



EUROPEAN
STATISTICAL
SYSTEM

PEER REVIEW REPORT

ON COMPLIANCE WITH THE EUROPEAN STATISTICS CODE OF
PRACTICE AND FURTHER IMPROVEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE
NATIONAL STATISTICAL SYSTEM

GREECE

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Hellenic Statistical System was established by Law 3832/2010 (Greek Statistical Law) and consists of the Hellenic Statistical Authority and currently twenty-two other agencies of the Hellenic Statistical System, which manage official statistical data and run statistical operations. Ten of these agencies are Other National Authorities, which are responsible for the development, production and dissemination of European statistics.

The Hellenic Statistical Authority's institutional environment is rooted in a very strong legal environment, with the Greek Statistical Law mirroring, where relevant, the respective parts of the Regulation on European statistics (No 223/2009, as amended), including in particular strong provisions to safeguard the independence of the Hellenic Statistical Authority and on the selection procedure of its President. The legal provisions are complemented by a Commitment on Confidence in Statistics, which binds the Greek government to guarantee and defend the professional independence of the Hellenic Statistical System. The Good Practice Advisory Committee, a body similar to the European Statistical Governance Advisory Board, produces an annual report giving recommendations on how to progress with regard to adherence to ES CoP principles 1-6 and how to address possible setbacks.

Official statistics produced by agencies other than the Hellenic Statistical Authority have to undergo a certification procedure by the Hellenic Statistical Authority in order to be labelled as official. The terms and conditions for certification are determined in the Regulation on the Operation and Administration of the Hellenic Statistical Authority. The agencies of the Hellenic Statistical System should submit quality reports on the statistics produced to the Hellenic Statistical Authority at least once a year. Together with these agencies' replies to a dedicated questionnaire and other evidence collected, including from stakeholders, they provide the basis for the Hellenic Statistical Authority's assessment of compliance with the ES CoP. An essential precondition for the start of the certification process is the nomination of a statistical head by the agency concerned.

The Hellenic Statistical Authority has succeeded in securing access to a high number of administrative data, based on memoranda of cooperation. This is a major achievement, reflecting the trust it enjoys from administrative data providers. It is also an important enabler for further improving the quality of official statistics and for the creation of new products.

The Hellenic Statistical System has a well-established programming mechanism covering a three-year cycle. Based on a system-wide common programme setting out the major statistical areas and objectives, each statistical agency compiles its Annual Statistical Work Programme. The Hellenic Statistical Authority compiles its own Annual Statistical Work Programme, which includes the required resources and the legislative, administrative and organisational measures necessary for the smooth and effective operation of the system.

In recent years, the Hellenic Statistical Authority has made substantial progress in the area of communication. It provides a remarkably rich selection of statistical literacy products for various age groups and encompasses multiple entry points, ranging from educational visits to competitions, gamification approaches and videos. Educational brochures on statistics for beginners are available for different age groups. All products and services can be accessed from a dedicated section of its website. Other good communication practices include a dedicated section on the Hellenic Statistical Authority's website with a gallery of infographics, fostering reuse and promoting its publications.

The Hellenic Statistical Authority cooperates actively with Greek universities, offering trainee programmes targeting students at various levels, from pre-master's studies to the joint supervision of master's theses. It aims to establish longer-term and evolving relationships with trainees.

The peer review team confirmed in discussions with external stakeholders and by many examples the strength of the Hellenic Statistical Authority's institutional environment, and in particular the confidence in its professional independence, already repeatedly highlighted by the Good Practice Advisory Committee. Progress made by the Hellenic Statistical System in implementing the ES CoP in recent years is impressive, with the Hellenic Statistical Authority demonstrating a high level of adherence to the ES CoP. Nevertheless, the peer review team identified four compliance-relevant and thirteen improvement-related recommendations, which would further strengthen the Hellenic Statistical Authority and the Hellenic Statistical System. The recommendations are grouped under five major headings as listed below.

RECOMMENDATIONS

I. Enhancing coordination and strengthening the statistical system as a whole

The Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT) has been given a strong legal basis to coordinate the Hellenic Statistical System and to provide advice and guidance to all other national statistical agencies, including the Other National Authorities developing, producing and disseminating European statistics. They are required by law to implement the ES CoP. The Regulation on the Operation and Administration of ELSTAT establishes a detailed framework for coordination and collaboration, comprising i.a. guidelines, instructions and memoranda of cooperation or written agreements. ELSTAT has the competence to certify statistics, which have been produced by the other national statistical agencies, including the Other National Authorities, as 'official'. This is implemented through templates and a questionnaire, notably on quality reporting and compliance with the ES CoP.

However, notwithstanding ELSTAT's efforts to repeatedly reach out to the Other National Authorities and the possibility of building on an existing certification system for the statistical products of the Other National Authorities, in practice progress regarding the certification of the statistics they produce remains slow. Accordingly, coordination of the System by ELSTAT remains fragmented and approaches across the Other National Authorities differ significantly.

To comply with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

1. ELSTAT should strengthen the Hellenic Statistical System by taking the necessary initiatives to ensure that all the Other National Authorities comply with the ES CoP in a sustainable manner. (Compliance-relevant: ES CoP, Indicators 1bis.1 and 1bis.2)

The Greek Statistical Law and the Regulation on the Operation and Administration of the Hellenic Statistical Authority give ELSTAT ample opportunity to provide guidance and training in institutional and statistical matters to the Other National Authorities. However, while such initiatives exist, they remain scarce and underdeveloped. Development of a statistical culture, joint dedicated training courses and opportunities for staff exchanges within the Hellenic Statistical System could help to preserve and develop further skills and reinforce the cohesion of the system. Moreover, the staff regulations of the Greek public administration do not foster exchanges between ministries and independent authorities. The Greek government should therefore take initiatives to remove such impediments.

To improve beyond compliance with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

2. ELSTAT and the Other National Authorities reviewed (the Ministry of Rural Development and Food, the Ministry of Environment and Energy, the National Documentation Centre) should further enhance their cooperation, and the Greek government should enable this, by establishing systematic exchanges and training on their respective statistical production, methods and quality standards,

and support the development of competences and skills in statistics. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 1bis.1 and 7.6)

The peer review team could ascertain that the statistical heads of the Other National Authorities have very different statistical qualifications, which are in some cases inadequate. Appointment criteria put emphasis on general experience and qualifications but are not explicitly geared towards carrying out a statistical function. Some Other National Authorities have statistical heads with high hierarchical standing but limited knowledge and involvement in statistical processes. In practice, such Other National Authorities show weak results in implementing the national quality guidelines and with regard to adherence to the ES CoP.

To comply with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

3. The relevant authorities should strengthen the emphasis on statistical qualifications in the selection process for the statistical heads of the Other National Authorities. (Compliance-relevant: ES CoP, Indicators 1.8 and 1.2)

Two of the Other National Authorities reviewed are lagging behind in their adherence to the ES CoP, especially in terms of serving the user perspective. The Ministry of Environment and Energy provides users with an unbalanced set of statistical information. While energy statistics are more accessible and covered by quality reports based on European standards, environmental statistics are hard to find and are missing the required meta- and quality information for public use. While provision of these statistics focuses on fulfilling the respective European regulatory requirements, broader user needs are not sufficiently served. A regular dissemination frequency is lacking, and it is very difficult for users to find suitable information on the topics covered. The Ministry of Rural Development and Food is also encouraged to show more attention to its possible users. The peer review team noticed that the statistical information produced by the Ministry is very hard to find and hyperlinks are broken. A thorough revision of both these Other National Authorities' dissemination services on the internet would be necessary. The peer review team could also establish that the minimum quality and documentation requirements for European statistics are met by these Other National Authorities, but could not detect a supportive institutional environment, nor a proactive approach to official statistics able to serve future perspectives. A more conscious and systematic approach to official statistics in both ministries would therefore be desirable.

To comply with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

4. The Other National Authorities reviewed (the Ministry of Environment and Energy, the Ministry of Rural Development and Food) should adhere to the ES CoP, particularly with regard to transparency to users, accessibility of statistics, quality requirements and reporting, the release calendar and user consultations. They should draw support from ELSTAT if necessary. (Compliance-relevant: ES CoP, Indicators 15.1, 11.1, 4.3, 13.1 and 15.2)

II. Extending and optimising the use of administrative data sources

ELSTAT's involvement in the design and development of administrative records is provided for by the Greek Statistical Law. However, in practice ELSTAT has repeatedly observed cases in which ministries changed their relevant legislation without consulting ELSTAT. This may render it difficult or even impossible to sustain statistics based on administrative data.

To comply with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

5. The relevant authorities should ensure that appropriate mechanisms are in place, supplementary to the respective legal measure, to guarantee that ELSTAT is consulted well before any developments

or reviews of administrative data sources, so that the needs of official statistics are taken into account. (Compliance-relevant: ES CoP, Indicator 2.2)

A major initiative has been taken by the Greek government to link several administrative registers and make the results available throughout the Greek public administration. This initiative could offer many opportunities for official statistics, provided that access is granted for an increasingly wide range of administrative data and that the linked data are fit for statistical purposes.

To improve beyond compliance with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

6. The relevant authorities should put the interoperability of its administrative data sources into general practice and make them fit for statistical purposes in order to mainstream data linking possibilities across the country and enhance their value for official statistics. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 9.5 and 8.7)

III. Ensuring adequate resources in number and skills

Certain elements of ELSTAT's IT environment are becoming outdated and insufficient to tackle the challenges ahead. ELSTAT intends to modernise its IT environment and make it fit for the future. This is essential to enable ELSTAT to continue its modernisation path and to ingest also innovative data sources.

To improve beyond compliance with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

7. ELSTAT should implement the envisaged modernisation of its IT environment as a priority, as this is essential for innovation, efficiency and modernisation. (Improvement-related: Indicators 10.2 and 3.1)

The peer review team was informed that the workload and a limited offer hamper participation in training and scientific exchanges at national and international level. This poses a risk to ELSTAT's ability to sustain its path towards modernisation, innovation and continuous improvement, given the importance of peer exchanges and knowledge transfer for staff skills and motivation. It also impinges, though to a varying extent, on the Other National Authorities' access to information on recent developments in their area of competence and the cohesion of the Hellenic Statistical System.

To improve beyond compliance with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

8. ELSTAT and the Other National Authorities reviewed (the Ministry of Rural Development and Food, the Ministry of Environment and Energy, the National Documentation Centre) should systematically increase the exposure of their staff to targeted training and scientific exchanges at national and international level. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 7.6 and 7.7)

Notwithstanding the recent breakthrough ELSTAT experienced in terms of its ability to hire new human resources, it is facing serious challenges in the long term with a large part of its staff approaching retirement age. Since progress in this field can be expected to be rather slow, hampered by the comparatively low salary levels in the public administration and the burdensome hiring procedure involving the Supreme Council for Civil Personnel Selection, a long-term strategy should be envisaged.

To improve beyond compliance with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

9. ELSTAT should develop a long-term human resources strategy to guarantee that allocated human resources are available and sufficient in terms of qualification and skills, including a contingency plan for possible setbacks. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 3.1)

In the Commitment on Confidence in Statistics, the Greek government committed “to secure adequate and stable resources necessary to maintain and further improve the quality and coverage of Greek statistics”. The possibility for ELSTAT to implement a human resources strategy is partly dependent on governmental initiative. Many requirements are minutely spelled out in legal documents, such as Presidential Decree No 73 of 4 July 2019, which sets out not only the foreseen number of ELSTAT staff positions (1,076), but also a breakdown by education and branch. Such legal provisions and their rigid interpretation may limit ELSTAT’s ability to adapt quickly to emerging needs. Furthermore, at the time of the peer review about 10% of ELSTAT’s staff positions were under public announcement and the office was expecting rather lengthy recruitment periods. However, ELSTAT’s ability to attract new recruits with an adequate skill set can be considered crucial for its ability to invest in modernisation and take-up of innovative practices, notably with regard to new tools and technologies.

Given the high number of vacant posts and the special expertise required, ELSTAT would benefit from a higher degree of flexibility, spurred by a strategic, far-looking approach, including a competitive salary level and modern working conditions.

To improve beyond compliance with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends that

10. The relevant authorities should take appropriate measures to ensure that the human resources granted to ELSTAT are made available in time and under more flexible conditions to ensure their availability and adequacy in terms of qualifications and skills. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 3.1)

IV. Standardising statistical processes and strengthening quality monitoring

ELSTAT’s organisation, with its 13 Divisions divided into Sections, seems to combine a matrix with a functional approach. Geared towards the process flow in the Generic Statistical Business Process Model, the aim is to improve consistency by bringing together and aligning all processes belonging to a statistical product in one unit. However, such a complex organisation, which still bears the mark of a stovepipe legacy system, can be considered sub-optimal for efficiency and effectiveness.

To improve beyond compliance with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

11. ELSTAT should consider shifting its organisation away from separate production lines towards a more integrated system, emphasising shared standardised programmes, procedures, solutions and tools. This may include a leaner and more transparent organisation. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 10.4)

ELSTAT’s approach to quality assurance has matured, with process and output quality being assessed for key, mainly survey-based statistics and reported to Eurostat according to the Single Integrated Metadata Structure. Parameters of survey processes, mainly on punctuality, are regularly monitored and assessment of survey accuracy benefits from central methodological guidance. In the discussions, it was explained that the quality management system is geared towards identifying quality-related problems but does not allow for higher-level monitoring and intervention during the processes or collecting evidence on a systematic basis for managerial decisions. The peer review team felt that the quality assurance system currently in place allows for a proper overview at operational level. It should however allow for a more systematic involvement of management and be generalised across the whole organisation, covering all statistical processes and outputs.

To improve beyond compliance with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

12. ELSTAT should strengthen its quality monitoring procedures by extending the systematic assessment of process and output quality across all statistical operations and systematically

engaging middle and senior management in addressing the outcomes. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 4.2 and 4.3)

V. Strengthening user orientation

In recent years, ELSTAT has invested in improving its communication channels and has upgraded its website, such as by including attractive infographics. However, user needs are continually increasing and require accelerated modernisation. The peer review team observed that the presence of a user-friendly database on the website of a National Statistical Institute has become standard within the European Statistical System, and the same goes for the availability of open data. ELSTAT is at risk of lagging behind. Technological progress in this field is increasingly fast and requires a long-term strategy and a quick action response.

To improve beyond compliance with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

13. ELSTAT should develop a comprehensive long-term dissemination and communication strategy and a multi-annual action plan for modernising its dissemination channels, in order to meet user needs and keep up with European practice. This could include a user-friendly interactive database and a wide range of open data. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 15.2 and 11.1)

Researchers from academia and private institutes are important users of microdata and often need them in identifiable form. According to Article 8(5) of the Greek Statistical Law, the members of the Hellenic Statistical System are allowed to provide researchers conducting statistical analysis for scientific purposes with access to data allowing the indirect identification of statistical units. In practice, however, ELSTAT is not yet fully equipped with the IT tools and technical methods needed to give wider access to such data. Solutions are limited to European obligations and require researchers to define very precise query parameters in advance, while good practices concerning safe environments with more interactive and flexible access to microdata are available throughout the European Statistical System.

To improve beyond compliance with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

14. ELSTAT should ensure that the microdata available within the Hellenic Statistical System can be accessed, i.a. via secure environments. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 15.4)

While ELSTAT provides Eurostat with very detailed quality reports in accordance with the Single Integrated Metadata Structure, the reports directed to users and published on ELSTAT's website are rather rudimentary. It would be advisable to produce user-friendly digests of the reports to Eurostat for all statistics. In addition, the user-oriented reports of some of the Other National Authorities reviewed are limited to a general description and do not contain quality indicators. Users are consequently not provided with objective information allowing them to judge the quality of the statistical products.

To improve beyond compliance with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

15. ELSTAT and the Other National Authorities reviewed (Ministry of Rural Development and Food, Ministry of Environment and Energy, National Documentation Centre) should enhance their quality reports for users, produced according to the Single Integrated Metadata Structure. These could include a more detailed assessment of product quality. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 15.7)

Due to a larger availability of administrative data and propelled by the Covid-19 crisis, ELSTAT has developed a series of 'experimental' statistics. These were very favourably received by users. There seems to be wide scope for such experiments and some of these could acquire the status and meet the quality requirements of official statistics.

To improve beyond compliance with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

16. ELSTAT should continue to invest in the development and dissemination of 'experimental' statistics to accelerate the delivery of innovative statistical information. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 11.1)

The practical functioning of the Advisory Committee of the Hellenic Statistical System representing users is rather narrow; it consists mainly of providing an advisory opinion to ELSTAT for the preparation of the Hellenic Statistical Programme and ELSTAT's Annual Statistical Work Programme. This committee could also give advice on a more long-term strategy but, to do so, its functioning in practice needs to be revised, e.g., by increasing the frequency of its meetings and/or organising seminars or conferences on strategic topics.

To improve beyond compliance with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

17. The Chair of the Advisory Committee of the Hellenic Statistical System, in consultation with ELSTAT, should review the practical functioning of the Committee. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 11.1)

In the spirit of continuous improvement integral to the European Statistical System (ESS), the NSI will interpret the recommendations, formulated in this report, into improvement actions for implementation within the national statistical system (NSS).

2. INTRODUCTION

It is recognised that quality is one of the European Statistical System's (ESS) comparative advantages in a world experiencing a growing trend of instant information and new challenges, driven by exceptional circumstances or the continuous need for faster but quality-assured data. The European Statistics Code of Practice (ES CoP) is the cornerstone of the ESS common quality framework, and the ESS statistical authorities have committed themselves to adhere to it.

In this context, it is crucial for the ESS to be equipped with a review mechanism, the peer reviews, supporting with credible evidence this self-commitment to adhere to the ES CoP. The objective of this review mechanism is to enhance the integrity, professional independence and accountability of the ESS statistical authorities. The first round of peer reviews was carried out in 2006-2008, followed by a second round in 2013-2015.

In 2017, the ES CoP was reviewed and extended and now encompasses 16 principles. This revised version of the ES CoP triggered a third round of peer reviews, being carried out in the Member States of the European Union and of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), and Eurostat from 2021 to mid-2023. This round of peer reviews aims at improving the quality and trust in European statistics by assessing the compliance of the ESS with the principles of the revised ES CoP. The peer reviews cover the ESS statistical authorities (Eurostat, the National Statistical Institutes (NSIs) and selected Other National Authorities (ONAs)) developing, producing and disseminating European statistics. The peer reviews will be followed by a period of annual monitoring of the implementation of the improvement actions developed by the NSIs to address the recommendations laid down in the peer review reports.

The third round of peer reviews has the following two objectives:

- To review the compliance/alignment of the ESS with the ES CoP, in order to demonstrate to the ESS and to external stakeholders that the ESS is a system based on the principles of the ES CoP;
- To help NSIs, ONAs and Eurostat in their further improvement and development by indicating future-oriented recommendations; at the same time, they should stimulate government authorities to support the implementation of these recommendations.

Each peer review is conducted by a team of four statistical experts (both from inside and outside the ESS). The peer review has four phases: completion of the Self-Assessment Questionnaires (SAQs) by a country; analysis of these SAQs by the peer review team; a country visit by the peer review team; and the preparation of the final report and ensuing recommendations by the peer review team. These recommendations are of two types:

- Compliance-relevant (ensuring compliance/alignment with the ES CoP);
- Improvement-related (less critical/technical supporting improvements).

A combination of an audit-like and a peer review approach is used when assessing the national statistical systems (NSS) in the countries to benefit from the positive aspects of both approaches. The audit-like approach requires the provision of documents as evidence, the ownership of the recommendations by the peer review expert team, and the right for the NSIs to express diverging views on the recommendations and to formulate the corresponding improvement actions. Whereas the peer review approach allows for common agreement within the ESS on the methodology, the objectives, scope and implementation arrangements, the focus on improvements and a peer learning process.

Although all principles of the ES CoP will be reviewed for all countries through the SAQ, the peer review experts are free to customise the country visit to concentrate on those principles where more clarification/explanation is needed. However, certain principles such as those concerning professional

independence and coordination and cooperation, as well as principles including elements of modernisation, will be assessed during the peer review visit for every member of the ESS.

In addition to the common principles to be addressed for every member of the ESS, the peer review team also placed emphasis on aspects relating to Adequacy of Resources, Access to Data and Data Sharing, Output Quality and User Orientation.

In the field of human resources (ES CoP principle 3), ELSTAT faces challenges in the availability, allocation and on-time provision of staff as well as in the rigidity of the hiring procedure for the public administration in Greece. Furthermore, in the area of access to data and data sharing (ES CoP principles 2 and 9), the self-assessment questionnaire seemed to show that the position of and on-time consultation with ELSTAT were challenging. While ELSTAT's involvement in the design and development of administrative records is provided for by law, it has in practice repeatedly faced cases in which ministries changed their relevant legislation without consulting ELSTAT. This may render it difficult or even impossible to sustain statistics based on administrative sources. On the other hand, the establishment of a Ministry of Digital Governance offers new opportunities, provided that access is compliant with the ES CoP and that the linked data are fit for statistical purposes.

The documentation of output quality (ES COP principles 12 and 14) and user orientation (ES CoP principles 11 and 15) were addressed by the peer review team to encourage ELSTAT to provide more publicly available information on quality aspects of their work, since there were indications from the self-assessment questionnaire and the deliberations during the peer review visit that there is room for improvement in these fields.

Also, although the reports should not be used to compare one country to another, much effort has been made to ensure the harmonisation of the reports and the ensuing recommendations across the countries so that all countries are treated equitably.

The peer review of Eurostat was conducted by the European Statistical Governance Advisory Board (ESGAB).

3. BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE NATIONAL STATISTICAL SYSTEM

Legislation

The Hellenic Statistical System (ELSS) in its current form was established by Law 3832/2010 (Greek Statistical Law). Pursuant to this law, the ELSS consists of the Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT) and the other services and organisations that manage official statistical data and run statistical operations (other agencies of the ELSS). Article 10 established ELSTAT as an Independent Administrative Authority and replaced the previous body, the General Secretariat of the National Statistical Service of Greece, which was part of the hierarchical structure of the Ministry of Finance.

Article 11.5 states that ELSTAT defines the agencies of ELSS as those, which have the responsibility or obligation to collect statistical data. This list is published on ELSTAT's website. There are currently twenty-two agencies of the ELSS. Ten of these agencies are Other National Authorities (ONAs), which are responsible for the development, production and dissemination of European statistics.

On the basis of the Greek Statistical Law, ELSTAT issued two Regulations: a) the Regulation on the Operation and Administration of ELSTAT (2012), which determines special issues related to ELSTAT's competencies, the procedures concerning the transmission of primary data by the ELSS agencies to ELSTAT, ELSTAT's coordination and cooperation with the other ELSS agencies and the obligations of the ELSS agencies to comply with ELSTAT's instructions; and b) the Regulation on the Statistical Obligations of the ELSS agencies (2012, 2016 updated version), which defines the criteria for determining an agency as an ELSS agency, the obligations arising from this determination and ELSTAT's role in coordinating the Hellenic Statistical System.

As enshrined in Presidential Decree 73/2019, ELSTAT's mission is the systematic development, production and dissemination of the country's official statistics, as well as the assurance and continuous improvement of the quality of statistics produced by the ELSS.

According to the Greek Statistical Law, all activities within the ELSS concerning the development, production and dissemination of official statistics are governed by the principles defined in Article 2 of the Regulation on European statistics (No 223/2009, as amended) and further developed in the European Statistics Code of Practice (ES CoP). Moreover, it is explicitly foreseen in Article 1.5 that ELSS agencies shall implement the ES CoP when developing, producing and disseminating official statistics.

The organisation of ELSTAT

By the Greek Statistical Law, ELSTAT has a distinct legal personality and enjoys operational independence and administrative and financial autonomy, and is not subject to the control of any governmental body or other administrative authority. Its budgetary operation is subject to the control of the Greek Parliament in accordance with its rules.

ELSTAT is headed by a President and has two General Directorates. The General Directorate of Administration and Organisation consists of five transversal Divisions, while the General Directorate of Statistics consists of six thematic and two regional Divisions. Each Division is divided into Sections. There are also 49 regional Offices, which are located in the respective Regional Units of Greece.

Appointment procedure for the head of the NSI

The selection and appointment procedure of the President of ELSTAT is delineated in great detail in the Greek Statistical Law (Article 13). The President is selected following an international open call on the basis of solely his/her professional and academic expertise and position during his/her career in accordance with statistical principles. He/she is appointed for a five-year term of office.

Candidates are assessed by a five-member committee nominated by the Greek Parliament, the Ministry of Finance, Eurostat, the European Statistical Governance Advisory Body (ESGAB) and the European Statistical System Committee (ESSC). The Committee makes a justified recommendation to the Minister of Finance for the choice of candidate. If the Minister of Finance does not agree with this recommendation, the Minister may appoint the candidate of his/her choice as President of ELSTAT, after prior notification to the Committee with full justification in accordance with the exclusive selection criteria. The Committee then notifies the Minister of its judgment on whether this candidate meets the selection criteria. The Committee's initial recommendation, the Minister's justification and the relevant judgment of the Committee of experts are published mandatorily in Greek and in English on ELSTAT's website.

The President's term of office may be renewed only once by decision of the Minister of Finance under the specific conditions of and in line with the procedure described in the Greek Statistical Law.

Statistical programmes

ELSTAT approves the Hellenic Statistical Programme (ELSP), which sets out the work priorities of the whole ELSS – both ELSTAT and the other ELSS agencies – for a three-year period. The ELSP is the basis on which the ELSS agencies compile their Annual Statistical Work Programmes. A list of statistics produced by ELSS agencies is attached to the ELSP.

In the year preceding the implementation year, ELSTAT compiles its corresponding Annual Statistical Work Programme which, in accordance with Article 5 of the Greek Statistical Law entails the planning of statistical operations for the following year and the competent actors, the required human and financial resources, the priority actions, the measures related to the review of priorities and the reduction of the response burden of the ELSS Agencies, and the legislative, administrative and organisational measures necessary for the smooth and effective operation of ELSS.

The Advisory Committee of the Hellenic Statistical System (SYPELSS) is composed of seventeen members who verifiably use statistical data in their work and are appointed for a four-year period. SYPELSS provides an advisory opinion to ELSTAT for the preparation of the Hellenic Statistical Programme and ELSTAT's Annual Statistical Work Programme.

Resources

At the end of 2022, the permanent staff of the Hellenic Statistical Authority amounted to 645 persons, while its organisation provides for a total number of 1,076 posts. All necessary steps were taken to improve ELSTAT's staff coverage and ad-hoc staff needs for the large-scale censuses of buildings, population - housing and agriculture. These were satisfactorily covered.

The assessment procedure for hiring new staff is performed centrally by the Supreme Council for Civil Personnel Selection (ASEP). Over 100 staff positions were under public announcement by ASEP at the end of 2022.

In general, ELSTAT is provided with the necessary financial resources to meet its European and national obligations on the basis of its Annual Statistical Work Programmes. In 2021, its annual budget amounted to 42.8 million Euro, including the costs for the 2021 Agricultural and Population Censuses.

Coordination

ELSTAT coordinates all the activities of the other ELSS agencies pertaining to the development, production and dissemination of official statistics, and to the implementation of the national quality assurance framework for statistics. For this purpose, it may hold consultations, convene meetings, sign memoranda of cooperation or other written agreements with the other ELSS agencies and issue instructions and guidelines for them. ELSTAT has issued a comprehensive guide with the aim of facilitating the practical implementation of the ES CoP by other ELSS agencies. Its annexes provide templates on the quality and statistical confidentiality policies, quality reporting and the documentation of statistical processes.

Official statistics produced by agencies other than ELSTAT have to undergo a certification procedure by ELSTAT in order to be labelled as official. The terms and conditions for certification are determined in the Regulation on the Operation and Administration of the Hellenic Statistical Authority. The agencies of the Hellenic Statistical System submit quality reports on the statistics produced to ELSTAT at least once a year. Together with these agencies' replies to a dedicated questionnaire and other evidence collected, including from stakeholders, they provide the basis for ELSTAT's assessment of compliance with the ES CoP. An essential precondition for the start of the certification process is the nomination of a statistical head by the agency concerned.

An ELSS Coordination Committee, composed of the statistical heads of the ELSS agencies and chaired by the President of ELSTAT, provides its opinion to ELSTAT on the Regulation on the Statistical Obligations of the ELSS agencies, on ELSS priorities (based on developments at national and international level), on the measures aimed at reducing the administrative response burden of the ELSS agencies and on other issues pertaining to the production of official statistics within the ELSS.

Other bodies

The Good Practice Advisory Committee (GPAC) is an independent advisory committee which prepares an annual report, advisory in nature, on the implementation of principles 1 to 6 (institutional environment) of the ES CoP in the ELSS. It is composed of five members, each being nominated for a two-year term by the Greek Parliament, Eurostat, ESGAB, ESSC and the Hellenic Data Protection Authority respectively. The report is submitted to the Greek Parliament and notified to ESGAB.

This Committee is quite unique within the European Statistical System. While it was primarily conceived to guide the Hellenic Statistical System towards a more robust institutional setting after the 2008 crisis, it has evolved into an invaluable asset, helping ELSTAT and the ELSS on many aspects of compliance with, and even innovation beyond, the principles of the ES CoP.

Other National Authorities reviewed

For the peer review, ELSTAT selected three Other National Authorities (ONAs) as they produce 16 out of 22 European statistical products produced by ONAs. In addition, these statistics serve as input for the production of European statistics by ELSTAT. Moreover, these statistics are important both from ELSTAT's perspective in the context of the implementation of the European Regulation on statistics on agricultural input and output (SAIO) and the production of statistics concerning the European Green Deal and climate change and, from a national point of view, in policymaking for the agricultural, environmental and R&D sectors. The selected ONAs were:

- Ministry of Rural Development and Food
- Ministry of Environment and Energy
- National Documentation Centre (EKT)

The Ministry of Rural Development and Food and the Ministry of Environment and Energy each collect a wide range of data to produce agricultural and food statistics, and environmental and energy statistics, respectively. The statistics of the Ministry of Rural Development and Food are based solely on administrative data. The Ministry of Environment and Energy conducts surveys and uses administrative data. With 10 and 9 Full-Time Equivalents respectively, the statistics Departments of these ONAs are rather small.

The National Documentation Centre is responsible for European statistics on research, development and innovation. The Documentation Centre is a non-profit organisation under the scope of the Research and Technology agencies, which are governed by special provisions and enjoy administrative and financial independence. Its legal basis explicitly mentions the Centre's status as part of the Hellenic Statistical System and provides guarantees for the professional independence of its statistical head. 16 Full-Time Equivalents are allocated to the production of European and national statistics.

Data access

The Greek statistical legal framework provides ELSTAT with adequate legal tools to gain access to administrative data and to minimise the response burden and costs of surveys. On this basis, ELSTAT has signed many memoranda of cooperation with public bodies setting out specific operational rules. The Greek Statistical Law also provides for all ELSS Agencies, including ELSTAT and the ONAs, to be able to access data held by legal entities under private law, associations of individuals and natural persons, for the performance of their duties. ELSTAT has already purchased some commercial databases that are used for the production of specific business statistics.

Relations with users / Dissemination of statistical products and services

The obligations of ELSTAT and the other ELSS agencies regarding the dissemination of their statistics are stipulated in Article 7 of the Greek Statistical Law and in Article 8 of the Regulation on the Statistical Obligations of the ELSS agencies. The principles and rules followed by ELSTAT in the dissemination of its statistics are set out in ELSTAT's Dissemination Policy.

ELSTAT's website is one of the basic tools for the dissemination of statistical information. The statistics are organised in six thematic domains. There is a dedicated page for each statistical domain, as well as for experimental statistics, where the relevant information (press releases, tables, time series, quality reports and metadata) is uploaded. In addition, the press releases calendar, the press releases, any scheduled revisions, other announcements and infographics are all presented on the main page of ELSTAT's website.

Statistical data that are not presented on ELSTAT's website are provided to interested users upon a relevant request, provided they are not subject to statistical confidentiality.

In recent years, ELSTAT has invested in new communication channels and provides a remarkably rich selection of statistical literacy products for various age groups and encompasses multiple entry points, ranging from educational visits to competitions, gamification approaches and videos.

Based on memoranda of cooperation, ELSTAT has established close relationships with Greek universities. Undergraduate students are received by ELSTAT for internships on a voluntary basis. Academia is often consulted for data analysis exercises, time series analyses and modelling cases. ELSTAT provides assistance to universities for master's thesis programmes and has developed high-level contacts with heavy – mainly institutional – users. ELSTAT also provides public use files for professional users, but demand is growing for more timely data. Moreover, ELSTAT provides anonymised microdata of statistical surveys it conducts (scientific use files) under certain conditions provided for in the Greek Statistical Law.

4. PROGRESS/ADVANCEMENT IN THE LAST FIVE YEARS

Stabilised legal / institutional background and re-established trust in official statistics

The peer review team noted, as one of the most important developments of the last five years, that official statistics and ELSTAT had regained general acceptance and respect after a long period of public debate and even prosecutions against former key actors of official statistics. By establishing the Hellenic Statistical Authority in 2010 and introducing relevant amendments to the original legal act by Laws 4334/2015 and 4484/2017, the integrity and independence of ELSTAT and its head were (re-) established and legally supported. ELSTAT is now considered an independent statistical agency that is free, in particular, from any direct political or inappropriate governmental influence on its professional work. In February 2021, the Law on the 2001 General Censuses for Buildings and Population-Housing was approved by the Greek Parliament. This was the first time that a census was conducted in Greece by virtue of a legal provision of democratic legitimisation to that extent. This example underpins the fact that the professional independence of ELSTAT is now widely recognised.

The peer review team was also informed about cases where ELSTAT was able to adhere to its professional independence and confidentiality standards. The European provisions of statistical confidentiality were challenged by Greek public prosecutors referring to contradicting articles 35 and 36 of the Greek Code of Penal Procedure (Law 4620/2019), which would enable prosecutors investigating suspected cases of economic and financial crime to have access to all information sources that are found useful for their work. In these cases, ELSTAT took the position of refusing such information requests based on the Regulation on European statistics (No 223/2009, as amended).

Article 11.6 of the Greek Statistical Law stipulates that ELSTAT has the responsibility for certifying statistics produced by the other designated agencies of the ELSS as 'official statistics'. A multi-stage certification process (first stage: institutional environment, second stage: outputs) of members of the ELSS was drawn up and implemented by ELSTAT from 2015 onwards. For the purposes of cooperation and coordination within the ELSS, as well as in the context of this certification of statistics produced by the other ELSS Agencies, ELSTAT holds consultations and convenes meetings with those agencies and signs memoranda of cooperation or other written agreements with them. To support the adherence of the agencies to the ES CoP, the 'Regulation on the Statistical Obligations of the Agencies of the Hellenic Statistical System' was drawn up and published in both Greek and English, complemented by the document 'Statement of the principles and procedures for the certification of ELSS statistics'. The certification procedure requires extensive efforts from all parties involved and is rather time-consuming but, in spite of this, the introduction of such a label and its quality framework became a driving force for improvements within the ELSS.

Finally, after a longer period of negotiations with the labour union, existing and newly recruited members of staff and external part-time collaborators in statistical data collection now sign a standardised confidentiality declaration with ELSTAT. This was a long-awaited improvement based on the previous peer review and repeated recommendations of the GPAC.

Improved organisational solutions, broader financial resources but still a lack of human capital

A new organisational structure was introduced in 2019 by Decree 73/2019 of the President of the Hellenic Republic, aiming to address malfunctions observed in the production of ELSTAT statistics and to adapt the production and dissemination of statistics to technological developments and resource-sharing processes. A considerable development in the organisational structure affected the position and tasks of quality management as a catalyst of product and process improvements. The utmost importance of improving the quality of direct data collections and their response rates was also reflected in the new structure by establishing the Primary Data Collection Division. The aim of the organisational structure is to assist ELSTAT's emerging activities; however, the detailed descriptions

and fragmentation of responsibilities and managerial levels may need more tailored actions in the future, while recruitment procedures should be speeded up.

Improved access to and use of administrative and other data sources

After a long period of preparation, essential administrative data from the tax authority for the reference years 2011-2015 were finally transmitted to ELSTAT in 2016. ELSTAT has deployed a Central Management System for Administrative Data in order to obtain and store all the administrative files, which are transmitted to ELSTAT. This system has become the exclusive channel for microdata transmissions from administrative sources. Based on memoranda of cooperation, as of October 2022, ELSTAT cooperates with 34 providers of administrative data, the majority being public administration bodies or enterprises. The number of memoranda is set to grow further in the future. ELSTAT is now considered a trusted partner by administrative data providers, which was also underpinned by the wide range of access to administrative data sources during the 2021 population - housing census.

ELSTAT has also intensified its efforts to improve the data sources of price statistics by introducing the twice monthly web-scraping of the prices of 186 products, to assist the market data surveys. In the field of consumer price surveys and the Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices, ELSTAT uses data on these products from the internet to compare their prices with retail shop prices. The experimental use of such web-based information and scanner data from retail trade units is growing.

The Greek public administration gave much prominence to data interoperability and central government addressed this as a key issue in developments regarding services and functions. The Ministry of Digital Governance was set up in order to mastermind, regulate and coordinate efforts in the Greek public administration as a whole. ELSTAT management has a clear view that ELSTAT should not act as a data steward in this setup, but rather be a major player in the supply and support of interoperability in the country's public administration under the umbrella of digital governance. This unequivocal positioning of ELSTAT also helps to set the proper direction for other strategic developments of ELSTAT.

Significant progress was also achieved by introducing a wide range of web-based questionnaires for population and business surveys in the regular data collection procedure. Two-thirds of ELSTAT's surveys are now exclusively or partly fed by administrative data sources.

Intensive communication with users, including new communication tools and channels

The peer review team acknowledges the improvements in ELSTAT's dissemination activities. The website has been developed and provides an improved range and variety of infographics. ELSTAT has put significant efforts into modernising the statistics.gr website in forms of data dissemination and making the interpretation of statistical data easier. ELSTAT also publishes more visualised information via Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram.

ELSTAT has invested heavily in the field of fostering statistical literacy. It has not only launched cooperation programmes with universities and research institutes, but has also improved its relations with the media – including explanatory sessions for media representatives. ELSTAT has also developed close relationships with secondary and even primary school educational organisations. One remarkable result of this work is a series of workbooks prepared for different school year pupils, built around themes relating to descriptive statistics, the analysis of the population census data and the possible interpretation of published official statistical information. These efforts in the field are essentially behind the positive and trustful public opinion on official statistics in Greece.

5. COMPLIANCE WITH THE CODE OF PRACTICE AND FUTURE ORIENTATION

5.1 STRENGTHS OF THE NSI AND THE PARTICIPATING ONAs IN RELATION TO THEIR COMPLIANCE WITH THE CODE OF PRACTICE

Matured National Statistical Institute relying on a strong institutional environment

ELSTAT has demonstrated its adherence to the ES CoP, reflected in its institutional renewal and spurred by a very strong legal basis. The strength of ELSTAT's institutional environment, and in particular the confidence in its professional independence, was confirmed by external stakeholders during the peer review visit and had also been highlighted by the GPAC. The Greek Statistical Law (No 3832) of 9 March 2010 and its amendments are rooted in the ES CoP. The Greek Statistical Law mirrors, where relevant, the respective parts of the Regulation on European statistics (No 223/2009, as amended) and includes cross references i.a. to its statistical principles (ES CoP Indicators 2.1, 5.1). The Greek Statistical Law includes in particular strong provisions to safeguard ELSTAT's independence. This comprises explicit guarantees in terms of its operational independence and administrative and financial autonomy (Article 10) as well as in terms of the personal independence of the President of ELSTAT (Article 15) (ES CoP Indicators 1.1, 1.3). The criteria for the selection of the President of ELSTAT and the selection procedure (Article 13), involving an independent committee, reinforce compliance with the ES CoP (ES CoP Indicator 1.8). This can be seen as best practice.

The presence of a high-profile independent ESGAB-like body, the Good Practice Advisory Committee (GPAC), has proven equally beneficial to ELSTAT's reputation. The findings of the GPAC, publicly available on the ELSTAT website, turned out to be extremely valuable for the peer review team. The peer review team considers the presence and form of such a committee to be of very high value for the ELSS and, as such, a best practice to be followed by other national statistical systems.

The Other National Authorities and the other agencies of the Hellenic statistical system are required by the Greek Statistical Law law to implement the ES CoP when developing, producing and disseminating official statistics (Article 1), including the principle of professional independence. The Regulation on the Statistical Obligations of the ELSS agencies requires them to nominate a statistical head in accordance with ES CoP (ES CoP Indicators 1.1 and 1.3).

The legal provisions are complemented by a Commitment on Confidence in Statistics, which binds the Greek government to guarantee and defend the professional independence of the Hellenic Statistical System.

Articles 2.3 and 8.2 of the Greek Statistical Law provide ELSTAT with a very broad mandate to access administrative data sources. In practice, owing to the increased availability of administrative data to ELSTAT over the last 6 years, their exploitation for statistical purposes has resulted in improvements i.a. in national accounts, in terms of completeness, coherence and timeliness as well as in the compilation of a series of experimental statistics, based i.a. on micro-data linking. This comprises new statistical products, particularly in the area of business statistics, which ELSTAT could develop on the basis of the wide range of administrative data obtained as well as statistics based on innovative data sources, such as high-frequency data. A recently created small 'Administrative and Big Data Section' facilitates the use of administrative data across ELSTAT through a central data provision system and uniform metadata. Collaboration with 34 owners of administrative data has improved over the years and a few cases a solution was found to optimise the data in such a way that they could be better exploited for statistical purposes.

At the end of 2022, ELSTAT invested in expanding its collaboration with the Bank of Greece, with which a data sharing agreement is to be concluded i.a. in the context of statistics on large enterprise groups.

Comprehensive certification procedure for official statistics

Official statistics produced by agencies other than ELSTAT have to undergo a certification procedure by ELSTAT (Article 11.6 of the Greek Statistical Law) in order to be labelled as official (Article 1.7 of the Greek Statistical Law). The terms and conditions for certification are determined in the Regulation on the Operation and Administration of ELSTAT (current version from 2012), which foresees that ELSS agencies submit quality reports on the statistics produced to ELSTAT at least once a year. Together with these agencies' replies to a dedicated questionnaire and other evidence collected, including from stakeholders, they provide the basis for ELSTAT's assessment of compliance with the ES CoP. An essential precondition for the start of the certification process is the nomination of a statistical head by the agency concerned. The process is concluded with ELSTAT's certification report, which comprises the assessment and possible recommendations. Designation of statistics as 'official statistics' is only confirmed once specific improvement actions have been completed by the agency. Follow-up assessments of both the agency and its statistics are carried out as necessary to ensure compliance is sustained. ELSTAT's Statement of Principles and Procedures for the Certification of the Statistics of the Hellenic Statistical System describes the procedure in detail.

Wide range of statistical literacy products and services

ELSTAT provides a remarkably rich selection of statistical literacy products, targeting mainly students. The offer addresses various age groups and provides access through multiple entry points, ranging from educational visits to competitions, gamification approaches and videos. Its educational brochures on statistics for beginners are also available for different age groups. All products and services can be accessed from a dedicated section of ELSTAT's website (in Greek).

Trainee programme and collaboration with the scientific community

Based on memoranda of cooperation, ELSTAT has established close cooperation with universities. This collaboration comprises trainee programmes targeting students at various levels, from selected pre-master's studies to the joint supervision of master theses and aims to establish longer-term and evolving relationships with trainees.

Strong and competent ONA - National Documentation Centre (EKT) as an example to follow

The ONA EKT has built upon its institutional position, know-how and infrastructure and has succeeded in promptly and efficiently responding to the urgent need of providing research, development and innovation statistics (RDI) for Greece. It has developed a competent statistical environment that embraces new technologies and sound methodological frameworks and is supported by organisational and technical elements. The Director of EKT has been nominated as the statistical head of EKT and has all the required competences and responsibilities as provided for in the ES CoP (Indicator 1.8). She has the practical authority and the actual capacity to successfully perform the duties. Moreover, the statistical head is of the highest professional calibre, equipped with in-depth statistical knowledge and experience, as well as strong competences, and spends around one-third of her working time dealing with statistical issues. At operational level, the Head of the RDI Metrics and Services Department takes responsibility for all actions and acts as a quality coach.

EKT has developed analytical and comprehensive manuals for the implementation of all relevant statistical processes. It employs specific guidelines on how to implement quality assurance related to the statistical production process and aligns with the principles of the ES CoP and the Generic Statistical Business Process Model (GSBPM).

At least twice a year, right after each main statistical release, user workshops/meetings are organised with key stakeholders and policy makers, and personal interviews are conducted with key stakeholders. In the framework of a new project, EKT has assigned to external experts the detailed

profiling and grouping of its user communities, including the documentation of their requirements and needs.

EKT achieves 100% timeliness in the publication of its European statistics and transmission of data to Eurostat and international organisations (OECD, EU). EKT's statistics website and statistical data tables conform as far as possible to universal web content accessibility guidelines (WCAG). A new portal is currently under development to allow for dashboard reporting, self-tabulation in various formats and a variety of visualisations, including data tables, infographics and interactive charts.

Innovative practices

The peer review team identified some noteworthy practices that may be applicable in some way in other national settings. The peer review team would like to highlight the following practices:

- In the framework of the ELSS certification procedure, there is a legally binding (through a Decision by ELSTAT) requirement for ONAs to nominate a statistical head in accordance with the principles of the ES CoP.
- In the context of ELSTAT's coordination role, it provides templates for the other national statistical agencies as a basis for them to issue their own quality and statistical confidentiality policies.
- ELSTAT has a dedicated section on its website with a comprehensive gallery of infographics, fostering re-use, e.g. by the media, and promoting its publications.
- ELSTAT has developed a wide range of statistical literacy products and services for students, targeting different age groups and using multiple channels.
- ELSTAT actively collaborates with two universities (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Athens University of Economics and Business) on student exchanges, pre-master's studies as well as the joint supervision of master's theses.

5.2 ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.2.1 Enhancing coordination and strengthening the statistical system as a whole

ELSTAT has been given a strong legal basis to coordinate the Hellenic Statistical System. It cooperates with the other ELSS agencies and coordinates their activities pertaining to the development, production and dissemination of official statistics in Greece, and the implementation of the national quality assurance framework for statistics. Issues pertaining to the cooperation between ELSTAT and the other agencies of the Hellenic Statistical System (ELSS) are included in the Regulation on the Operation and Administration of the Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT). The criteria for an agency's affiliation to the ELSS, the obligations arising from this affiliation and ELSTAT's role in coordinating the Hellenic Statistical System are defined in the Regulation on the Statistical Obligations of the ELSS agencies. According to Article 1.5 of the Greek Statistical Law, the ELSS agencies shall implement the ES CoP.

ELSTAT has been given the competence to certify statistics which have been produced by the other national statistical agencies forming part of the ELSS, including the ONAs, as 'official'. This procedure is implemented through templates and a questionnaire, notably on quality reporting and compliance with the ES CoP.

However, notwithstanding ELSTAT efforts to repeatedly reach out to the other national statistical agencies and the ONAs in particular, in practice, progress regarding the certification of the statistics they produce remains slow. Accordingly, coordination of the Hellenic Statistical System by ELSTAT remains fragmented and approaches across the ELSS differ significantly. At the end of 2022, none of the ONAs received certification for their products. While the ONAs that were interviewed confirmed

the importance of the certification process for their work, they called for operational improvements and a simplified process, which should allow for both formal and informal exchanges.

Although ELSTAT provides valuable input and assistance to ONAs, coordination is done mainly on a bilateral basis. The ONAs interviewed asked for additional and more regular meetings to be organised, with the participation of all ELSS members. Moreover, more regular training workshops on the implementation of national guidelines would be particularly useful.

Given the importance of the certification procedure for the consolidation of the ELSS and compliance with the ES CoP, and to assure users of the product quality of all Greek official statistics, the peer review team considers that higher priority should be given to the certification of ONAs and to strengthening the coordination of the ONAs by ELSTAT.

To comply with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

R1. ELSTAT should strengthen the Hellenic Statistical System by taking the necessary initiatives to ensure that all the Other National Authorities comply with the ES CoP in a sustainable manner. (Compliance-relevant: ES CoP, Indicators 1bis.1 and 1bis.2)

The ten ONAs differ in terms of their human and financial resources. With 16 FTEs dedicated to statistics, the National Documentation Centre (EKT) relies on a highly qualified workforce, whereas the Ministry of Environment and Energy and the Ministry of Rural Development and Food have to rely on a much smaller dedicated workforce. When responsibilities are reallocated across government bodies, statistical experience frequently suffers and ELSTAT needs to rebuild collaboration with the statistical departments. The Greek Statistical Law and the Regulation on the Operation and Administration of the Hellenic Statistical Authority gives ELSTAT ample opportunity to provide guidance and training in institutional and statistical matters to the ONAs. However, while such initiatives exist, they remain scarce and underdeveloped. Development of a statistical culture, joint dedicated training courses and opportunities for staff exchanges within the ELSS could help to preserve and develop further skills and reinforce the cohesion of the Hellenic Statistical System. Moreover, the staff regulations of the Greek public administration do not foster exchanges between ministries and other, independent public administration authorities. The Greek Government should therefore take initiatives to improve the situation.

Article 12 of the Regulation on the Operation and Administration of the Hellenic Statistical Authority states that *“1. ELSTAT sees to constantly enhance the knowledge and continuously upgrade and update the skills of its staff and the staff of the ELSS agencies so that they can better perform their official duties.”* Moreover, point 3 also states that *“ELSTAT shall take all necessary measures to inform its staff and the staff of the ELSS agencies about the fundamental principles, procedures, deontological matters and professional ethics concerning the production of official statistics”*. Apart from offering training on the ES CoP, there are no recent targeted training programmes for members of the ELSS, although their staff may participate in seminars that are announced by ELSTAT.

As part of ELSTAT's coordination activities, it could be beneficial to introduce more frequent and fit-for-purpose training courses or other forms of educational programmes for ONAs, in order to improve specific statistical skills in their organisations. The ONAs reviewed also confirmed that a more proactive approach to the development of statistical skills by ELSTAT could further advance their work.

The peer review team had the impression that such an approach would also be beneficial to support all members of the ELSS.

To improve beyond compliance with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

R2. ELSTAT and the Other National Authorities reviewed (the Ministry of Rural Development and Food, the Ministry of Environment and Energy, the National Documentation Centre) should further enhance their cooperation, and the Greek government should enable this, by establishing systematic exchanges and training on their respective statistical production, methods and quality standards, and support the development of competences and skills in statistics. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 1bis.1 and 7.6)

The Regulation on the Statistical Obligations of the Agencies of the Hellenic Statistical System states clearly that *“to ensure compliance with the basic operational principles and the fulfilment of their statistical obligations, the ELSS agencies, besides ELSTAT, shall nominate a statistical head having the (...) features and responsibilities as provided for in Principle 1 of the European Statistics Code of Practice”*. However, in practice, the procedures for the appointment of the statistical heads of ONAs (and the other agencies of the ELSS) are often guided by the standard procedures of the Greek public administration. Appointment criteria put emphasis on general experience and qualifications but are not explicitly geared towards carrying out a statistical function. While statistical qualifications are not essential for leading an ONA, they may play an important role in fostering ONAs’ adherence to the ES CoP.

The peer review team could ascertain that the statistical heads of the ONAs have very different statistical qualifications which are in some cases inadequate. The statistical heads of some ONAs have high hierarchical standing but limited knowledge and involvement in statistical processes. In practice such ONAs show weak results in implementing the national guidelines, and with regard to adherence to the ES CoP.

To comply with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

R3. The relevant authorities should strengthen the emphasis on statistical qualifications in the selection process for the statistical heads of the Other National Authorities. (Compliance-relevant: ES CoP, Indicators 1.8 and 1.2)

Two of the ONAs reviewed are lagging behind in their adherence to the ES CoP, especially in terms of serving the user perspective. The Ministry of Environment and Energy provides users with an unbalanced set of statistical information. While energy statistics are more accessible and are covered by quality reports based on European standards, environmental statistics are hard to find and are missing the required meta- and quality information for public use. While provision of these statistics focuses on fulfilling the respective European regulatory requirements, broader user needs are not sufficiently served. Dissemination does not happen at a regular frequency, and it is very difficult for users to find suitable information on the topics covered. The Ministry of Rural Development and Food is also encouraged to show more attention to its possible users. The peer review team noticed that the statistical information produced by the Ministry is very hard to find and hyperlinks are broken. A thorough revision of both these ONAs’ dissemination services on the internet would be necessary. The peer review team could also establish that the minimum quality and documentation requirements for European statistics are met by these ONAs, but could not detect a supportive institutional environment, nor a proactive approach to official statistics able to serve future perspectives. A more conscious and systematic approach to official statistics in both ministries would therefore be desirable.

When the structure of a ministry is being changed, effectively reconciling the different functions of the public authorities affected always seems to be a demanding exercise. In the case of the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Energy, a merger was carried out in 2009. The peer review team found that the statistical functions of the previously separate authorities (both being ONAs) were not restructured and remained as separate units within the Ministry. Both entities previously produced European statistics on their own and the subject matter units communicated directly with Eurostat

and other organisations. These functions still remained separate at subject matter level after the changes in the organisation. Although a nominal coordination unit was established in the merged Ministry, its exact function is not obvious and rather technical. The production of energy and environmental statistics (e.g., air pollution, waste and CO₂ emissions) takes place within the different areas without any real internal coordination. Although a statistical head was appointed in accordance with ELSTAT's certification procedure established for members of the ELSS, and the position can be found at a sufficiently high hierarchical level in the Ministry, the established position is now distant from the units where the actual work is taking place and was not necessarily based on subject matter considerations. On the one hand, this solution has resulted in a remarkable level of professional independence of the respective statistical areas, with practically all decisions being made at subject matter level, but on the other hand it has also had an impact on other quality components in the ES CoP, since it lacks internal coherence and leaves the statistical function without a management track. This scattered structure for producing European statistics in the Ministry of Environment and Energy is not optimal, with processes and practices following their earlier paths. A consolidation of these statistical functions in the organisation of the Ministry would be beneficial, to better support the transparent and efficient production of European statistics.

The peer review team also found that both ministries selected for the review fulfil European obligations, but with a low focus on user awareness. They do not have a release calendar and the level of accessibility to statistical information is not the same for all areas in their portfolio. Both ministries underlined the fact that the basic aim of their actions in official statistics is to serve European legal obligations, to the extent that, for example, a majority of the statistics they produce are not even directly available on their own websites, but can be obtained from Eurostat. Some information is not available due to links on their webpages not being updated and leading users to empty html sites. This inward perspective and lack of attention to national user needs limits the accessibility of official statistics. Quality assessments and documentation intended for users are also missing in several cases. The peer review team found evidence that statistics on energy supply and use are adequately covered by detailed quality reports and standardised European documentation in accordance with SIMS, and are made available on the Ministry's webpage. However, the same kind of documentation is neither publicly available for environmental statistics nor for the data produced by the Ministry of Rural Development and Food. These data are properly documented at Eurostat, meeting European expectations. But data users should be able to judge the quality of the information provided for different quality aspects, and these should be reflected in a suitable form of documentation. As they are partly missing, an improvement in both the range of available data and metadata on the websites of the respective ministries would be desirable from the user perspective. Some good examples are already present within the organisations involved. With some assistance from ELSTAT and an exchange of expertise, it would be relatively easy for other units within the organisations to attain a higher level of compliance as well.

To comply with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

R4. The Other National Authorities reviewed (the Ministry of Environment and Energy and the Ministry of Rural Development and Food) should adhere to the ES CoP, particularly with regard to transparency to users, accessibility of statistics, quality requirements and reporting, the release calendar and user consultations. They should draw support from ELSTAT if necessary. (Compliance-relevant: ES CoP, Indicators 15.1, 11.1, 4.3, 13.1 and 15.2)

5.2.2 Extending and optimising the use of administrative data sources

ELSTAT has improved the exploitation of administrative data sources remarkably from 2016 onwards, with the purpose of enhancing coverage, improving timeliness and other quality aspects and substituting gaps in primary data collection. The provision of administrative data for statistical

purposes follows a standard procedure and an information technology environment has also been created to support the monitoring of data transmissions. All data files now contain a technical information sheet describing the variables obtained from the administrative sources.

In the case of business statistics, tax data are now considered to be the most generic data source for ELSTAT. During the 2021 population - housing census, several administrative sources were also used for quality control and for the set-up of population and building/dwelling registers. Residents' tax identification and social security numbers were used to link the census data with other data sources. At the end of 2022, the Greek Social Security Entity already regularly provided data relating to enterprises and employed persons in a non-anonymised way, in order to ensure the proper linking of individual data for statistical purposes.

Based on the information provided by ELSTAT, the peer review team noted that, as of the end of 2022, more than half of the Annual Statistical Work Programme was compiled based on the use of administrative data, another quarter on the basis of a combined use of administrative and survey data, and the remaining statistical products on the basis of survey data.

ELSTAT's involvement in the design and development of administrative records is provided for by Article 11.7 of the Greek Statistical Law, which states that *"ELSTAT provides its opinion prior to submitting to Parliament any legal provision that concerns ELSTAT or the official statistics of the country, or through which this law is explicitly or implicitly amended. The same applies for any legal provision regarding the creation of new, or the restructuring of, administrative data sources and public registers or files..."* However, in practice ELSTAT has repeatedly observed cases in which ministries changed their relevant legislation without consulting ELSTAT. The peer review team was informed about some recent examples related to the administrative reporting obligations and tax declarations of enterprises.

These changes usually cause rather minor problems in the statistical processes, and – as ELSTAT stated – were solved earlier by ex-post consultations with the tax authority and other organisations. However, if ELSTAT is usually not being consulted in advance, it may render it rather difficult or in more serious cases even impossible to sustain statistics based on the affected administrative sources. As a systemic advancement, the ex-ante involvement of ELSTAT in such consultative procedures is needed to avoid risks and is a vital component of relying on administrative data provision in statistical data production.

To comply with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

R5. The relevant authorities should ensure that appropriate mechanisms are in place, supplementary to the respective legal measure, to ensure that ELSTAT is consulted well before any developments or reviews of administrative data sources, so that the needs of official statistics are taken into account. (Compliance-relevant: ES CoP, Indicator 2.2)

A major initiative has been taken by the Greek government to link several administrative registers and make the results available throughout the Greek public administration. The Ministry of Digital Governance was set up as an interoperability centre, which also provides data to ELSTAT. This centre interchanges the raw transactional data and identifiers for the entire public sector. ELSTAT has full access to all these datasets, as have all other public organisations. The Ministry has combined tax, social security, citizen and police ID registries on all citizens and provides fully automated query options for the licensed users of the system, who can run their queries remotely. The data outputs are anonymised. All public organisations are legally allowed to use the information provided by the system, while private sector actors may only have access after obtaining the citizen's permission. This initiative could offer many opportunities for official statistics, provided that access is granted for an increasingly wide range of administrative data and that the linked data are fit for statistical purposes.

To improve beyond compliance with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

R6. The relevant authorities should put the interoperability of its administrative data sources into general practice and make them fit for statistical purposes in order to mainstream data linking possibilities across the country and enhance their value for official statistics. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 9.5 and 8.7)

5.2.3 Ensuring adequate resources in number and skills

Many elements of ELSTAT's IT environment are becoming outdated and insufficient to tackle current and future challenges. This is the case for parts of its hardware infrastructure as well as for some software applications. ELSTAT intends to modernise its IT environment and make it fit for the future. The network, servers and storage facilities are to be upgraded. Increasing threats of cyberattacks and hacking have to be countered by improved backup and security systems. Additionally, the existing IT system is still following the 'silo' approach, where each survey is a separate 'silo'. These silos are to be replaced by modern IT systems, allowing the integration of various sources and the use of common tools and methods. At the same time, a modern IT infrastructure is necessary to exploit the potential of new data sources and for ELSTAT's ability to participate in the Ministry of Digital Governance's plans to interlink all data sources within the public administration. ELSTAT does not intend to become the data steward of the Hellenic Republic; this role will rather be taken up by the Ministry of Digital Governance. However, ELSTAT should be ready to make use of a fully interoperable data environment for statistical purposes.

So, there is a need to upgrade the IT infrastructure to an enterprise-wide architecture that could cover new emerging requirements, while reducing needs in human resources. This is essential to enable ELSTAT to continue its modernisation path and to ingest also innovative data sources.

To improve beyond compliance with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

R7. ELSTAT should implement the envisaged modernisation of its IT environment as a priority, as this is essential for innovation, efficiency and modernisation. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 10.2 and 3.1)

In the near future, ELSTAT will see a substantial inflow of new staff, which will partly compensate for the outflow of staff reaching retirement age. This turnover of staff will lead to an increased need for training. ELSTAT does not yet have a dedicated internal vocational training plan. However, it informs its staff of the training programme provided by the public service and the training offered in the European Statistical Training Programme (ESTP) coordinated by Eurostat. Participation in these programmes is encouraged. However, the peer review team was informed that the workload and a limited offer may hamper participation in training and scientific exchanges at national and international level. This poses a risk to ELSTAT's ability to sustain its path towards modernisation, innovation and continuous improvement, given the importance of peer exchanges and knowledge transfer for staff skills and motivation. It also impinges, though to a varying extent, on ONA's access to information on recent developments in their area of competence and the cohesion of the Hellenic Statistical System.

To improve beyond compliance with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

R8. ELSTAT and the Other National Authorities reviewed (the Ministry of Rural Development and Food, the Ministry of Environment and Energy, the National Documentation Centre) should systematically increase the exposure of their staff to targeted training and scientific exchanges at national and international level. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 7.6 and 7.7)

In 2020, ELSTAT experienced a breakthrough in terms of its ability to hire new staff, and 115 vacant posts have been confirmed for publication. With more than 200 staff members aged 60 or older, further vacancies may be confirmed over the next years. At the same time, however, progress has been rather slow, hampered by the burdensome hiring procedure involving the Supreme Council for Civil Personnel Selection (ASEP) and the comparatively low salary levels in the public administration.

Notwithstanding this recent breakthrough, ELSTAT is facing serious challenges in the long term with a large part of its staff approaching retirement age. Since progress in this field can be expected to be rather slow, a long-term human resource strategy should be envisaged. The peer review team warns that, since a number of the 115 vacant posts are already hard to fill in the current round of recruitment, and almost a further one-third of the existing staff will be retiring in a few years' time, immediate actions should be initiated to ensure the timely replacement of outgoing staff. As current experience shows that the ongoing staff recruitment procedures are taking at least eighteen months, the preparations and planning for the replacement of retiring staff should be speeded up.

To improve beyond compliance with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

R9. ELSTAT should develop a long-term human resources strategy to guarantee that allocated human resources are available and sufficient in terms of qualification and skills, including a contingency plan for possible setbacks. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 3.1)

In the Commitment on Confidence in Statistics, the Greek government committed “to secure adequate and stable resources necessary to maintain and further improve the quality and coverage of Greek statistics”. ELSTAT's implementation of this human resources strategy is hindered by the fact that it partly depends on governmental measures, with many requirements being spelled out down to the minutest detail in legal documents. For instance, Presidential Decree No 73 of 4 July 2019 sets out the foreseen number of ELSTAT staff positions (1,076) broken down by education and branch. Out of 994 staff positions with a public servant employment relationship, 477 are to have university-level education and 349 of them will be allocated to the Branch of Statistics. Only two-thirds of the allocated posts in ELSTAT were filled at the end of 2022. The peer review team was informed that ELSTAT asked the Supreme Council for Civil Personnel Selection (ASEP) to recruit more employees in 2020 but no employees were provided. Such legal provisions and their rigid interpretation limit ELSTAT's ability to adapt quickly to emerging needs.

Given the high number of vacant posts and the special expertise required, ELSTAT would benefit from a higher degree of flexibility, spurred by a strategic, far-looking approach. Salaries, especially of highly skilled scientific and IT staff, are not competitive. Moreover, the peer review team found evidence that more flexible procedures and higher salaries are applied elsewhere in the public administration. A more attractive working environment, including teleworking, might also be considered in order to retain and motivate employees.

To improve beyond compliance with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

R10. The relevant authorities should take appropriate measures to guarantee that the human resources granted to ELSTAT are made available in time and under more flexible conditions to ensure their availability and adequacy in terms of qualifications and skills. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 3.1)

5.2.4 Standardising statistical processes and strengthening quality monitoring

ELSTAT's current organisation has been in place since 2019. ELSTAT is composed of 13 Divisions, most of which have 5 Sections, and seemingly combines a matrix with a functional approach. Geared towards the GSBPM flow, the aim is to improve consistency by bringing together and aligning all processes belonging to a statistical product in one unit. However, the high granularity of the organisation, with a total of 645 permanent staff, results in a rather low span of control for each of the 13 Divisions and 104 Sections. Efficiency and level of responsibility seem to be unevenly split across entities. The high number of 'clients' also affects delivery by horizontal services, which are confronted with increased interaction points, resulting in a higher workload overall. This complexity may hamper ELSTAT's reaction time and effectiveness in re-using existing capabilities and meeting newly emerging user demands.

ELSTAT is an organisation that still bears the mark of a stovepipe legacy system and the risk of diluted responsibilities, which may not always be clearly delineated across the organisation. ELSTAT has centralised units for data collection and dissemination as well as a methodology unit providing data weighting. Nevertheless, statistics production is still very much based on stovepipes, with no concrete plans to introduce a process-based approach in the future. Statistics production units mostly employ applications created specifically for their data processing, and standardised documentation is limited. In such circumstances, further efficiency could be gained by implementing a more standardised approach with regard to the execution of statistical processes and the use of common corporate tools.

To improve beyond compliance with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

R11. ELSTAT should consider shifting its organisation away from separate production lines towards a more integrated system, emphasising shared standardised programmes, procedures, solutions and tools. This may include a leaner and more transparent organisation. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 10.4)

ELSTAT's approach to quality assurance has matured with process and output quality being assessed for key, mainly survey-based statistics and reported to Eurostat according to SIMS. Parameters of survey processes, mainly on punctuality, are regularly monitored and assessment of survey accuracy benefits from central methodological guidance. In the discussions, it was explained to the peer review team that the quality management system is geared towards identifying problems but does not allow for higher-level monitoring and intervention during the processes or collecting evidence on a systematic basis for managerial decisions. The peer review team felt that the quality assurance system currently in place allows for a proper overview at operational level. It should however allow for a more systematic involvement of management and be extended to the whole organisation, covering all statistical processes and outputs. Furthermore, information provided to users could be completed with qualitative and quantitative assessments of all output quality dimensions. The peer review team was informed that steps have been taken in the context of the 2021 population - housing census and ELSTAT envisages introducing automated process monitoring throughout its statistical operations in the future.

To improve beyond compliance with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

R12. ELSTAT should strengthen its quality monitoring procedures by extending the systematic assessment of process and output quality across all statistical operations and systematically engaging middle and senior management in addressing the outcomes. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 4.2 and 4.3)

5.2.5 Strengthening user orientation

Given ELSTAT's emphasis on complying with the requirements of European statistics and key national users, the peer review team observed that modern dissemination tools and channels allowing for interactive and more tailored data use have only recently been introduced. The peer review visit and the results of ELSTAT's continuous user surveys confirmed the need to strengthen ELSTAT's user orientation, allowing for a higher degree of flexibility in tailoring the product and service portfolio to meet a wider range of user needs. In recent years, ELSTAT has invested in improving its communication channels and has upgraded its website, such as by including attractive infographics. However, user needs are continually increasing and require accelerated modernisation. While the presence of a user-friendly database on an NSI's website has become standard within the ESS and open data are available, ELSTAT is at risk of lagging behind. Technological progress in this field is increasingly fast and requires a long-term strategy and a quick action response.

To improve beyond compliance with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

R13. ELSTAT should develop a comprehensive long-term dissemination and communication strategy and a multi-annual action plan for modernising its dissemination channels, in order to meet user needs and keep up with European practice. This could include a user-friendly interactive database and a wide range of open data. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 15.2 and 11.1)

ELSTAT grants access to the anonymised microdata of nine statistical surveys: European Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC), Labour Force Survey (LFS), Household Budget Survey (HBS), EU survey on the use of Information and Communication Technologies in households and by individuals (ICT), survey on energy consumption in households, national health survey, time use survey, survey on road traffic accidents and mortality statistics. These datasets have been anonymised in accordance with predefined anonymisation criteria, so that the direct or indirect identification of surveyed units is not possible. The access to these data is relatively easy, as reported by users during the peer review visit.

However, researchers from academia and private institutes, as important users of microdata, often need the information in identifiable form, with the theoretical possibility of linking it with other external data sources. The peer review team was informed that these stakeholders unanimously expect a wider range of topics, covered by researchable microdata, and would also encourage ELSTAT to support their scientific activity with a more flexible system. According to Article 8.5 of the Greek Statistical Law, the ELSS agencies are allowed to provide researchers conducting statistical analysis for scientific purposes with access to data allowing the indirect identification of statistical units. In practice, however, ELSTAT is not yet fully equipped with the IT tools and technical methods to give access to such data. Currently, a precisely defined need for data must be specified in advance by the researcher during the request certification process and ELSTAT only provides the researcher with the given dataset. Every newly emerging idea or change in the data request would result in the need to run another process. This may result in a more difficult iteration procedure between ELSTAT and the user, while good practices concerning safe environments, where more dynamic queries can be served, are already available throughout the ESS.

To improve beyond compliance with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

R14. ELSTAT should ensure that the microdata available within the Hellenic Statistical System can be accessed, i.a. via secure environments. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 15.4)

While ELSTAT provides Eurostat with very detailed SIMS-based quality reports, the reports directed to users and published on its website are rather rudimentary. It would be advisable to produce user-friendly digests of the reports already provided to Eurostat for all statistics. In addition, the user-oriented reports of some of the ONAs reviewed are limited to a general description and do not contain

quality indicators. Users are consequently not provided with all the objective information to allow them to judge the quality of the statistical products.

Although the general level of trust in the quality of the published data was established with great effort in previous years, and less experienced users do not necessarily seek further confirmation of quality, ELSTAT would benefit from a more transparent set of quality reports that would explicitly explain the level of different quality components for more experienced users.

The peer review team also found that ONAs are less advanced than ELSTAT in providing users with information on quality, therefore their efforts should also be strengthened. Such a development would stabilise the trust achieved in Greek official statistics for the long-term.

To improve beyond compliance with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

R15. ELSTAT and the Other National Authorities reviewed (Ministry of Rural Development and Food, Ministry of Environment and Energy, National Documentation Centre) should enhance their quality reports for users, produced according to the Single Integrated Metadata Structure. These could include a more detailed assessment of product quality. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 15.7)

Due to a larger availability of administrative data and propelled by the Covid-19 crisis, ELSTAT has developed a series of ‘experimental’ statistics. This comprises new statistical products, which ELSTAT could develop on the basis of the wide range of administrative data obtained, and statistics based on innovative data sources. These were very favourably received by users. There seems to be wide scope for such experiments, fostered by the capabilities developed in ELSTAT’s new entity ‘Administrative and Big Data Section’; on the other hand, some of the experimental statistics could acquire the status and meet the quality requirements of official statistics.

To improve beyond compliance with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

R16. ELSTAT should continue to invest in the development and dissemination of ‘experimental’ statistics to accelerate the delivery of innovative statistical information. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 11.1)

The composition and mandate of the Advisory Committee of the Hellenic Statistical System (SYEPELSS) were set out in an amendment to the Greek Statistical Law (Article 3) in 2015. This amendment was adopted to assist ELSTAT in taking user needs into account in the formulation, coordination and implementation of the strategic goals and priorities for the Hellenic Statistical System, most notably with regard to the preparation of the Hellenic Statistical Programme and ELSTAT’s Annual Statistical Work Programmes. This new composition of the Committee has been operating since 2017, ensuring that user needs are efficiently reflected into statistical production.

The practical functioning of this Advisory Committee of the ELSS for users is rather narrow; it consists mainly of providing an advisory opinion to ELSTAT for the preparation of the Hellenic Statistical Programme and ELSTAT’s Annual Statistical Work Programme. This committee could also give advice on a more long-term strategy but, to do so, its functioning needs to be revised, e.g., by increasing the frequency of its meetings and/or organising seminars or conferences on strategic topics.

To improve beyond compliance with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

R17. The Chair of the Advisory Committee of the Hellenic Statistical System, in consultation with ELSTAT, should review the practical functioning of the Committee. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 11.1)

5.3 VIEWS OF THE NSI, AS THE NATIONAL COORDINATOR OF THE NSS AND THE PEER REVIEW, ON THOSE RECOMMENDATIONS WHERE THEY DIVERGE FROM THE PEER REVIEW EXPERTS' ASSESSMENT

None

ANNEX A – AGENDA OF THE VISIT

Timing	Topic	Participants
Day 1 – 17 October 2022		
09:00-09:30	Preparatory meeting: practical aspects of the visit and getting to know each other	<p>The Peer Review Expert Team: All</p> <p>ELSTAT: President Special Advisor President's Office Special Associate President's Office Head of Business Statistics Division Head of Methodology, Quality Management and International Relations Division, National Coordinator Head of International Cooperation and Public Relations Section Head of Quality and Certification of Statistics Section Employee of Quality and Certification of Statistics Section</p>
09:30-11:30	Presentation of the National Statistical System	<p>The Peer Review Expert Team: All</p> <p>ELSTAT: President Head of Directorate General of Statistics Head of Directorate General of Administration and Organisation Special Advisor President's Office Special Associate President's Office Head of Business Statistics Division Head of Methodology, Quality Management and International Relations Division, National Coordinator Head of Quality and Certification of Statistics Section</p>
11:30-11:45	Coffee break	
11:45-13:00	Professional independence and the statistical law (ES CoP principles 1, 2, 5 and 6).	<p>The Peer Review Expert Team: All</p> <p>ELSTAT: President Head of Directorate General of Administration and Organisation Special Advisor President's Office Special Associate President's Office Head of Business Statistics Division</p>
13:00-14:00	Lunch	
14:00-14:30	Good Practice Advisory Committee (GPAC)	<p>The Peer Review Expert Team: All</p>

		GPAC: Chairman
14:30-15:30	Resources (ES CoP principle 3)	The Peer Review Expert Team: All ELSTAT: Head of Directorate General of Statistics Head of Directorate General of Administration and Organisation Head of Business Statistics Division Head of Administration Division Head of Informatics Division Head of Budget and Accounting Section
15:30-15:45	Coffee break	
15:45-17:00	Planning and programming (ES CoP principles 1, 9 and 10)	The Peer Review Expert Team: All ELSTAT: Head of Directorate General of Statistics Head of Directorate General of Administration and Organisation Head of Business Statistics Division Head of Methodology, Quality Management and International Relations Division, National Coordinator Head of Quality and Certification of Statistics Section
17:00-18:00	Peer review expert team discussion	
Timing	Topic	Participants
Day 2 – 18 October 2022:		
09:00-10:00	Confidentiality (ES CoP principle 5)	The Peer Review Expert Team: All ELSTAT: Head of Directorate General of Administration and Organisation Special Advisor President's Office Special Associate President's Office Head of Informatics Division Head of Statistical Confidentiality Assurance Section Data Protection Officer
10:00-11:00	Administrative data sources	The Peer Review Expert Team: All ELSTAT: Head of Directorate General of Statistics Head of Business Statistics Division Head of Informatics Division

		Head of National Accounts Division Head of Administrative and Big Data Section
11:00-11:30	Coffee break	
11:30-12:15	Other data sources	The Peer Review Expert Team: All ELSTAT: Special Advisor President's Office Special Associate President's Office Head of Business Statistics Division Head of Administrative and Big Data Section
12:15-13:15	Quality governance (ES CoP principles 4 and 11 to 14)	The Peer Review Expert Team: All ELSTAT: President of ELSTAT Head of Directorate General of Statistics Head of Directorate General of Administration and Organisation Head of Business Statistics Division Head of Methodology, Quality Management and International Relations Division, National Coordinator
13:15-14:15	Lunch	
14:15-15:15	Quality and metadata management	The Peer Review Expert Team: All ELSTAT: Head of Directorate General of Administration and Organisation Head of Business Statistics Division Head of Methodology, Quality Management and International Relations Division, National Coordinator Head of Quality and Certification of Statistics Section
15:15-15:30	Coffee break	
15:30-16:30	Methodology (ES CoP principles 2, 7 and 8)	The Peer Review Expert Team: All ELSTAT: President Head of Business Statistics Division, Head of Methodology, Quality Management and International Relations Division, National Coordinator Head of Informatics Division Head of Primary Data Collection Division Head of Methodology and Nomenclatures Section Head of Statistical Programme Section
16:30-17:30	Internal communication (within ELSTAT) and human resources	The Peer Review Expert Team: All

		ELSTAT: Head of Directorate General of Administration and Organisation Head of Business Statistics Division Head of Administration Division Head of Personnel Training Section
17:30-18:00	Peer review expert team discussion	
Timing	Subject	Participants
Day 3 – 19 October 2022		
09:00-10:00	Coordination (ES COP principle 1bis)	The Peer Review Expert Team: All ELSTAT: Head of Directorate General of Administration and Organisation Special Associate President’s Office Head of Business Statistics Division Head of Methodology, Quality Management and International Relations Division, National Coordinator Head of Quality and Certification of Statistics Section
10:00-11:00	Meeting with ONA - National Documentation Centre (EKT)	The Peer Review Expert Team: All EKT: Statistical Head, Director of EKT Head of RDI Metrics and Services Department Responsible for European Statistics ELSTAT: Special Associate President’s Office Head of Quality and Certification of Statistics Section
11:00-11:30	Coffee break	
11:30-12:30	Meeting with ONA - Ministry of Environment and Energy (YPEN)	The Peer Review Expert Team: All YPEN: Statistical Head, Head of the Directorate for Energy Policies and Energy Efficiency Head of the Department of Statistics, Directorate for Energy Policies and Energy Efficiency Officer, Department of Statistics, Directorate for Energy Policies and Energy Efficiency Officer, Climate Change Department, Directorate of Climate Change and Air Quality Head of Southern Hellenic Energy Inspectorate Section Deputy Head of Directorate of Electronic Government and Head of Department of Statistics and Indicators ELSTAT:

		Special Associate President's Office Head of Quality and Certification of Statistics Section
12:30-13:30	Lunch	
13:30-14:30	Meeting with ONA - Ministry of Rural Development and Food (MoA)	The Peer Review Expert Team: All MoA: Statistics & Documentation Section, responsible for European Statistics ELSTAT: Special Associate President's Office Head of Quality and Certification of Statistics Section
14:30-15:15	Meeting with ELSTAT's coordination unit	The Peer Review Expert Team: All ELSTAT: Head of Directorate General of Administration and Organisation Special Associate President's Office Head of Business Statistics Division Head of Methodology, Quality Management and International Relations Division, National Coordinator Head of Quality and Certification of Statistics Section
15:15-16:00	Future orientation of ELSTAT	The Peer Review Expert Team: All ELSTAT: Head of Business Statistics Division, Head of National Accounts Synthesis Section, Head of Population and Migration Statistics Section
16:00-18:00	Peer review expert team discussion	
Timing	Topic	Participants
Day 4 – 20 October 2022		
09:00-10:00	Meeting with junior staff	The Peer Review Expert Team: All Junior Staff: Employee of Press Office Employee of General Government Accounts Section Employee of Energy and Environmental Statistics Section Employee of Cartography and Geospatial Data Section Employee of Phototypesetting and Typographical Formatting of Publications Section

10:00-11:00	Dissemination and external communication (ES CoP principles 6 and 15)	<p>The Peer Review Expert Team: All</p> <p>ELSTAT: President Head of President's Office, Head of Business Statistics Division, Head of Phototypesetting and Typographical Formatting of Publications Section</p>
11:00-11:15	Coffee break	
11:15-12:15	Meeting with Data holders	<p>The Peer Review Expert Team: All</p> <p>Data holders: Head of Data Services Directorate, Independent Authority for Public Revenue (IAPR) Department of Waste Registry, Licensing and Statistics, Directorate of Waste Management, General Secretariat of Waste Management Coordination Department of Waste Registry, Licensing and Statistics, Directorate of Waste Management, General Secretariat of Waste Management Coordination Head of General Directorate of Digital Systems, Infrastructures and Examinations, Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs Financial Director, General Directorate of Financial Planning & Support, Ministry of National Defence Officer in Procurement Payment Services, Ministry of National Defence Department A' for Customs Procedures Coordination & Simplifications, Customs Procedures Directorate, Independent Authority for Public Revenue (IAPR)</p>
12:15-13:15	Lunch	
13:15-13:45	Meeting with the Advisory Committee of the Hellenic Statistical System (SYEPELSS)	<p>The Peer Review Expert Team: All</p> <p>SYEPELSS: Member of SYEPELSS Hellenic Federation of Enterprises (SEV) Special Advisor for Sustainable Development</p>
13:45-14:45	Meeting with main users – Ministries and other public/private institutions (including the Central Bank as user)	<p>The Peer Review Expert Team: All</p> <p>Stakeholders: Head of Experts Unit on Employment, Social Security, Welfare and Social Affairs (M.E.K.Y.), Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs Chief of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation, UNICEF Greece Country Office Economic Advisor at the Office of the Prime Minister of Greece</p>

		Head of Statistics Department, Bank of Greece Head of General Secretary for Social Security Office, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
14:45-15:00	Coffee break	
15:00-16:00	Meeting with main users – scientific community	The Peer Review Expert Team: All Stakeholders: Research Director at Research and Policy Institute Dianeosis Professor, Head of MSc’s Program in Applied Statistics, Athens University of Economics and Business (AUEB) Professor, University of Peloponnese Professor, Athens University of Economics and Business (AUEB) and General Director, Foundation for Economic and Industrial Research (IOBE)
16:00-17:00	Meeting with main users - Media	The Peer Review Expert Team: All Stakeholders: Financial Journalist Athens Bureau Chief, Bloomberg Journalist, TA NEA
17:00-18:00	Peer review expert team discussion	
Timing	Topic	Participants
Day 5 – 21 October 2022		
09:00-09:45	Meeting with new data holders	The Peer Review Expert Team: All Data Holders: Head of Minister’s Office, Ministry of Digital Governance Research Director, Institute for Environmental Research and Sustainable Development (IERSD), National Observatory of Athens Head of (Coordinator) of Hellenic Parliamentary Budget Office Chairman of the Board of Directors and Scientific Director of Centre of Planning and Economic Research (KEPE) General Secretary of Fiscal Policy, Ministry of Finance
9:45-10:30	Innovation	The Peer Review Expert Team: All ELSTAT: President Head of President's Office Head of Directorate General of Statistics

		<p>Head of Directorate General of Administration and Organisation Special Advisor President's Office Special Associate President's Office Head of Business Statistics Division</p>
10:30-10:45	Coffee break	
10:45-12:00	Clarifications	<p>The Peer Review Expert Team: All</p> <p>ELSTAT: President of ELSTAT Special Advisor President's Office Special Associate President's Office Head of Business Statistics Division Head of Methodology, Quality Management and International Relations Division, National Coordinator Head of International Cooperation and Public Relations Section Head of Quality and Certification of Statistics Section</p>
12:00-13:00	Lunch	
13:00-14:00	Final meeting with ONAs	<p>The Peer Review Expert Team: All</p> <p>EKT: Director of EKT, Statistical Head Head of RDI Metrics and Services Department Responsible for European Statistics</p> <p>YPEN: Statistical Head, Head of the Directorate for Energy Policies and Energy Efficiency Head of the Department of Statistics, Directorate for Energy Policies and Energy Efficiency Department of Statistics, Directorate for Energy Policies and Energy Efficiency Climate Change Department, Directorate of Climate Change and Air Quality Head of Southern Hellenic Energy Inspectorate Section Deputy Head of Directorate of Electronic Government and Head of Department of Statistics and Indicators</p> <p>MoA: Statistics & Documentation Section, responsible for European Statistics</p> <p>ELSTAT: Head of Directorate General of Administration and Organisation Special Associate President's Office Head of Business Statistics Division</p>

		Head of Methodology, Quality Management and International Relations Division, National Coordinator Head of Quality and Certification of Statistics Section
14:00-15:30	Meeting with the senior management of ELSTAT	<p>The Peer Review Expert Team: All</p> <p>ELSTAT: President Head of President's Office Head of Directorate General of Statistics Head of Directorate General of Administration and Organisation Special Advisor President's Office Special Associate President's Office Head of Business Statistics Division Head of Methodology, Quality Management and International Relations Division, National Coordinator Head of International Cooperation and Public Relations Section Head of Quality and Certification of Statistics Section</p>

ANNEX B – LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

ELSTAT:

President
Head of President's Office
Special Advisor President's Office
Special Associate President's Office
Head of Directorate General of Statistics
Head of Directorate General of Administration and Organisation
Head of National Accounts Division
Head of Business Statistics Division
Head of Primary Data Collection Division
Head of Administration Division
Head of Methodology, Quality Management and International Relations Division, National Coordinator
Head of Informatics Division
Head of Administrative and Big Data Section
Head of Budget and Accounting Section
Head of Methodology and Nomenclatures Section
Head of Statistical Programme Section
Head of Quality and Certification of Statistics Section, Alternate National Coordinator
Head of International Cooperation and Public Relations Section, Alternate Communication Officer
Head of Personnel Training Section
Head of Phototypesetting and Typographical Formatting of Publications Section
Head of Statistical Confidentiality Assurance Section
Head of National Accounts Synthesis Section
Head of Population and Migration Statistics Section
Data Protection Officer (DPO)
Employee of Quality and Certification of Statistics Section
Employee of Press Office
Employee of General Government Accounts Section
Employee of Energy and Environmental Statistics Section
Employee of Cartography and Geospatial Data Section
Employee of Phototypesetting and Typographical Formatting of Publications Section

GPAC:

Chairman

ONAs:

National Documentation Centre

Statistical Head, Director of EKT
Head of RDI Metrics and Services Department
Responsible for European Statistics

Ministry of Environment and Energy

Statistical Head, Head of the Directorate for Energy Policies and Energy Efficiency
Head of the Department of Statistics, Directorate for Energy Policies and Energy Efficiency
Officer, Department of Statistics, Directorate for Energy Policies and Energy Efficiency
Officer, Climate Change Department, Directorate of Climate Change and Air Quality
Head of Southern Hellenic Energy Inspectorate Section
Deputy Head of Directorate of Electronic Government and Head of Department of Statistics and Indicators

Ministry of Rural Development and Food

Officer, Statistics & Documentation Section, responsible for European Statistics

Stakeholders:

Data holders:

Head of Data Services Directorate, Independent Authority for Public Revenue (IAPR)
Officer, Department of Waste Registry, Licensing and Statistics, Directorate of Waste Management, General Secretariat of Waste Management Coordination
Officer, Department of Waste Registry, Licensing and Statistics, Directorate of Waste Management, General Secretariat of Waste Management Coordination
Head of General Directorate of Digital Systems, Infrastructures and Examinations, Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs
Financial Director, General Directorate of Financial Planning & Support, Ministry of National Defence
Officer in Procurement Payment Services, Ministry of National Defence
Head of Department A' for Customs Procedures Coordination & Simplifications, Customs Procedures Directorate, Independent Authority for Public Revenue (IAPR)

Main Users - Ministries and other public/private institutions, including the Central Bank

Head of Experts Unit on Employment, Social Security, Welfare and Social Affairs (M.E.K.Y.), Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
Chief of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation, UNICEF Greece Country Office
Economic Advisor at the Office of the Prime Minister of Greece
Head of Statistics Department, Bank of Greece
Head of General Secretary for Social Security Office, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs

Main users - scientific community:

Research Director at Research and Policy Institute Dianeosis
Professor, Head of MSc's Program in Applied Statistics, Athens University of Economics and Business (AUEB)
Professor, University of Peloponnese
Professor, Athens University of Economics and Business (AUEB) and General Director, Foundation for Economic and Industrial Research (IOBE)

SYPELSS members:

Member of SYEPELSS
Hellenic Federation of Enterprises (SEV)
Special Advisor for Sustainable Development

Main users - media:

Independent Financial Journalist
Athens Bureau Chief, Bloomberg
Journalist, TA NEA

New data holders:

Head of Minister's Office, Ministry of Digital Governance
Research Director, Institute for Environmental Research and Sustainable Development (IERSD),
National Observatory of Athens
Head of (Coordinator) of Hellenic Parliamentary Budget Office
Chairman of the Board of Directors and Scientific Director of Centre of Planning and Economic
Research (KEPE)
General Secretary of Fiscal Policy, Ministry of Finance