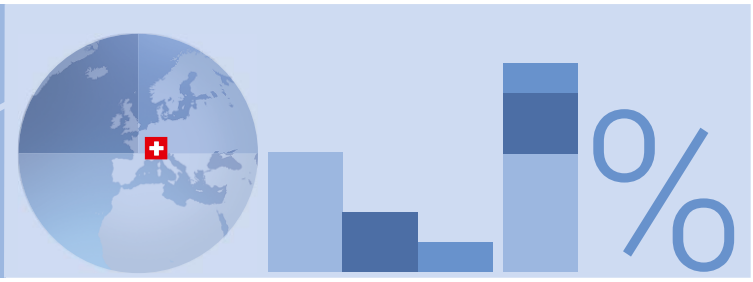
Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Confederation

Federal Department of Home Affairs FDHA
Federal Statistical Office FSO

Beyond the Horizon



Issue 02 – June 2018

International Newsletter from the Swiss Federal Statistical Office

Bilateral cooperation with the EU in the field of statistics

As a non EU Member, Switzerland has been active in the European statistical system for years. Switzerland and the European Union (EU) maintain close relations with one another based on several agreements. The Bilateral Agreements I have been in force since 2002, governing amongst other things the free movement of persons between Switzerland and the EU.

This agreement also covers other areas such as public procurement markets, agriculture, overland transport and research. In 2004 a second package of agreements was signed - the Bilateral Agreements II - to extend cooperation between Switzerland and the EU to other areas. Cooperation with regard to Schengen/Dublin is probably the best known. But for us there is another more important area: Statistics are included in this package. The bilateral agreement in the field of statistics has been in force since 2007. In other words we can now look back on over 10 years of institutional cooperation with the EU in the area of statistics.

This second edition of our international newsletter, "Beyond the Horizon", focuses on this topic in two articles. But there have been other important events in recent months to report on too. The newsletter contains articles from FSO employees and guest authors on such topics as the bilateral meeting in Italy, the launch of the statistics project in Albania, discussions on how to achieve a more efficient UN statistical system, the annual PARIS21 meeting in Bern in April, the SDG experts' meeting in Geneva and an account of a European Statistical Training Programme course. I would like to take this opportunity to thank our guest authors: Christoph Graf, Swiss Ambassador to Albania, Shaida Badiee, Managing Director of Open Data Watch and Andrea Zbinden from the Directorate for European Affairs (DEA) of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA). I hope you enjoy our newsletter.

Georges – Simon Ulrich
Director General, FSO

Content of the Newsletter

Page 1: Bilateral cooperation with the EU in the area of statistics
Page 2: Why bilateral agreements?
Page 4: 10 years of cooperation and revision of Annex A
Page 6: First half year 2018: International highlights
Page 8: A wind of reform in Albania – the importance of reliable data
Page 10: What is needed for a more efficient UN statistical system?
Page 11: Changing Landscape, Fresh Perspective, and New Plans
Page 13: A national statistical office moves with the times
Page 14: UNECE Expert Meeting on Statistics for Sustainable Development Goals (SGDs)
Page 15: ESTP Course on Small Area Estimation

Relations between Switzerland and the EU

“Why bilateral agreements?”

Switzerland maintains a close relationship with the European Union (EU) on an economic, political and cultural level that is regulated through bilateral agreements. This approach allows for customised contractual solutions for a wide range of economic and political issues. The agreements create mutual market access to a large extent and form the basis of a close cooperation in important political areas.



Switzerland is located in the centre of Europe but is not an EU Member State. However, this does not mean that Switzerland is unable to pursue an active cooperation with the EU. On the contrary, Switzerland is closely intertwined with the EU. Due to its geographical and cultural proximity and in particular its political and economic power, the EU and its 28 member states are by far Switzerland’s most important partners. Switzerland's economic relations with the EU are especially important. Did you know that Switzerland and the EU exchange goods worth more than one billion Euro every workday? On a daily basis, 320 000 cross-border commuters come to work in Switzerland and around 1.4 million EU citizens live in Switzerland out of a total population of around 8.5 million. A targeted, interest-driven policy towards the EU is therefore of crucial importance to Switzerland’s prosperity. But Switzerland is also a key partner for Europe. As regards the trade of goods, Switzerland is the EU’s third most important partner. Furthermore, almost 465 000 Swiss nationals live and work in the EU.

Switzerland pursues EU matters on a bilateral basis. In selected sectors of mutual interest, both partners negotiate contractual regulations and conclude sectoral agreements. These firstly improve mutual market access for companies or regulate related aspects concerning product safety, protection of employees and health. Secondly, they enable close cooperation in the areas of research, security, asylum, environment, education, culture and statistics.

Switzerland’s relations with the EU have continuously developed and deepened over the decades. The bilateral agreement

Chronology of Switzerland’s European policy

- 1972 Signing of the Switzerland–EU Free Trade Agreement
- 1989 Signing of the Insurance Agreement
- 1990 Signing of the Agreement on Customs Facilitation and Security
- 1992 Rejection of EEA membership by the Swiss electorate
- 1999 Signing of Bilaterals I (free movement of persons, technical barriers to trade, public procurement, agriculture, overland transport, civil aviation, research)
- 2004 Signing of Bilaterals II (Schengen/Dublin, taxation of savings income, combating fraud, processed agricultural products, environment, statistics, MEDIA programme, pensions)
- 2004 Signing of the agreement with Europol
- 2005 Extension of the free movement of persons to the EU10
- 2006 Adoption by the Swiss electorate of the Federal Act on Cooperation with the Countries of Eastern Europe
- 2008 Signing of the agreement with Eurojust
- 2009 Continuation of the free movement of persons and extension to Romania and Bulgaria
- 2010 Signing of the Agreement on Education, Training and Youth
- 2012 Signing of the Agreement on the European Defence Agency
- 2013 Signing of the Satellite Navigation Cooperation Agreement and the Agreement on Competition
- 2013 Adoption by the Federal Council of a mandate to negotiate an agreement on institutional matters
- 2014 Adoption of the “Stop Mass Immigration” federal popular initiative
- 2014 Signing of the EASO participation agreement (European Asylum Support Office)
- 2015 Signing of the Agreement on the Automatic Exchange of Information in Tax Matters
- 2016 Signing of Protocol III extending the free movement of persons to Croatia
- 2016 Decision by Parliament on the implementation of Art. 121a Cst.
- 2017 Full association of Switzerland in “Horizon 2020”
- 2017 Signing of the agreement between Switzerland and the EU on the linking of their emissions trading schemes
- 2017 Update to the agreement on mutual recognition in relation to conformity assessment (MRA)

was gradually extended: with the Bilaterals I (1999), relations between both trading partners were placed on a broader footing. The Bilaterals II (2004) extended the cooperation to important political areas. Altogether around 20 main agreements plus a large number of additional agreements have been concluded in various stages. The Swiss people confirmed and supported this bilateral approach in various referendums. Thanks to this pragmatic approach, tailored solutions have been found in a number of areas

The consolidation and further development of the bilateral approach with the EU is of key importance to Switzerland. This further development does, however, require the clarification of unresolved institutional matters related to market access (legal development, interpretation, monitoring of the application of agreements and dispute settlement). In its assessment of Swiss-EU relations from March 2018, the Federal Council confirmed its intention to achieve quick progress in ongoing negotiations relating to institutional matters. In parallel to this, all other ongoing negotiations are continued. In particular, the agreement on participation in the electricity market is expected to be quickly concluded

To ensure that future challenges in European policy can be successfully mastered, solutions are called for that must be both feasible from a foreign policy perspective and capable of achieving majority support in the domestic political process and, in addition, must secure the mid- and long-term preservation of our country's interests.

Andrea Zbinden
Research associate, Sectoral policies section
Directorate for European Affairs DEA



Link

Switzerland's European policy:
https://www.eda.admin.ch/dea/en/home.html

Bilateral agreement in the area of statistics with the European Union

10 years of cooperation and revision of Annex A

The bilateral agreement in the area of statistics with the EU was signed on 26 October 2004 and came into force on 1 January 2007. Its aim is to harmonise certain statistics between Switzerland and the EU in fields of common interest. For this purpose, Switzerland strives to develop, produce and disseminate a series of statistics according to EU regulations. In turn, the EU strives to process and disseminate European compatible statistics from Switzerland in the same way as those from EU member states and EFTA/EEA states (Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway). The agreement also allows Switzerland to participate in bodies of the European statistical system (committees, working groups, task forces) as well as in various measures of the European statistical programme (projects, courses, exchanges).



FSO in Neuchâtel

After just over 10 years of statistical cooperation with the EU under the agreement, Switzerland's assessment of this cooperation is a positive one. Many statistics mentioned in annex A of the agreement have benefited over the past 10 years from harmonisation efforts between Switzerland and the EU and impetus at European level. These statistics provide more information, more quickly and with more details while respecting the reinforced quality requirements and enabling comparisons to be made with Switzerland's European partners. These developments benefit the users of statistics in Switzerland and in the EU whether in the political or economic fields or in society in general.

The participation of Swiss experts in the committees, working groups and task forces of the European statistical system has developed over the years and allows Switzerland to assert its views on a number of issues in the EU's decision shaping phase. Over the years, Swiss experts have participated on average in 80 meetings of the European statistical system on an annual basis. They have thus been able to set out and defend the interests of Switzerland regarding the system's strategic priorities and the EU's standards that apply to specific European statistics. Switzerland's participation in the European statistical programme has also intensified over the past years. It allows for a regular exchange of experience and knowledge between Swiss experts and those of the EU and EFTA/EEA states, especially concerning the modernisation of the production and dissemination of European statistics (Vision 2020 programme). Swiss experts also regularly benefit from vocational training courses offered by the programme.

The dissemination by Eurostat of European compatible statistics from Switzerland has improved over the years to the point that it is today virtually beyond reproach. The statistical visibility of Switzerland in Europe has thus been reinforced. However, Switzerland does not appear in all of Eurostat's publications. The statistical cooperation between Switzerland and the EU is limited to European statistics of common interest. For European statistics covered by the agreement, Switzerland also benefits from adaptations and derogations which dispense it from producing and sending certain statistical results to Eurostat. These measures enable Switzerland to cooperate with the European statistical system while keeping the response burden for companies and households to an acceptable level.

In terms of the future, Switzerland and the EU wish to develop the agreement by integrating changes in EU statistical legislation as well as additional European statistics of common interest. Discussions on this subject are currently being held between Switzerland and the EU. They notably aim to integrate into Annex A of the agreement the European system of national and regional accounts (ESA 2010) and four additional European statistics: (i) the

European System of Integrated Social Protection Statistics (ESSPROS), (ii) European population and dwellings censuses, (iii) the European demographic statistics and (iv) the European environmental-economic accounts.

When these discussions have been concluded, Annex A of the agreement will be modified through a decision of the European Union/Switzerland Statistical Committee, approved beforehand by the Federal Council. The revision of Annex A will mark a new, important phase in the statistical cooperation between Switzerland and the EU.

Michel A. Di Pietro
European Affairs
Federal Statistical Office FSO

Main stages

- 26 October 2004: signing of the agreement
- 17 December 2004: approval of the agreement by the Federal Assembly
- 1 January 2007: entry into force of the agreement
- 21 November 2008: 1st revision of Annex A
- 1 October 2010: 2nd revision of Annex A
- 12 June 2013: 3rd revision of Annex A

Link

Bilateral agreement in the area of statistics with the EU:
https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/en/home/fso/international-statistics/european-statistical-system/bilateral-agreement.html



FSO international activities in 2018

First half year 2018: International highlights

In addition to standard activities and the main meetings with international organisations, the start of the year also saw quite a few other important events and visits. These are summarised below with links offering further information.

Truth in numbers' conference



The conference 'Truth in numbers: The role of data in a world of fact, fiction and everything in between' took place on 4 April 2018 in Bern, Switzerland. It was organised by the FSO in cooperation with PARIS21 and the Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). The latest publication from Prof. V. Hendricks 'Postfactual – the new reality in the era of bullshit, fake news and conspiracy theories' initiated the debate and set the tone for the event. Presentations from renowned speakers and enthusiastic discussions on the role of official statistics in this context sparked the interest of the some 200 participants from all around the world. The aim of the conference was to show how official statistics and data play an important role in making factual and reliable information available to society. In a world of fragmented information, this also involved encouraging the public to critically evaluate circulating information from all sides, while giving them the tools they need to achieve their ends. (To find out more, please see Page 11)

Link

Conference: http://www.paris21.org/news-center/events/conference-truth-numbers-role-data-world-fact-fiction-and-everything-between

SALSTAT conference in Albania

To publicly mark the launch of the technical cooperation project 'SALSTAT Strong Albanian Local Statistics', the FSO organised a conference on 15 May 2018 in Tirana in cooperation with its Albanian partners. This involved informing the public, media and authorities at the start of the project implementation phase. The importance of this project was highlighted in a speech by Arben Ahmetaj, Minister of Finance and Economy, and by the presence of many other important guests including Vangjush Dako, the Mayor of Durres, Voltana Ademi, the Mayor of Shkodra, Christoph Graf, Swiss Ambassador in Albania, Delina Ibrahimaj, Director General of INSTAT Albania and Georges-Simon Ulrich, Director General of the FSO. (To find out more, please see Page 8)

Link

Conference: https://tinyurl.com/y75rqu9r
Video: http://www.instat.gov.al/al/rreth-nesh/aktivitetet/promovimi-i-aktiviteteve-statistikore/statistika-të-forta-lokale-shqiptare/

Visit by Martine Durand, Chief Statistician of the OECD



From left to right: A. Ayush (NSO Mongolia), M. Durand (OECD), G.-S. Ulrich (FSO)

On 3 April 2018, Martine Durand, Chief Statistician and Director of Statistics and Data Directorate, granted us the honour and pleasure of visiting us in Neuchâtel. First of all, she personally met the members of the Extended Board of Management, then addressed the executive managers as a whole. Her presentation emphasised the OECD's current statistical activities and priorities. Analysing data and providing relevant information on complex and

transversal issues remains the key purpose of the management of statistics and data. Ms Durand also highlighted the areas in which Switzerland and the FSO could strengthen their cooperation with the OECD.

Visit by Ariunzaya Ayush, Chairperson of the National Statistics Office of Mongolia



From left to right B. Rothen (FSO), L. Lugano (FSO), A. Ayush (NSO Mongolia), G.-S. Ulrich (FSO), R. Escher (FSO)

An unusual flag waved from the FSO mast on 3rd April. We were in fact visited by Ariunzaya Ayush, Chairperson of the National Statistics Office of Mongolia. After a one-to-one discussion with the Director General of the FSO, Ms Ayush had the opportunity to exchange information with our publication and dissemination specialists. Our excellent relationship with Mongolia has thus been reinforced and will also continue in the future.

Rolf Escher
Head of International Affairs, FSO

A look at the realities and challenges of a country in translation

A wind of reform in Albania - the importance of reliable data

Albania, one of the poorest countries in Europe, is getting closer to the European Union with remarkable reforms. To successfully put reforms into action, reliable databases are an important prerequisite. The Albanian statistics office INSTAT is taking a giant leap out of the Stone Age and into the modern era. Switzerland is there to lend a hand.

Reliable and up-to-date data are in short supply in Albania. Mayors don't know, for example, how many inhabitants live in their municipality, as no population registers have been kept since the end of the communist regime in 1990. Nor do municipalities know how many employees work in the businesses located there. This information is indispensable for the planning of public transport. Estimates of the number of Romany Gypsies living in Albania, for example, range from 8000 (last population census) to approximately 120 000 (NGO estimates) and are poles apart. The list of inadequate figures is endless.

As far as digitalisation is concerned, Albanians live in two different worlds. On the one hand, parking fees in Tirana can be paid by mobile phone and patients can pick up medication with a health insurance card at some pharmacies using a paper-free electronic prescription. On the other hand, rural health centres are lacking the bare essentials: Patients' records lie unbound in handwritten files and binders; there is no systematic data collection or analysis and no comprehensive health information system either.

In Albania's highly politicised and polarised society, information and data are often used for political purposes. Consequently, the population tends to be suspicious of statistics and figures, as already during the communist period it was not an uncommon practice to embellish statistics. Public debate and political decisions about the structure of necessary reforms are also dominated by rumour and supposition in the place of hard facts and objectivity.

In this (hitherto) not very fact-oriented or data-friendly environment, Albania's national statistics office INSTAT is undergoing astonishingly dynamic and innovative development. With a new legal basis from the start of this year, INSTAT has gained autonomous and independent status. Under the Prime Minister Edi Rama, the current government is also strengthening the independence of INSTAT in practical ways and in recent years has appointed non-partisan individuals to the head of INSTAT. In so doing, they recognise the necessity of approaching political decisions and reform efforts in a more fact-based manner.

Swiss development cooperation has been assisting Albania for some time to make its data and statistics more reliable and easier to access. Between 2011 and 2014, it supported various surveys to record socio-economic development with regards poverty and the healthcare situation in Albania in order to improve planning of new development projects. Several reforms in recent years have been based on data collected with Swiss support. This support has also helped improve access to statistical surveys and their readability and enabled INSTAT to incorporate the required standards for EU accession countries into their population census statistics.



A new cooperation project between INSTAT and the Federal Statistical Office (FSO) aims to lay the foundations for Albania to enter the modern era of statistics. Albania's population census, currently conducted every ten years through a survey, is a relatively complex and expensive system. The project aims to replace it by 2030 with a population register that will provide figures that are continuously updated by the municipalities. This transition took place in Switzerland in 2008 with the harmonisation of communal registers and enabled the first national, register-based census to be carried out in 2010. To do this, the municipalities must be enabled, together with INSTAT, to run a reliable and manageable municipal statistics system. This will also help them to provide customer-friendly services adapted to the needs of the population.

These milestones in Albania's "Data and Statistics History" were fittingly celebrated on 15 May 2018. At a national conference entitled "The importance of municipal statistics" held in Tirana, the Minister of Finance, Arben Ahmetaj, together with FSO Director-General, Georges-Simon Ulrich, emphasised the importance of reliable data for the pending reforms, to ensure that they will be implemented efficiently and in the interests of Albania's citizens.

Links

https://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/albania/en/home/representations/embassy-tirana.html
https://www.facebook.com/SwissEmbassyTirana/
http://www.instat.gov.al/en/about-us/cooperations/support-for-strong-albanian-local-statistics-salstat/



Christoph Graf
Swiss Ambassador to Albania

49th session of the United Nation's Statistical Commission

What is needed for a more efficient UN statistical system?

From 6-9 March 2018 the United Nation's Statistical commission held its 49th session at the United Nation's Headquarters in New York. In addition to approving a series of international standards, delegates spoke about what can be done to achieve a more efficient UN statistical system as well as greater visibility of statistics.

Since last year, Switzerland has been a member of the commission and the FSO Director-General, Georges-Simon Ulrich member of its Bureau. Switzerland is also member of the High-Level Group on Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building (HLG-PCCB). For this reason it has already been involved in a number of strategic discussions. Two topics in particular merit our attention here.

Funding of official statistics

With the adoption of the 2030 agenda for sustainable development, it comes as no surprise that demand for information, data and statistics has increased sharply, at national and worldwide level. It's not that this demand is completely new - it has just become much more visible: the evidence was there to see during a visit to the High-Level Political Forum for Sustainable Development (HLPF). Many side events and official statements refer to statistics that are already available, but mostly to data that are not yet available although urgently needed. The supposed availability of new data sources (such as Big Data) arouse hope that these data gaps can be filled with little investment.

It is true that some of these gaps in data can be filled by new data sources. Unfortunately, up until now it has been possible in only a few cases to replace the necessary basic data (such as birth rates) with new methods and new data sources. Often a census and traditional household surveys prove indispensable.

One thing is certain - without major investment in national statistical systems, the necessary basic data will not be available in the coming years. The Cape Town Global Action Plan, presented at the first UN World Data Forum, provides a framework and indicates the structures that will need investment. Together with the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21), the World Bank and other partners, the HLG-PCCB will continue to examine the question of how to build a sustainable funding system for official statistics and will present the results of this cooperation at the second UN World Data Forum in Dubai in October this year.

A more efficient UN statistical system

The second strategical question discussed at the UN Statistical Commission's session was the efficiency of the UN's statistical system. The UN is made up of many programmes and institutions, which to a certain degree work independently from one another. The area of statistics already has a variety of well-functioning coordination mechanisms. As mentioned above, the world of official statistics has undergone great change in recent years. The same holds true for the demands made on the UN statistical system. No-one would deny that in order to meet these demands, careful consideration will be needed to organise the system more efficiently.

At this year's session of the statistical commission, the question arose as to whether a UN Chief Statistician could take on the required coordination and management role. Another important task of a UN Chief Statistician would be to make official statistics visible at the highest level of the UN system.

Today there are already an array of ideas on how to change the UN statistical system: one suggestion is the appointment of a Chief Data Officer who would deal with the subject of new data sources. This person would work in parallel to the official statistical system. There is reason to doubt that the installation of a parallel system (traditional data sources vs. new data sources) would result in a more efficient UN statistical system.

In the coming months, the HLG-PCCB will address the question of which path will lead to a more efficient UN statistical system. The HLG-PCCB will also present its initial findings at the second UN World Data Forum in Dubai and submit them to the UN Statistical Commission in March 2019.

Benjamin Rothen
Deputy Head of the FSO's International Service

Link

HLG-PCCB report to the UN Statistical Commission (Item 3a):
https://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/49th-session/documents/

Three Highlights from the 2018 PARIS21 Annual Meetings

Changing Landscape, Fresh Perspective, and New Plans

PARIS21, in collaboration with the Swiss Federal Statistical Office and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, held their 2018 annual meetings in Bern, Switzerland on 4-5 April. Ahead of the full-day board meeting, a special public conference brought together new and familiar faces to discuss "Truth in Numbers".

In the foothills of the Alps in Bern, Switzerland, statisticians, academics, journalists and others gathered for a public conference to discuss how official statistics and data play a critical role in making reliable information available to society and how to encourage the use of facts and evidence by citizens. It was a perfect preface for the PARIS21 board meeting the next day.

Just as the data landscape is evolving to adapt to new technologies, to the misuse or mistrust of data, and to the demands of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), so is PARIS21. The board meeting this year reflected a sentiment of change and adaptation.

This year's meetings differed from past meetings in three ways

One: This was only the second time since 2009 that the Board convened in a city outside of Paris. Away from the City of Light, this year's agenda included an open-to-all, thematic conference "Truth in Numbers" that tackled the thorny challenges facing statistical agencies and data providers. In a world where the information landscape is in flux and in an era when mistrust of data or suspicions of misuse persist, it is evident that the role played by national statistical agencies as trusted sources of unbiased data is more important than ever to both governments and their citizens

Two: The new location also brought with it new faces and perspectives. "Expanded" and "inclusive" are two words that come to mind to describe the board's new governance structure. As a member of the new board, and having been a member of the old



board, I welcome the diversity of members from 21 national statistical agencies, 22 international organisations, and 3 representatives from civil society and non-governmental groups. This diversity brings with it fresh perspectives and viewpoints, which are critical for understanding the needs of the changing data ecosystem.

Three: In addition to new places and faces, the board meeting also offered the opportunity to present PARIS21's new work programs and upcoming initiatives. Robust research into financing for data and a global fund for development data, a new work stream for gender statistics, and, of course, the advance of the Capacity Development 4.0 were the main topics. The Board received a progress report on the CD 4.0 framework from the task team co-chairs and heard about the results of the recent HLG-PCCB survey on CD 4.0. In other exciting news, PARIS21 will now serve as a "standing-issue partner" to the HLG-PCCB.

PARIS21 will continue to adapt to the ebbs and flows of the data revolution, navigating the changing landscape as it must. Organisations like PARIS21 must continue to support official statistics and the agencies that produce them. Support from strong NSOs, like the Swiss Federal Statistical Office, is likewise key to sustaining the success of PARIS21. It is a symbiotic relationship. And while it won't be easy to ensure that facts and figures prevail over feelings and emotions, PARIS21 is in a strong position to support the SDG data agenda and to ensure confidence in the provision of more and better data



Shaida Badiee
Managing Director, Open Data Watch

Links

"Truth in Numbers" Conference Summary
PARIS21 Board Meeting Agenda
2018 PARIS21 Annual Meeting Video

Study visit to ISTAT in Italy

A national statistical office moves with the times

The bilateral meeting between the Italian ISTAT – Istituto Nazionale di Statistica – and the FSO came to life about following proactive discussions between both directors general in various international committees.

The further development of official statistics was a key subject of these discussions. Italy's national statistical office has begun an extensive modernisation process over the last few years. On 10 and 11 January 2018, a delegation from the FSO travelled to the Italian statistical authority in Rome led by the Director General Georges-Simon Ulrich to learn about this process on-site from the President of ISTAT, Giorgio Alleva, and his team. Modernisation has become unavoidable due to external factors such as an increasingly complex society, new statistical methods and technical possibilities. Internal problems such as the ever more expensive data collection and weak governance have also prompted this move. The aim of the meeting was to understand the context in which ISTAT works and how the management team has approached the modernisation of the organization.

The models presented are not always directly comparable with the FSO's situation as the framework conditions for each statistical authority are different; the FSO has already mastered some of the challenges that its Italian counterpart is yet to face. For example, ISTAT's offices today are still spread across Rome (a new building on the outskirts of Rome is planned for the next few years) and population and business surveys will be changed to annual cycles on a register basis as already implemented by the FSO with the 2010 population census system.

However, there was also some food for thought, such as our approach to internal communication and fundamental discussions relating, for example, to the FDP motion "Digitalisation. No duplications in data collection", which has recently occupied the FSO.

In addition to the main topic of the modernisation process, other topics such as "data matching" and "access to microdata" were discussed among experts in smaller groups. In this way, ISTAT provided information on its newly defined processes and organisation to integrate administrative data, which now include three registers (individuals, economic units and geographic information). Staff have access to the registers via defined views. From an organisational perspective, a central unit maintains the registers but the exchange with the specialist statistical units is still to be arranged. The linking process implemented at the FSO does not yet exist at ISTAT: internal ISTAT researchers can only carry out linking together with external researchers for previously approved projects, external linking requests are not handled by ISTAT. Other discussion sessions were held on the topics of international affairs and the application of the GAMSO model.

All in all, talks between both statistical offices showed that digitalisation/e-government is a subject of intense discussion throughout the administration in both Switzerland and Italy. We were able to exchange a lot of information and experience in this area, providing valuable findings for both countries and their respective approaches.

Marco D'Angelo
Head of Health and Social Affairs Division, FSO



View from St. Peter's Basilica onto St. Peter's Square and the city of Rome

A Road Map on Statistics for SDGs, Vol. 1

UNECE Expert Meeting on Statistics for Sustainable Development Goals (SGDs)

The Second Expert Meeting on Statistics for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) took place on 18-19 April at the European headquarters of the UN in Geneva. The meeting was held at the invitation of the UNECE Steering Group on statistics for SDGs.

The goal of this annual meeting is to give a regional overview of the progress made and challenges encountered in implementing measurements for SDGs. Accordingly, the main participants were ECE member states, but there were also some Portuguese-speaking non-ECE member countries and various representatives of UN entities, Eurostat as well as different intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations. Switzerland has been a Co-Chair of the Steering Group since the beginning and is also a member of the Capacity Building sub-group.

The variety of topics discussed at the meeting was broad, ranging from the national reporting of SDG Statistics to capacity building needs and the provision of data for global monitoring. During Session 4, Switzerland shared its experiences in the preparation of the Voluntary National Review (VNR), which will be presented at the next High-Level Political Forum 2018 in New York. The presentation also dealt with the monitoring of sustainable development in Switzerland, ensured through the MONET indicator system.

Throughout the meeting, the CES Road Map on Statistics for Sustainable Development Goals – published in November 2017 – provided the framework for the implementation activities that were discussed. Indeed, the document was repeatedly referred to as a "bible" by various participants, due to the fact that it serves as a useful reference work regarding collaboration, data provision, indicator development, capacity building and communication for SDG statistics.

The Swiss network "stats_agenda2030"
The Federal Statistical Office of Switzerland is currently promoting the development of a Swiss network regarding the global indicators of the Agenda 2030. The aim of the "stats_agenda2030" network is to enable more efficiency in the data flows between the Swiss Federal Administration and the UN agencies responsible for data collection.

As the Federal Statistical Office (FSO) has been entrusted with building the "stats_agenda2030" network (see box), the presence of the FSO at the Expert Meeting in Geneva was of utmost importance to both follow the ongoing discussions on data flows



within the scope of the formal meeting and to also make contact with other country or UN-agency representatives that are in charge of optimising data flows between countries and international organisations. Indeed, attending the different presentations and talks by participants is key, yet the informal exchanges that take place during the lunch break or evening events should not be underestimated. This is where one learns how to approach whom in order to get the information needed and also obtain useful advice on how to navigate this truly complex world of data delivery from countries up to the UN Statistical Division (UNSD). The "bible" is a first step towards bringing order to the current data jungle.

Laura Tejada
Scientific Officer; Environment, Sustainable Development, Territory Section; FSO

Link

Road Map on Statistics for Sustainable Development Goals
http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=47510

Experience of a participant

ESTP Course on Small Area Estimation

From 25 to 27 April 2018, a European Statistical Training Programme (ESTP) course was held in Valencia on the topic of "Small Area Estimation". The FSO was represented by four employees.

The European Statistical Training Programme (ESTP)

The purpose of the European Statistical Training Programme (ESTP) is to provide European statisticians with the opportunity to participate in international training courses, workshops and seminars at postgraduate level.

Courses under the ESTP have a truly international dimension to meet the challenges of comparable statistics at European and international level. Courses focus on harmonised European concepts and legislation, as well as the implementation practices at national level.

The programme is coordinated by Eurostat. Courses are delivered either at Eurostat premises in Luxembourg or in national training sites of EU and European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries.

The Economy division's New Data Sources (NDS) project aims to examine whether small area estimation (SAE) can be implemented advantageously in the Job Statistics (JOBSTAT). Ideally, figures for subgroups/small areas for which no reliable results can be calculated with a direct estimator can be published using this method. In the case of JOBSTAT, it would, for example, be possible to publish results for the cantons instead of only for the major regions. It was therefore perfect timing for this course in Valencia, which took place for the first time in this context.

The course was held at the University of Valencia which is located in the middle of the old town. The course instructor, Domingo Morales, Professor at the Universidad Miguel Hernández de Elche, guided us through three days filled with theory and examples. Our group consisted of 22 participants from 14 different countries. In addition to members of staff from the European statistical offices as expected, an employee of the Bank of Korea from South Korea also took part in this course

The course started at 8:30am and finished at 5pm every day, with an hour-long lunch break. Domingo first of all taught us the theory that he then applied using a simulated dataset. Unfortunately, the allotted time was too short for all the material and in other ESTP courses that I attended in 2017 I was able to participate more actively. Eurostat set a very dense programme for this course which didn't give participants the opportunity to experiment, apply and test things for themselves.

There was, however, sufficient time outside the course to explore Valencia. The city offers a picturesque old town, charming districts, a lovely beach and a number of culinary delights including paella, jamòn, tapas, horchata de Chufa and some fantastic cakes in the "Dulce de Leche" café. However, the evening meal is not eaten until 9pm at the earliest, which takes some getting used to for the Swiss!



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Link

http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/en/web/european-statistical-system/training-programme-estp

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