata. However, several statistical domains still need to be further developed relative to the EU standards, and in some areas much work needs to be done.

While the approved maximum number of permanent staff is 455, the actual number is 422 FTE (full-time equivalents). However, SORS has the option to recruit temporary staff, and, currently, a total of 114 persons are employed on temporary contracts. Therefore, a total of 536 FTE is working in the headquarters and regional offices. In addition, an average of 134 interviewers are doing field work for SORS. Since 2007, SORS has lost about 150 staff members.

**Improvement action 8.1: *Presenting information about human resources in SORS to the relevant national authorities and asking them to provide SORS with permanent human resources***

SORS will continue to report the status of available human resources to responsible Serbian authorities, comparing them to increasing volume of tasks and mandatory results expected in official statistics, with the emphasis on EU statistics and to ask relevant national authorities to ensure that the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia is provided with increasing proportion of permanent human resources. Temporary staff will be converted to permanent staff.

**Timeline:**

Q4/ 2018

**9. *The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia should introduce a staff mobility policy. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 10)***

**Current situation:**

There is no internal staff mobility policy in SORS. Civil Servants Act does not define staff mobility except when a vacancy within a state authority exists. In that situation mobility within a state authority is possible by reassignment of a civil servant from other position within a state authority. In this case reassignment can be done with or without his/her promotion.

**Improvement action 9.1: *Introduction of a staff mobility policy***

SORS will introduce staff mobility policy in accordance with the Law on Civil servants. The new status of the Statistical Office, in accordance with the new Draft Official Statistics Law , will create greater possibilities for staff mobility.

**Timeline:**

Q4/ 2020

**10. *The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia should continue transferring posts from its regional offices to its head office. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 10)***

**Current situation:**

Of the permanent 422 FTEs, 269 work in the head office and 153 in the 15 regional offices. The main role of the regional offices is to conduct data collection activities, in particular among important enterprises in the region; the regional offices also perform some data entry and editing. The implementation of new technologies for data collection, such as the use of web-based questionnaires as well as use of more administrative sources should reduce the need for direct data collection, free up resources in the regional offices, and allow reallocating positions to the SORS head office for higher level statistical activities which are much needed to fulfil national and European obligations. SORS has already transferred some posts from the regional offices to its head office.



**Improvement action 10.1: *Continuation of transferring posts from SORS regional offices to SORS head office***

SORS will continue to implement the new technologies for data collection and to use more administrative sources in order to reduce direct data collection. This will lead to transferring main posts from SORS regional offices to SORS head office.

**Timeline:**

Q4/ 2020

**11. *The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia should strongly encourage all enterprises to use web-based methods of data provision. Further, the Office should provide, as far as practicable, user-friendly web-based methods of data collection for social surveys. (European statistics Code of Practice, Indicator 10.2)***

**Current situation:**

For most of SORS's enterprise surveys, web-based questionnaires are available. 90% of SORS surveys use the Integrated Survey Tool (IST) for data collection and data processing, a software package designed and developed by SORS. IST delivers many benefits. It is very cost-effective and has helped SORS cope with the shortage of human resources. One of the many useful facilities of IST is that it can automatically generate web questionnaires. For household surveys, SORS relies on interviewing, and has developed two new modules in IST for CAPI and CATI data collection.

**Improvement action 11.1: *Encouraging all enterprises to use the web questionnaires for providing data***

SORS will continuously work on encouraging enterprises to use the web questionnaires for providing data. This implies continuous work on improving solution for generating web questionnaires suitable to users, which would increase web responses.

**Timeline:**

Q4 /2020

**Improvement action 11.2: *Development of web-based applications for social surveys***

SORS will develop web - based applications for social surveys, where appropriate.

**Timeline:**

Q4 /2020

**12. *The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia should use a suitable system to enable the estimation of the costs of statistical processes and products, and should use the resulting information for management purposes. (European statistics Code of Practice, Indicator 10.1)***

**Current situation:**

Following the reporting requirements of the public service, SORS identifies costs by sectors, though only for some types of costs. SORS does not currently have an accounting system that allows allocating resources to individual statistical products or processes.

**Improvement action 12.1: *Development of a proper cost-accounting system***

SORS will develop a proper cost-accounting system that will enable the estimation of the costs of individual statistical processes and products.

**Timeline:**

Q4/ 2020

**Develop quality management further (recommendations 13-17)**

**13. *Quality management in the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia should comprehensively cover all relevant issues; the planned activities and projects should be publicised by covering them in more detail in the annual programmes, and progress should be covered in the corresponding annual reports. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 4)***

**Current situation:**

Central responsibility for quality issues is assigned to the Working Group for Quality Management. The Working Group, which usually meets weekly, has nine members and consists of experts from statistical units, sampling methodology, dissemination and IT. The Working Group is directly responsible to the Board of Directors and the Director of SORS. Activities of the Working Group include user and staff satisfaction surveys, staff training on quality issues, setting standards for documents, etc. It produces an annual plan and annual reports which go to the Board of Directors. All documentation of the Working Group is held on the SORS intranet. In SORS, procedures to monitor the quality of the statistical products are the responsibility of the relevant production unit.

**Improvement action 13.1 *Establishment of a new unit that will comprehensively cover all relevant issues related to quality management***

SORS will appoint more resources to quality management activities in the new organisational structure. Unit responsible for quality management will comprehensively cover all relevant issues.

**Timeline:** Q4/2018

**Improvement action 13.2: *Publicising quality management activities in the annual plans***

The planned activities and projects concerning quality management will be publicised by covering them in more detail in the annual plans. There are already some information about quality management activities in the current annual plan, but this information will be expanded in the future annual plans.

**Timeline:**

Q4/2019

**Improvement action 13.3: *Publicising the progress regarding quality management activities in annual reports***

The progress regarding quality management activities and projects will be covered in the corresponding annual reports as soon as this kind of comprehensive reports is prepared and published by SORS.

**Timeline:**

Q4/2019

**14. *The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia should produce and publish reports on the five-year programmes and on the annual plans. (European statistics Code of Practice, Indicator 1.5)***

**Current situation:**

The development of official statistics in Serbia is based on five-year programmes (passed by Parliament) and annual plans (passed by the Government). SORS prepares these programmes and plans in consultation with other producers of official statistics. The current programme covers the period 2016-2020. It provides detailed information on the expected outcomes, and also incorporates the strategy for official statistics for the period. The annual plan for 2018 consists of a very detailed 90-page table listing the surveys or other activities and the producer responsible. These documents, the programme (with the incorporated strategy) and the plan, contain useful and relevant information for users and other stakeholders. Until now SORS prepared only short version of annual reports as required by the Government of the Republic of Serbia.

**Improvement action 14.1: *Producing and publishing reports on the annual plans***

SORS will start with producing and publishing comprehensive reports on the annual plans.

**Timeline:**

Q4/2019

**Improvement action 14.2: *Producing and publishing reports on the five-year programmes***

SORS will start with producing and publishing comprehensive reports on the five-year programmes.

**Timeline:**

Q3/2021 (The current five-year program covers the period 2016-2020, so the first report of this kind will be published during 2021)

**15. The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia should establish user advisory groups for key statistical areas. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 11.1)****Current situation:**

Discussions with users take place at the Statistical Council. The two-yearly user satisfaction survey provides useful feedback from a wide range of users. There are many informal contacts with users. SORS has set up many working groups with Ministries, the National Bank of Serbia, the Tax administration, etc, to discuss various statistical matters.

**Improvement action 15.1: Preparation of the guidelines for establishing user advisory groups**

SORS will prepare a guidelines for establishing user advisory groups

**Timeline:**

Q3/2018

**Improvement action 15.2: Investigating possibilities for setting up user advisory groups**

SORS will investigate possibilities for setting up a realistic number of standing user groups, according to specific statistical areas.

**Timeline:**

Q4 /2018

**Improvement action 15.3: Establishment of user advisory groups**

SORS will establish user advisory groups for key statistical areas.

**Timeline:**

Q4/ 2019

**16. *The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia should introduce plans for self-assessment and auditing of statistical processes and products. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 4.)***

**Current situation:**

SORS performs some quality reviewing, but it's not done in a systematic way. SORS have plans to introduce self-assessments, though these have not yet been put into effect due to pressure on resources. The position of Internal Auditor was added to the organisational chart of SORS in 2016, but this position has not yet been filled.

**Improvement action 16.1: *Introducing plans for self-assessment and auditing of statistical processes and products***

SORS is planning to introduce plans for self-assessment and auditing of statistical processes and products. The plan is to put this as one of the activities within the project IPA 2017-Quality Management that will start in 2019 and last until August 2021.

**Timeline:**

Q4/2021

**17. *The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia should implement its plan for ensuring a non-excessive burden on respondents. Reduction targets should be set, performance indicators should be analysed by senior management, and progress reports should be published. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 9)***

**Current situation:**

SORS adopted Action plan for non-excessive burden on respondents. The aims are to devise a procedure for reducing the burden on reporting units, to strengthen cooperation with data providers, to measure the estimated burden, and to analyse the content of statistical surveys with a view to reducing the burden by simplifying the questionnaires.

**Improvement action 17.1: *Implementation of an action plan for ensuring a non-excessive burden on respondents***

According to the action plan the following actions are foreseen: preparing Procedure for reducing burden on reporting units, Measuring burden on reporting units and analysis and control of the content of statistical surveys with a view to reducing the burden by simplifying the questionnaires.

**Timeline:**

Q2/2019

**Improvement action 17.2: *Reduction target will be set***

SORS will set activities with direct or indirect impact on managing the burden on reporting units, such as use of administrative data, use of electronic questionnaires, coordinated sampling and optimization of sample design as well as the questionnaires, etc.

**Timeline:**

Q3/2019

**Improvement action 17.3: *Performance indicators on reducing the burden will be produced and analysed by senior management***

According to the action plan it is foreseen to produce performance indicators for measuring the burden on reporting units which will be analysed by senior management. SORS will establish a system for measuring the burden in a standardized way.

**Timeline:**

Q4/2019

**Improvement action 17.4: *Publishing progress report on implementation of the action plan for ensuring a non-excessive burden on respondents***

SORS will produce and publish progress report on implementation of the action plan for ensuring a non-excessive burden on respondents

**Timeline:**

Q4/2019

**Improve accessibility (recommendations 18-20)**

**18. *The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia should enhance the accessibility of its statistical releases by providing appropriate headlines and improved commentary on the information contained in the figures, reinforced with appropriate graphics. To achieve this, the Office should provide further appropriate training to staff who write releases. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 15)***

**Current situation:**

The results of statistical surveys are published in “Statistical Release” and in “Press Release” for key statistical indicators. The text in releases is usually identical, with just the numbers changing. SORS does not have a practice of putting headlines to statistical releases. A larger part of “Statistical Release” consists of tables only.

SORS has adopted two internal documents regulating the production of releases: “The procedure for creating and publishing press releases” and “Guidelines for writing press releases”.

**Improvement action 18.1: *Improving the accessibility of statistical releases by providing appropriate headlines and improved commentary on the information contained in the figures, reinforced with appropriate graphics***

SORS is planning to include more extensive commentaries with appropriate graphics and corresponding headline in statistical releases, thus making them more understandable to general public.

SORS is preparing a new application for making a statistical release. The application contains the headline fields, the main comment, and the ability to post comments above and below the table and chart. Stakeholders will have a possibility to download any table in Excel format.

**Timeline:**

Q1/ 2019

**Improvement action 18.2: *Organization of trainings to staff who write releases***

SORS will introduce trainings to staff involved in writing releases.

**Timeline:**

Q4/2018

**19. *The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, and, where relevant, other producers of official statistics, should publish standard user-oriented methodology and quality reports for all European statistics. (European statistics Code of Practice, Indicators 15.6 and 15.7)***

**Current situation:**

SORS currently produces quality reports for statistical surveys when required by Eurostat. These reports are submitted to Eurostat but not published on SORS website. RZSMETA, the reference metadata system developed by SORS and which complies with Eurostat's metadata standard, is now being deployed to produce standard reports on methods and quality.

Accompanying documentation related to quality and metadata reporting has been prepared: "Procedure for the production, publishing and updating of reference metadata and quality reports", "Manual for using application for production of reference metadata and quality reports", and "Handbook for Creating Metadata and Quality Reports" (based on ESS standards and guidelines for quality reporting).

**Improvement action 19.1: *Publishing standard user-oriented methodology and quality reports for European statistics***

SORS has already started with the production of standard user-oriented quality reports and their dissemination to users. This process will be continued in the future for other disseminated statistics, European and national.

**Timeline:**

Q4/2020

**Improvement action 19.2: *Providing a support to other producers of official statistics for publishing standard user-oriented methodology and quality reports for European statistics***

SORS will enable usage of the RZSMETA system to other producers of official statistics, and provide them relevant trainings in order to support them in production and dissemination of standard user-oriented methodology and quality reports.

**Timeline:**

Q4/2020

**20. *The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia should publish a revision calendar in order to notify users of planned significant revisions to its statistical results. (European statistics Code of Practice, Indicators 6.6 and 8.6)***

**Current situation:**

SORS adopted a general revision policy at the beginning of 2017. The policy sets the rules on how major revisions or changes in methodology are communicated to users. In some cases, revision policies have already been incorporated in the methodological documentation of specific statistical products and are available on the SORS website. SORS does not prepare or publish a revision calendar, though major revisions are generally announced in advance on the SORS website. In some cases, when SORS publishes the revised data, a press conference is organised.

**Improvement action 20.1: *Extending release calendar to include revision data***

SORS will change existing procedures for establishment and update of calendar of publications and press releases and include revision in the release calendar. SORS will add information about the status of the data in the release calendar.

**Timeline:**

Q3 /2018

**Define the NSS and strengthen coordination (recommendations 21-26)**

**21. *The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia should define the precise list of producers of official statistics and should decide on what statistics should be designated as official statistics. (Coordination)***

**Current situation:**

Article 4 of the Official Statistics Act states: "The system of official statistics of the Republic of Serbia includes, as authorised producers of official statistics, the following institutions:



1. Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia
2. National Bank of Serbia
3. City administration of Belgrade, for the territory of the City of Belgrade
4. Other authorised producers of official statistics, listed in the five-year statistical program.”

Reading of the five-year programme for 2016-2020 and the annual plan for 2017 indicates that there are, in total, 31 organisations that are termed as producers of official statistics. It is not quite clear who are the producers of official statistics, and it is not quite clear what statistics should be regarded as official.

**Improvement action 21.1: *Define the precise list of producers of official statistics***

SORS will, in the process of drafting the five-year programme for 2021-2025, prepare precise list of producers of official statistics based on clear criteria in line with international statistical principles and practice.

**Timeline:**

Q4/ 2019

**Improvement action 21.2: *Define the list of all official statistical products by producers of official statistics***

SORS will provide, in cooperation with all producers of official statistics, list of all official statistics produced by ONAs.

**Timeline:**

Q4/ 2020

**22. *The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia should develop a portal to official statistics by having links to the statistics of other producers, and the release calendar should be extended to cover all of Serbia’s official statistics. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 6 and 15, Coordination)***

**Current situation:**

There is no portal to official statistics with links to the statistics of other producers. SORS does not produce guidelines on dissemination for other producers, and there is no common dissemination policy. Currently, the only producer to publish a release calendar, apart from SORS, is the National Bank of Serbia.

**Improvement action 22.1: *Development of portal to official statistics***

SORS will develop the portal to official statistics with links to the all other producers of official statistics.

**Timeline:**

Q1/2020

**Improvement action 22.2: *Extending release calendar in order to cover all of Serbia's official statistics***

SORS will, in cooperation with all producers of official statistics, extend Release calendar in order to cover official statistics produced by ONAs.

**Timeline:**

Q4/ 2020

**23. *The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia should establish a small organisational unit dedicated to supporting and promoting statistical coordination among all producers of official statistics. This unit should also focus on issues relating to quality and compliance with the European statistics Code of Practice. (Coordination)***

**Current situation:**

According to Article 7 of the Official Statistics Act, SORS is the “coordinator of the system of official statistics of the Republic of Serbia”. Article 29 states that “Other authorised producers of official statistics shall be obliged to cooperate with the Office on the methodology of statistical surveys that are envisaged by annual implementation plans, and when required, they consult the Office on the methodology and databases that they determine”. Article 8 goes into the coordination role of the Office in some detail: “As the organiser and coordinator of official statistics, the Office prepares five-year statistical program and annual implementation plans; creates methodology for the surveys and sets the standards for the overall official statistics”; SORS “takes decisions on proclaiming official results”; it “sets implementation standards for all authorised producers of official statistics”; it “cooperates with other authorised producers of statistics regarding statistical surveys they conduct and approves sampling methodologies”; and it “creates and maintains databases resulting from official statistics”. There is good coordination in preparing the five-year programme and the annual plans, and in formalising standards for classifications. Some communication takes place through the meetings of the Statistical Council, and there are some formal working groups involving some producers dealing with specific topics.

In January 2018, SORS established informal group dedicated to supporting and promoting statistical coordination among all producers of official statistics.

**Improvement action 23.1: *Create a formal organisational unit within SORS, dedicated to supporting and promoting statistical coordination among all producers of official statistics***

With the next change of organization, the informal group dedicated to supporting and promoting statistical coordination among all producers of official statistics will be made formal.

**Timeline:**

Q4/ 2018

**Improvement action 23.2: SORS organisational unit for coordination will focus on issues relating to quality and compliance with the European statistics Code of Practice**

SORS will organise training related to European statistics Code of Practice and quality issues for all producers of official statistics.

**Timeline:**

Q4/ 2019

**24. The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia should develop guidelines for all producers of official statistics. These guidelines, covering development, production and dissemination, should be in line with the European statistics Code of Practice, and should be communicated effectively with other producers. The compliance with these guidelines should be monitored by the Statistical Office. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 7, Coordination)**

**Current situation:**

In the 2016-2020 programme, one of the planned activities is to “improve the cooperation with all the users of statistical data and services by implementing new forms of communication and mutual information sharing”. In November 2017, there was a first meeting of producers of official statistics. At this moment SORS does not produce guidelines or standards for other producers to assist them in implementing the CoP.

**Improvement action 24.1: Developing guidelines for all producers of official statistics**

SORS will develop guidelines for all producers of official statistics, covering development, production and dissemination, in line with the European statistics Code of Practice.

**Timeline:**

Q1/ 2020

**Improvement action 24.2: Promoting guidelines for all producers of official statistics**

SORS will promote guidelines for all producers of official statistics through presentations and training and ensure that it is effectively communicated with all producers of official statistics.

**Timeline:**

Q2/ 2020

**Improvement action 24.3: Monitoring the guidelines for all producers of official statistics**

SORS will set up a system for monitoring compliance with national guidelines and start monitoring the compliance of the producers of official statistics with these guidelines.

**Timeline:**

Q4/ 2020

**25. *The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia should ensure that any memorandums of understanding developed with other producers of official statistics should cover, inter alia, the coordination role of the Office. (Coordination)***

**Current situation:**

To improve statistical production and cooperation, SORS has signed memorandums of understanding, protocols and agreements with many producers of official statistics, including the National Bank of Serbia, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of the Interior, the Serbian Environmental Protection Agency, and many others. However, apart from the Cooperation Agreement with the Tax Administration, such agreements make no reference to the coordination role of SORS.

**Improvement action 25.1: *Making reference to the coordination role of SORS in memorandums of understanding with other producers of official statistics and their Annexes***

SORS will ensure that all new memorandums of understanding and all new annexes of existing memorandums developed with other producers of official statistics cover the coordination role of SORS.

**Timeline:**

Q4/ 2018

**26. *The relevant Serbian authorities should amend the provisions in the Official Statistics Law to require the holders and planned holders of administrative data sources to consult with the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia before creating new sources or modifying existing sources. Data holders should be required to take account as far as is reasonably practicable of the views of the Office before decisions are finalised. The Statistical Office should be required to maintain close contacts with the holders of administrative data in order to be aware of the possible creation of new sources or the modification of existing sources. (European statistics Code of Practice, Principle 8)***

**Current situation:**

SORS has built up good relationships with holders of administrative data. Memorandums of understanding are drawn up and agreed between the data owners and SORS. SORS Administrative Sources and Registers Division developed a procedure which aims at the identification and analysis of the statistical potential of all administrative sources for the needs of statistical production. The Official Statistics Law also gives SORS the right to be involved in the creation or modification of registers. Article 9 states that "The Office shall participate in all activities related to the establishment of new or to the change of existing administrative data sources, or in the activities relative to the sources based on constant monitoring and observation and that are also relevant for official statistics. However, the register situation in Serbia is changing fairly rapidly. It is possible that a new source might reach the stage of being too late for the statistical view to be considered, It is also possible that an existing source might be altered without the view of SORS being taken into account.

**Improvement action 26.1: *SORS will submit for adoption by the Serbian Government the draft Law on Amendments to the Official Statistics Law with provision that requires the holders and planned holders of administrative data sources to consult with SORS before creating new sources or modifying existing sources.***

SORS prepared draft Law on Amendments to the Official Statistics Law with provision that require that the holders and planned holders of administrative data sources have to consult with the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia before creating new sources or modifying existing sources. SORS will send this draft Law to the Serbian Government in order to be adopted.

**Timeline:**

Q4/2018

**Improvement action 26.2: *Signing memorandums of understanding with new and remaining major holders of administrative data and strengthen close contacts with the holders with whom cooperation has already been established.***

SORS will sign the memorandums of understanding with major holders of administrative data with whom memorandums have not been signed and strengthen the cooperation with existing partners by organizing meetings, participating in joint conferences and presentations and by sharing good practices.

**Timeline:**

Q4/ 2020