

The EFTA Statistical Office: 30 Years of Statistical Cooperation

The EFTA Statistical Office: 30 Years of Statistical Cooperation

Authors: Volker Täube, Marius Andersen, Pascal Bisang, Joël Brunner, Ambre Crettenand,

Elena Friso, Bragi Ólafsson, Fride Sigurdsson

Managing Editors: Volker Täube and Thorfinnur Omarsson

Editor: Nicola Abbott Remøy **Design:** Raphaëlle Borgeaud

Published November 2021

Photo Credits:

Photos in this publication can be found here: https://photos.efta.int/2021/2021-11-ESO-Years-Publication/

Editor's note:

For more information on EFTA and ESO's activities and institutional framework, please see our website: www.efta.int

Subscription:

This publication is also available in electronic form. To access it via the EFTA website, please visit https://www.efta.int/publications

Table of Contents

Forewords	4
Olafur Hjalmarson, Director General, Hagstofa (Statistics Iceland)	4
Andrea Scheller, Director General, Amt für Statistik (Statistics Liechtenstein)	5
European Free Trade Association	6
EFTA: legal provisions and duty stations	7
EFTA bodies	9
Interview with Henri Gétaz, EFTA Secretary-General, Geneva	10
Interview with Hege Marie Hoff, EFTA Deputy Secretary-General, Brussels	12
The EFTA Statistical Office	14
Incorporation of statistical legislation into the EEA Agreement	16
Cooperation with the EU (focus on statistics)	17
Inclusion monitoring	18
Seconded National Experts (SNEs)	19
European Statistical Training Programme (ESTP)	19
Compliance Monitoring	20
The European Statistical System (ESS)	21
Interview with Geir Axelsen, Director General, Statistik Sentralbyrå (Statistics Norway)	23
Interview with Georges-Simon Ulrich, Director-General Bundesamt für Statistik (Swiss Federal	
Statistical Office)	25
Interview with Mariana Kotzeva, Director-General of Eurostat	27
ESO Activities with Third Countries	29
Interview with Lidia Bratanova, Director of the UNECE Statistical Division	31
Interview with Steven Vale, Senior Statistical Advisor, UNECE	34
Statistical stocktaking exercises	37
Dissemination / Weblinks	37
Annexes	
Annex I – Two-pillar Stucture	39
Annex II – Fields of work of Seconded National Experts	40
Annex III – ESTP courses offered by EFTA since 2005	42
Annex IV – Technical Cooperation in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA)	45
Annex V – Technical Cooperation in the European Neighbourhood Policy, Western Balkans, and Turkey	46
Annex VI – Presentation of EFTA in Russian	47



Forewords

Celebrating 30 years of success

Since the establishment of the EFTA Statistical Office (ESO) in 1991, there have been vast changes in official statistics, statistical regulations and visibility of statistics from the EFTA countries. The role of ESO in these changes has been vital and the office has had a good and fruitful cooperation with Eurostat while at the same time keeping its independence in line with the two-pillar system of the European Economic Area (EEA). ESO has been active in supporting the EFTA national statistical offices as regards legal matters and implementation of EEA regulations, coordination of statistical programs, compliance monitoring and other formal matters. Meanwhile, the office has also been relentless in the constant monitoring and scrutinising of Eurostat statistical publications to ensure the publication of data from the EFTA countries as well as their visibility. This work is as important as all the informal communication and permanent promotion for the EFTA countries.

Promoting our part in statistical cooperation is key for being seen as valuable and fully participating partners in the European Statistical System (ESS).

International statistical cooperation is different from most other international work as common interests in statistics are more frequent than in most other fields. However, there are also differences between countries that require understanding and different approaches as regards methods or the concrete implementation of statistical production processes. ESO has been very helpful in supporting the EFTA national statistical offices in these areas and has always worked closely with us when needed. Not to mention the statistical support and capacity building ESO



Olafur Hjalmarson

Director General, Hagstofa (Statistics Iceland), Current Chair of the group of EFTA Heads of NSIs (since June 2021)

has planned and delivered to third countries outside the ESS through dedicated technical support projects.

When looking back one wonders, how with so few people working at the EFTA Statistical Office, it can manage to do so well on so many fronts.

I want to congratulate the current Director, Volker Täube, his Deputy Marius Andersen and the staff of ESO for their important and successful work as we all celebrate the 30 year anniversary of the office in 2021. Furthermore, I wish the reader of the present publication an interesting read on the various aspects of statistical cooperation presented.

Slew Homewas





30 years of statistical cooperation in the ESS

The increasing integration of European countries has always been accompanied by the need for information on various aspects of their respective societies, such as social conditions, the economy, the labour market and the environment to name but a few. Official Statistics, as a means of providing impartial and reliable relevant information to policy makers as well as citizens in general, represents a common solution to such information needs, which is why the field of statistics was taken on board as a horizontal provision in the creation of the EEA Agreement or why a Swiss-EU Agreement in statistics was concluded. At the organisational level, it is the partnership between the EFTA and EU Member States and Eurostat – the European Statistical System (ESS) – which guides the advancement and harmonisation of official statistics in Europe through comprehensive legislation.

The value placed by the EFTA Member States on well-functioning European statistical cooperation is reflected in the establishment of an EFTA Secretariat duty station – the EFTA Statistical Office - in Luxembourg for this purpose in 1991. From the EU side, the very presence of the EFTA Statistical Office in Eurostat premises (a unique arrangement in the European Commission) is a strong statement of the particularly close relationship between the EU and EFTA in the field of statistics.

Participating in Eurostat's working groups and training courses, giving lectures in advanced training courses or volunteering as an expert in technical cooperation, staff members acquire international exposure and experience that is an attractive addition to their job portfolio. Moreover, many a staff member of ESO and also many a national expert seconded to Eurostat from the EFTA Member States have successfully embarked on or continued a career in international cooperation at their home institution or abroad.



Andrea Scheller
Director General, Amt für Statistik (Statistics
Liechtenstein)
Outgoing Chair of the group of EFTA Heads of NSIs
(until May 2021)

On the occasion of the 30th anniversary of ESO I wish that this success story will continue for all involved for many years to come. Three decades, and more than 300 legal acts later, experience has shown that the decision for the establishment of the EFTA Statistical Office in Luxembourg was a very good one, as my colleague Ólafur Hjálmarsson so nicely outlined in his greetings. It should also be mentioned that the EFTA statistical cooperation also benefits the National Statistical Institutes as employers.









European Free Trade Association

Since 1991 the EFTA Statistical Office (ESO) has been serving its Member States, Iceland Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland, in and around the evolving European Statistical System (ESS). On the occasion of the 30th anniversary of ESO, the present publication aims at providing the interested reader with some background information on the legal and institutional settings that accompany those activities, as well as an overview of some of the achievements attained in the area of statistical cooperation over the last three decades.

As will become clearer, the legal provisions and implications that guide the cooperation amongst EFTA Member States on the one side, and the relations of EFTA and its Member States towards the EU and other countries and institutions on the other side, are complex. The following paragraphs will first give an overview on the EFTA Secretariat, its duty stations in Geneva, Brussels and Luxembourg, and how the different legal mandates are reflected in the daily work. Other EFTA bodies, such as the EFTA Court or the EFTA Surveillance Authority that exercise functions in the context of the European Economic Area (EEA) Agreement will also be shortly introduced.

Subsequently, the focus will shift towards the legal settings that mandate ESO's activities. In this context, it is especially the EEA Agreement that provides the basis for ESO's role as a bridging body between EEA-EFTA National Statistical Institutes (NSIs), their EEA-EU counterparts and Eurostat. Although the tasks related to statistical cooperation as defined by the EEA Agreement constitute a large part of ESO's dealings and therefore include especially the EFTA EEA countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, many activities – especially in the field of technical statistical cooperation with third countries – are exercised on behalf of all EFTA Member States, including Switzerland.

Consequently, the presentation will focus in more detail on ESO's tasks and activities and how those serve EFTA Member States in the field of official statistics.





EFTA: legal provisions and duty stations

The European Free Trade Association (EFTA) is an intergovernmental organisation set up for the promotion of free trade and economic integration to the benefit of its four Member States – Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland – and their trading partners around the globe. Although EFTA is not a customs union, which means that its Member States have the right to also negotiate bilateral third-country trade agreements, it does have a common trade policy.

Relations with the EEC, later the European Community (EC) and the European Union (EU), have been at the core of EFTA activities from the beginning. Many former EFTA Member States have become EU Member States over the years. Today, EFTA and EU Member States participate in the European Single Market. The respective legal provisions for the participation of three EFTA Member States (Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway) is the **European Economic** Area Agreement (EEA), while Switzerland has concluded separately CH/EU Bilateral **Agreements** with the EU in this regard. We will re-visit those legal settings with a focus on their relevance for statistics when presenting ESO's activities later.

In addition to the EEA Agreement and the bilateral agreements that provide the legal settings for the cooperation of EFTA Member States with the EU, the **EFTA Convention** governs relations between the EFTA States.

Founded by the Stockholm Convention in 1960, EFTA was originally intended as a counter design to the European Economic Community (EEC) while focussing mainly on fostering common trade relations instead of striving for political integration. Founding countries of EFTA were Austria, Denmark, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

The Stockholm Convention was updated later on and became the Vaduz Convention which integrated the principles and rules of the EEA Agreement as well as those of the CH/EU bilateral Agreement. The Vaduz Convention entered into force on 1 June 2002. Meanwhile it experienced several amendments amongst which figure such topics as free movements of persons, social security or trade in services.

Whereas the EFTA Secretariat plays an important role with regard to the coordination between EEA-EFTA Member States and their relations with the EU, Switzerland mainly handles the relations with the EU based on the bilateral agreements in their own right.

In line with the broad objectives of the Convention, EFTA has developed economic relations with a number of countries outside the European Union (referred to as third countries) through free trade and cooperation agreements. This network covers more than 30 countries and territories and has secured EFTA's economic operators free access to markets with a total of around 440 million consumers outside the EU.

The EFTA Secretariat has three duty stations: Geneva, Brussels and Luxembourg. The day-to-day running of the Secretariat is headed by the Secretary-General based in Geneva, who is assisted by three Deputy Secretaries-General, one based in Geneva and the other two in Brussels. EFTA employs approximately 90 staff members, of whom a third are based in Geneva and two thirds in either Brussels or Luxembourg. The division of tasks in the EFTA Secretariat corresponds to the different duty stations as follows.







EFTA Duty Station Geneva

The Headquarters in Geneva deals with the management and negotiation of free trade agreements with non-EU countries, and provide support to the EFTA Council. It is also the seat of the Secretary-General who oversees all of the EFTA Secretariat's activities.

EFTA Duty Station Brussels

In Brussels, the Secretariat provides support for the management of the EEA Agreement and assists the Member States in the preparation of new legislation for integration into the EEA Agreement. The Secretariat also assists the Member States in the elaboration of input to EU decision making.



EFTA Duty Station Luxembourg

The EFTA Statistical Office in Luxembourg contributes to the development of a broad and integrated European Statistical System (ESS) and coordinates statistical technical cooperation activities with third countries (countries not part of EFTA/the EU) in cooperation with Eurostat and other international organisations, such as the United Nations Commission for Europe (UNECE).





EFTA bodies

EFTA Council

The EFTA Council is the governing body of the Association. It is responsible for intra-EFTA relations, as well as relations between EFTA States and third countries. Financial and common administrative matters lie with the Council, which meets once a month at the level of heads of permanent missions to EFTA in Geneva and twice a year at ministerial level. All Member States are represented and have one vote each.

The institutional framework of the EEA consists of two pillars, and is thus often referred to as the two-pillar structure (see annex I for an overview of the two-pillar structure). The EU and its institutions constitute one pillar (EU bodies), while the EEA EFTA States and their institutions constitute the other pillar (EEA EFTA bodies), mirroring those of the EU. The EEA EFTA bodies are as described below.

EFTA Standing Committee

The EFTA Standing committee, which consists of the Ambassadors to the EU of Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, and observers from Switzerland and the EFTA Surveillance Authority, serves as a forum for the EEA EFTA countries to reach common positions before meetings in the EEA Joint Committee. It therefore serves an important preparatory role in the decision making. There are five subcommittees under the EFTA Standing Committee, each dealing with various parts of the EEA Agreement. Statistical cooperation in the EEA Agreement is organised in Subcommittee IV on flanking and horizontal policies.

The EFTA Surveillance Authority (ESA)

ESA monitors compliance with legislation in the EEA EFTA countries. In this regard, ESA fulfils the role of the European Commission as regards compliance monitoring for the EU Member States, as well as for the EEA EFTA countries.

EFTA Court

The EFTA Court fulfils the judicial function within the EFTA system and has jurisdiction with regard to the EEA EFTA States. The competences of the Court include dealing with infringement actions brought by the EFTA Surveillance Authority against an EFTA State with regard to the implementation, application or interpretation of EEA law rules and giving advisory opinions to courts in EFTA States on the interpretation of EEA rules. Therefore, the jurisdiction of the Court largely corresponds to the jurisdiction of the Court of Justice of the European Union over EU States.

The Committee of MPs of EFTA Member States

The EFTA Parliamentary Committee is a forum for parliamentarians from the EFTA States. It provides a valuable link to political life in each EFTA country and, through its cooperation with parliamentarians in the European Union, serves as a link between political life in EFTA and the EU.

The EFTA Consultative Committee

The Committee is a forum for trade unions and employers' organisations in the EFTA States. Through its co-operation with social partners in the EU, the Committee also serves as a link between social partners in EFTA and in the EU.

Between the two pillars, a number of joint bodies have been established. Through these joint bodies, the EEA States jointly implement and develop the EEA Agreement. Particularly important in this regard is the EEA Joint Committee which is responsible for the management of the EEA Agreement and is the decision-making body for incorporating new legislation into the EU Agreement.





Interview with Henri Gétaz EFTA Secretary-General, Geneva

1. As Secretary-General of the EFTA Secretariat, you know our organisation intimately. What would you say are the common interests that bring the EFTA States together and what are the organisation's goals?

What brings the EFTA countries together is the common dedication to free trade; the willingness to foster trade among themselves in Europe and worldwide for the benefit of their citizens and economies. They do that whilst promoting not only trade, but also sustainable trade and inclusiveness in their trade policy.

2. How does the EFTA Statistical Office (ESO) in Luxembourg fit into EFTA's overall organisational structure and how does it contribute to achieving EFTA's objectives?

ESO is an integral part of the EFTA Secretariat as a directorate in our structure. It provides an important contribution to sound policymaking. There is no sound policy without reliable statistics. Therefore, thanks to ESO's work, we can base our trade policy on serious facts and figures.



3. One important partner of ESO is the European Community's Statistical Office (Eurostat). From your experience, what are the challenges of cooperation between an intergovernmental organisation like EFTA – where Member States keep sovereignty - and a supranational one like the European Union, where Member States delegate parts of their sovereignty to common institutions like the EU?

It is true that the EFTA countries base their international cooperation on the traditional principles of international law and intergovernmental cooperation, whereas the EU works on the supranational organisation basis. However, as our cooperation in statistics shows, where there is a will, there is a way to overcome these institutional differences. The EFTA countries are fully integrated in the European Statistics System (ESS). With a system of agreements that ensure a seamless integration of our countries in that system. This works to the satisfaction of both the EFTA Member States and our EU/European partners.





4. How does the EFTA Secretariat work to best serve the interest of the EFTA Member States given the different legal frameworks of the EEA, the Swiss bilateral Agreement, and third-country free trade agreements?

The Secretariat supports our Member States in these different activities. When it comes to statistics, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Iceland cooperate with the EU via the EEA Agreement, whereas Switzerland has a bilateral agreement on statistics with the EU. Both legal frameworks provide for full integration into the ESS and the Secretariat supports all the Member States based on these different legal frameworks in the same way.

5. The EFTA Secretary-General and headquarters are based in Geneva while EFTA has also duty stations in Brussels and Luxembourg. What was the rationale behind choosing these locations?

We want to be close to where things happen, depending on the kind of activities we have. Therefore, EFTA is headquartered in Geneva and runs its trade activities from Geneva. This is because Geneva is the capital of global trade with the WTO and a number of other international organisations that deal with trade. ESO is based in Luxembourg where the main partner Eurostat is located. In Brussels, we run the activities as they pertain to the EEA and this location was chosen as our closest partners are the institutions of the EU.

6. What do you see as the important accomplishments of the EFTA Statistical Office in these 30 years?

ESO has ensured a seamless integration of our countries into the ESS, which is not to be underestimated. I remember when the agreements entered into force; both the EEA and the Swiss bilateral agreements induced quite a push in the statistics production in our Member States. A core function of ESO is the very important role in making this cooperation seamless, including the incorporation of new EU legislation in our respective agreements.

Statistics cooperation is also a living animal in a way. People meet and discuss. We now have to face new challenges, such as digitalisation of societies that require new approaches to capture reality through statistics. This kind of work is carried out through ESO that provides support for that.

Finally, ESO has established itself as a reliable partner when it comes to technical cooperation with countries outside Europe by providing support to third-country NSIs. I am very proud of these fantastic achievements and looking forward to the next decade of dedicated work of ESO.







Interview with Hege Marie Hoff EFTA Deputy Secretary-General, Brussels

1. As Deputy Secretary-General, you are based in Brussels. What are the main tasks addressed in the Brussels duty station and what is your function?

The main responsibility of the EFTA Secretariat in Brussels is to serve our Member States in their work related to the EEA Agreement and the incorporation of new EU legal acts. This means all the work from when a new legal act has been proposed on the EU side until the act has been incorporated into the EEA Agreement through a decision of the EEA Joint Committee. With our work, we aim to support the main objective of the EEA Agreement, namely safeguarding common rules and equal conditions of competition. My role in this is to oversee our work related to the EEA Agreement, support, and give advice as best as I can.

2. What role does the EFTA Statistical Office and statistics in general serve in the EEA?

The aim of our statistical cooperation is to provide reliable and comparable statistics to describe and monitor all the different policy areas and programmes covered by the EEA Agreement. This information provides answers to questions such as how the economy is evolving, what the standard of living is, and what the environmental status is in a certain sector? With this broad application of the statistical cooperation, you can also see how this supports the core objective of the EEA Agreement, namely having a well-functioning internal market.

The role of ESO is to serve as a liaison office between the three EEA EFTA States in the field of statistics and to support and coordinate their work related to the incorporation of new legal acts into the EEA Agreement.

As ESO is located together with Eurostat, ESO is very well placed to enhance cooperation and communication between the EFTA States' national statistical experts and their EU colleagues, as well as with Eurostat.

3. EEA EFTA States are part of the European Statistical System (ESS). How do EFTA Member States benefit from the ESS?

Harmonisation of statistics is important in order to make international and regional comparisons. The European Statistical System makes it possible to coordinate the methodologies we use for the production of official statistics.

Thus, with this system, the EEA EFTA States have and provide access to high-quality, independent information about our economies and society. This information can be used for decision-making purposes, research, and democratic debate.





4. What are the possibilities of EFTA Member States in shaping European statistical legislation?

As members of the European Statistical System, our three EEA Member States also participate in working groups where new EU legislation is worked out. Here they can therefore discuss and shape new EU legislation in the field of statistics together with their EU colleagues.

Experts from the EEA EFTA States participate on an equal footing with experts from the EU Member States.

5. What do you see as the important accomplishments of the EFTA Statistical Office in these 30 years?

The EEA Agreement has now been in force for 27 years and ESO has played a key role in supporting and coordinating the work of EEA EFTA States in the field of statistics during all these years. ESO has actively supported participation of our EFTA experts in working groups that discuss and shape new statistical legislation and prepare for timely incorporation of these legal acts into the EEA Agreement. In fact, more than 300 legal acts in the field of statistics have been successfully incorporated into the EEA Agreement. This is certainly an accomplishment that stands out for me!

Finally, I would like to say congratulations on 30 years to my dear colleagues in ESO, and all the best for the next 30 years!





EUROPEAN FREE TRADE ASSOCIATION

EFTA STATISTICAL OFFICE

The EFTA Statistical Office

The EFTA Statistical Office (ESO) was established in 1991 as a liaison office between the EFTA NSIs and Eurostat. Since the office was created, the tasks have been expanded and the role of ESO has become more formalised. Nevertheless, the initial and overarching objective of the office was, and still is to promote the full inclusion of the EFTA States in the continuously evolving European Statistical System.

With the EEA Agreement established in 1994, the three EEA EFTA countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway became partners in the European Statistical System (ESS). With the rights and obligations of the three EEA EFTA NSIs established in the EEA Agreement, the role of ESO also included supporting these NSIs in the process of assessing and incorporating new statistical legislation into the EEA Agreement among other things.

Another important milestone was the establishment of the bilateral agreement between EU and Switzerland in 2006. Although ESO does not have a specific role concerning the bilateral agreement, this still constituted an important milestone in the European statistical cooperation, because all four EFTA countries

including Switzerland became integrated partners of the ESS.

In addition to the cooperation within the ESS, ESO, in close cooperation with the four EFTA NSIs, Eurostat and UNECE, contributes to building statistical capacities by contributing financially and by providing expertise to selected partner countries. ESO builds and decides on its capacity building activities on the results of regularly conducted statistical stocktaking exercises (e.g. global assessments, peer reviews, sector reviews, etc.). The organisation of training courses, international conferences and seminars with beneficiary countries are all closely coordinated with ESO's international partners such as Eurostat, UNECE and others.

In 2021, there are six staff in ESO; the Director of ESO, the Deputy Head of ESO, two Administrative Coordinators, one EFTA Trainee and one short-term Seconded National Expert (SNE). In addition, ESO pays for two Seconded National Experts from EFTA NSIs to Eurostat that are placed in the Unit (B3) Enlargement, neighbourhood and development cooperation.







From left to right: Stefan Sigurthorsson (EFTA-SNE); Simen Saeterdal (EFTA-SNE); Lars Svennebye (ESO Deputy/outgoing); Bragi Ólafsson (ESO Administrative Coordinator); Volker Täube (ESO Director); Fride Sigurdsson (ESO Trainee); Marius Andersen (ESO Deputy/incoming); Paul Camenzind (CH-SNE); Joël Brunner (ESO Trainee). Absent: Elena Friso (ESO Administrative Coordinator); Claude Macchi (CH-SNE); Kurt Wass (EEA-SNE).

For ESO being a liaison office between the EFTA countries and Eurostat, it is useful being located in Luxembourg and in the same premises as Eurostat. This ensures easy access to and frequent contact with Eurostat for the various tasks and services offered in the context of statistical cooperation in the EEA Agreement and in the European Statistical System.

On the one hand, the role of ESO is to liaise between the EFTA countries and Eurostat. On the other hand, it serves as a contact point and coordinator between EFTA and the EFTA Member States on statistical cooperation within the EEA Agreement, which includes the process of integrating new EU legislation in the area of statistics.





Incorporation of statistical legislation into the EEA Agreement

A key task for ESO, is to coordinate and support the EEA EFTA NSIs in the process of incorporating new EEA relevant legal acts in the area of statistics. This work can be described as consisting of two main stages:

- 1. The identification and preparation of legislation
- 2. The incorporation of legal acts into the EEA Agreement

Preparatory stage

The preparatory phase includes the work of preparing proposals for statistical legislation and adopting implementing or delegated acts in the European Commission. According to the EEA Agreement and the bilateral Swiss/EU Agreement, the EFTA countries participate fully but without the right to vote in Commission expert groups and its supporting groups. This implies that the EFTA countries have the opportunity to contribute and take part in shaping legislation together with their EU colleagues in the preparatory stages such as expert groups.

Eurostat manages the preparations of new legal acts for European statistics. The European Statistical System Committee (ESSC) has the authority to make formal decisions, including preparing proposals for legislation or in some circumstances adopting implementing acts. New legislation is discussed in Eurostat task forces, working groups and Directors' meetings and formally decided upon in the ESSC. During these stages, ESO is mainly an observer while it is up to the countries to follow the respective preparations.

• Proposals for new acts of the European Parliament and the Council (basic acts) are adopted by the European Commission. In the preparatory phases of these acts the EFTA countries are free to give their views on such proposals, also when the ESSC is consulted on proposals for new basic acts in the area of statistics. The ESSC usually gives its opinion on new basic acts through this consultation.

- •The ESSC can under some conditions adopt new implementing acts or make amendments to existing acts through the examination procedure or regulatory procedure with scrutiny in its capacity as a comitology committee. For these type of decisions, the EEA EFTA countries do not give a formal vote, but their joint opinion is given either through written procedure or in the ESSC meeting. ESO coordinates this process by collecting the views of the EEA EFTA countries and submitting the joint opinion to the ESSC when the ESSC decides by written procedure. When voting is done during a meeting of the ESSC, the chair of the Working Group of the Heads of the NSIs gives the opinion of the EEA EFTA countries.
- For new delegated acts these are usually adopted by the Expert Group of National Statistical Institutes and consultations are often done in writing or in back-to-back meetings with the ESSC. These acts are not formally voted upon, but each EFTA country can give its opinion on the proposals.

For new legal acts of the European Parliament and the Council, the EEA EFTA countries make an early assessment of horizontal challenges on Commission proposals. This is intended to facilitate discussions on such challenges at an early stage in order to avoid delays in the incorporation process after the European Parliament and the Council have adopted the legal acts. ESO distributes the Commission proposals to the countries along with a specific form (Commission Proposal Form) for assessing challenges with incorporation. ESO's assessment of horizontal challenges is included the Commission Proposal Form. This stage begins when a new legal act is adopted by the EU.





1. Identification

The EFTA Secretariat monitors Commission registers for legislation and the Official Journal of the EU for new EEA-relevant legislation. New statistical legislation identified in the Official Journal is forwarded to ESO. ESO also monitors the Official Journal of the EU for new EEA-relevant statistical legislation in order to make sure all EEA-relevant legislation in the area of statistics is considered for incorporation into the EEA Agreement.

2. Assessment through standard or fast-track procedure

Once a new legal act is identified as relevant for incorporation, ESO assesses the act for potential horizontal challenges. ESO considers whether the act should be assessed according to standard or fast-track procedure and submits the legal act, together with the relevant assessment form to the Working Group of the Heads of the NSIs:

- The fast-track procedure form is used for legal acts that are considered straightforward for incorporation into the EEA Agreement. These are usually legal acts without any particular horizontal challenges or required adaptations. The NSIs only need to react in a situation where they consider that there is a need to assess the legal act under standard procedure.
- Standard procedure applies for all other legal acts. ESO identifies possible horizontal challenges and distributes the standard procedure with this assessment to the EEA EFTA NSIs. The NSIs will similarly assess if they consider whether the legal act is EEA relevant (and thus should be incorporated into the EEA Agreement), has possible horizontal challenges in the legal act, has needs for adaptations of the legal text and/ or whether there are possible constitutional requirements of the legal act before incorporation.

3. Preparation and adoption of Joint Committee Decisions

Based on the feedback from the EEA EFTA States in the procedures described above and taking into account needs for adaptations, the EFTA Secretariat in cooperation with ESO prepares a draft Joint Committee Decision (ICD) to incorporate the act into the EEA Agreement. Once the EEA EFTA States approve the draft Decision, first in the Working Group of the Heads of the NSIs and subsequently in the Subcommittee IV for horizontal and flanking policies, EFTA forwards the legal act to the EU. In the EEA process, it is the European External Action Service (EEAS) which coordinates the EU's part of the EEA process. When both sides have finalised their approval procedures, the EEA Joint Committee adopts the JCD and the act is incorporated into the EEA Agreement. Statistical legislation is included in Annex XXI in the EEA Agreement.

For more information about the procedures and the different parts of the assessments, we refer to the handbook on EEA EFTA procedures. Whereas the EU has its Official Journal and EUR-Lex for publishing and accessing legislation, the EEA counterpart for legislation is EEA-Lex. EEA-Lex provides information about proposed EU legal acts with possible EEA relevance, adopted EU acts under consideration in the EEA process and acts incorporated including JCDs.

Cooperation with the EU (focus on statistics)

Two legal frameworks govern the cooperation between the EFTA countries and the EU; the EEA Agreement for the three EEA EFTA countries, and the bilateral Swiss/EU Agreement for Switzerland.

The EEA Agreement unites the EU Member States and the three EEA EFTA States into the internal market governed by the same basic rules. The EEA Agreement specifies the different





areas relevant to the single market including a number of cooperation areas known as flanking and horizontal policies, with one of these areas being statistics. Statistical cooperation is defined in the following way in the EEA Agreement.

- Article 76 of the EEA Agreement states that the Contracting Parties shall ensure the production and dissemination of coherent and comparable statistical information for describing and monitoring all relevant economic, social and environmental aspects of the EEA.
- Annex XXI contains the specific provisions in statistics; these are the legal acts adopted by the EEA Joint Committee and in force.
- Protocol 30 deals with the organisation of the cooperation and also defines the contributions of the EEA EFTA countries into the cooperation.

The cooperation between Switzerland and the EU is governed by a number of bilateral agreements in order to secure access to the internal market. One of these bilateral agreements is the bilateral agreement on statistics which ensures by and large the same rights and obligations for Switzerland in the ESS as for the three EEA EFTA States. The agreement establishes the rights and obligations as well as the cooperation modes of Switzerland and EU. Similar to Annex XXI of the EEA Agreement the relevant statistical legislation is defined in Annex A of the bilateral agreement. Annex B of the agreement defines the financial rules and contribution of Switzerland to the statistical cooperation.

Although there are two separate legal frameworks defining the statistical cooperation between the EFTA States and the EU, their purpose is similar and both frameworks recognise the value and role of harmonised statistics in the governance of the internal market. Furthermore, both legal frameworks integrate the EFTA countries as partners in the ESS.

Inclusion monitoring



Marius Andersen, Deputy Head of the EFTA Statistical Office, and Bragi Olafsson, Administrative Coordinator, discussing inclusion monitoring.

One key element in the statistical cooperation between the EFTA countries and Eurostat is that the EFTA States shall provide data to Eurostat in accordance with their legal obligations, and Eurostat is obliged to publish statistics on these countries through the normal dissemination channels of Eurostat. For this reason, ESO monitors inclusion of data in Eurostat publications and provides several indicators on inclusion of EFTA data. Part of this monitoring also includes examining situations where EFTA States' data are not included in Eurostat publications and the reasons for this.

Given the broad coverage of different statistical areas and the high number of articles, ESO gives high priority to monitoring Statistics Explained articles. ESO monitors a sample of about 100 articles on a yearly basis and the sample includes publications from all the broad statistical areas. The legal basis for reporting of EFTA data as well as possible reasons for non-inclusion is also examined for the sample of articles. Furthermore, ESO monitors the inclusion of EFTA data in social media such as the Eurostat Twitter page and other channels like news releases, statistical books, Eurobase (Eurostat's dissemination database) and specific indicator frameworks that use European statistics.

Based on the monitoring, several indicators are





produced including inclusion indicators and indicators describing possible reasons for data not being included in Eurostat publications. These indicators serve as information for improving inclusion of EFTA data, and as a tool for improving reporting by the NSIs as well as inclusion of EFTA data by Eurostat. By covering multiple dissemination channels, the inclusion monitoring thus also serves the purpose of monitoring the visibility of statistics from the EFTA States disseminated to various user groups.

Seconded National Experts (SNEs)

Protocol 30 of the EEA Agreement stipulates that the EFTA countries shall contribute financially to the costs related to handling and disseminating data from their countries. While part of this contribution is provided through the EEA budget, a part of the contribution is covered by providing Seconded National Experts (SNEs). These are experts recruited from the NSIs of the EFTA countries to work fully integrated in Eurostat for a period of 2 – 4 years with the option of an additional extension of 2 years (maximum 6 years) in justified cases. These secondments are considered highly important both by the EFTA countries and Eurostat because they provide technical expertise in the different statistical areas the SNEs work in. In addition, these experts bring specific competence about the ESS, Eurostat and European statistics back to the countries of the NSIs following the secondment.

Through the different statistical cooperation frameworks between EFTA and Eurostat, the following SNEs are provided.

- EEA EFTA SNEs: The three EEA EFTA NSIs
 provide four Seconded National Experts to
 Eurostat as part of the contribution to the
 statistical cooperation in the EEA Agreement.
 These experts are seconded to units producing
 statistics in Eurostat.
- EFTA SNEs: Two experts are seconded to

Eurostat from the four EFTA countries as a contribution by EFTA to the statistical cooperation programmes of Eurostat in the field of statistics. The secondments of these experts are governed by an administrative agreement between EFTA and Eurostat and they are recruited to work specifically in the statistical cooperation unit of Eurostat.

 Swiss SNEs: As part of the cooperation in the context of the bilateral Swiss/EU Agreement, two experts are usually seconded to Eurostat as a contribution by Switzerland.

Since 1995, the EFTA Member States have contributed 62 SNEs to Eurostat (see also annex II for a full overview of SNEs seconded to Eurostat and their fields of work).

	Iceland	Norway	Switzerland	Total
EEA EFTA SNEs	2	38		40
EFTA SNEs	2	9	2	13
Swiss Bilateral Agreement SNEs			9	9
Total	4	47	11	62

Overview of the provision of SNEs by the EFTA Member States.

European Statistical Training Programme (ESTP)

The European Statistical Training Programme (ESTP) provides European statisticians with continuous training in new methods, techniques and best practices in order to maintain and improve the quality of national and European statistics. As part of the European Statistical System – Learning and Development Framework (ESS-LDF), the ESTP is designed to cover the





specific needs of European statisticians working in European national statistical offices and to integrate the application of European concepts, methodology and definitions. The programme offers a selection of courses, workshops and seminars on a broad range of topics, which are continuously developed and revised in order to respond to emerging statistical information needs of the ESS.

ESTP courses are open to officials and employees of the National Statistical Institutes or corresponding competent national authorities of the EU Member States, EFTA Member States, EU candidate countries and potential candidate countries. Occasionally, on an individual basis, applicants from other administrations, international organisations and statistical offices of non-European countries may also be admitted.

Since the European Commission internalised the organisation of its statistical training programme in 2004, the ESTP has overall been coordinated by Eurostat, and courses are conducted either internally in the premises of Eurostat in Luxembourg, at contracted partner institutions in the EU, or at the National Statistical Institutes of the EU and EFTA Member States. In recent years, the courses are also increasingly complemented or fully conducted through online formats, which allow for a greater selection of courses through reduced costs, and potentially reaching out to wider audiences.

With a view to securing full participation by EFTA statisticians in the ESTP, the EFTA Secretariat has since 2006 committed itself, through an exchange of letters with Eurostat, to finance the organisation of at least two courses per year. Each exchange of letters covers a period of four years, the latest one covering the period 2019–2022. While the courses are financed by the EFTA Secretariat, they are wholly organised and conducted by the EFTA National Statistical Institutes. In return, Eurostat ensures that EFTA statisticians have the right to participate in all ESTP courses financed by Eurostat.

EFTA has thus been an important contributor to the ESTP since the programme's beginning; when the first set of external courses were offered by ESS member countries in 2005 during the programme's implementation phase, Norway and Switzerland were among the six countries contributing. Since then, in accordance with the exchange of letters between the EFTA Secretariat and Eurostat, Norway and Switzerland have continued to organise courses each year, with Iceland joining in since 2020.

Including the courses organised in 2021, the EFTA Member States have conducted a total of 52 ESTP courses over the years (see annex III for a full overview of ESTP courses offered by EFTA since 2005). Of these, Norway has organised 29, on topics such as Business Registers, Administrative Registers, Waste Statistics, Geographic Information Systems and Designing and Conducting Business Surveys for Official Statistics. Switzerland has organised 21 courses, on topics including Advanced Methods of Survey Sampling, Data Analysis and Data Modelling, Development and use of Indicators and Survey Methodology and Sampling Techniques. Finally, Iceland has conducted 2 courses on Tidying up official statistics with 'R' and GSBPM. These courses have consistently been high in demand amongst participants in the programme, and are frequently requested to be repeated in following years.

The full and free access for EFTA statisticians to the ESTP has been of great benefit for the EFTA Member States. In the period between 2011–2020, a total of 374 statisticians from the EFTA National Statistical Institutes participated in ESTP courses, or about 5 per cent of total participants.

Compliance Monitoring

Eurostat monitors compliance with legal requirements for EU and EFTA Member States annually in order to identify potential gaps between the legal obligations and statistics provided by the countries. For the EEA EFTA countries, the compliance monitoring is





conducted based on the legal requirements in annex XXI of the EEA Agreement, and possible compliance issues are then addressed in a letter from Eurostat to the ESO. Possible compliance issues usually include situations where country data is not reported, data is reported after the reporting deadline or data does not fulfil particular quality requirements according to the monitored legal act.

Countries with any compliance issues are requested to provide a plan for how the identified compliance issues will be addressed in statistical production and reporting, and of course a timeline to implement required improvements in order to comply with the respective legal acts. The process of informing the EEA EFTA NSIs, compiling a response to Eurostat which includes the improvement actions to be undertaken by the countries and informing Eurostat about these is coordinated by ESO.

As the target for the compliance monitoring is of course to enhance compliance over time, the compliance monitoring exercise ensures that the EEA EFTA countries fulfil their legal obligations to provide compliant data to Eurostat.

The European Statistical System (ESS)

The European Statistical System (ESS) is the partnership between the European Community statistical authority, which is the Commission (Eurostat), and the National Statistical Institutes (NSIs) and of all EEA Member States (EU and EFTA). The EFTA Statistical Office acts as a broker between the EEA EFTA Member States and Eurostat in this regard.

The European Statistical System Committee (ESSC) meets three times a year and provides professional guidance to the ESS for developing, producing and disseminating European statistics. It is composed of the representatives of the EU EFTA NSIs and chaired by Eurostat. As Members of the ESS, EFTA Member States participate fully without the right to vote in the ESSC and other

bodies which assist the European Commission in the management or development of programs and actions.

ESS' work on harmonisation concentrates mainly on statistics related to EU policies. To this end, Eurostat organises numerous Director Groups, Working Groups and Task Forces in the different statistical topic areas that bring together experts of all ESS members in order to discuss and prepare methodologies for statistical production. Once these methodologies have been agreed upon in the respective groups, they will be prepared for becoming EU legal acts that given their relevance — will also be prepared for the integration into the EEA Agreement or the Swiss/EU bilateral Agreement. Since EFTA Member States participate in these groups, they also have the possibility of contributing to the different discussions before the outputs enter the legislative processes.

With the extension of policy actions, the work on harmonisation has been extended over time to numerous statistical areas which are considered Official Statistics that are produced in line with the provisions of the European Statistics Code of Practice (ESCoP).

The ESS functions as a network in which Eurostat's role is to lead the way in the harmonisation of statistics in close cooperation with the national statistical authorities that are responsible for data collection and production of official statistics, nationally and for EU purposes. In order to ensure that statistics produced within the ESS are relevant, timely and accurate while also complying with the principles of professional independence, impartiality and objectivity, the ESSC has adopted the revised European Statistics Code of Practice (ESCoP). The revised Code has 16 principles concerning the institutional environment, statistical processes and statistical outputs (see also the paragraph The European Statistics Code of Practice below). The European Statistical Governance Advisory Board (ESGAB) provides an independent overview in form of an annual report on the ESS as regards the





implementation of the ESCoP.

The ESS also sets up the European Statistical Programme. To this end, the DGINS (French abbreviation of Directors-General of National Statistical Institutes) Conference is held once a year, discussing the statistical programme, methods and processes providing the framework for the development, production and dissemination of European statistics. ESO jointly with Eurostat develop every year the EEA Annual Statistical Programme, which is a subset of the European Statistical Programme which includes statistics and projects that are considered EEA relevant.

The ESS is also the platform for coordinating work with candidate countries and at European level with other Commission services and governance bodies, agencies and the European Central Bank (ECB). The relation between Central Banks and National Statistical Institutes is to a certain extent peculiar, since both bodies usually work on somewhat different legal basis which ensures their respective independence. However, in order to coordinate and harmonise statistical production the European Statistical Forum (ESF) was created in 2013. The ESF intends to give strategic guidance to the relations between the ESS and the Statistics Committee (STC) of the European System of Central Banks. The ESF meets once a year and is co-chaired by the chairs of the ESSC and the STC.

Another governance body of the ESS is the European Statistical Advisory Committee (ESAC) which represents different stakeholders of European Statistics, such as users (also institutional users), respondents, the scientific community, social partners and the civil society. ESAC's aim is to ensure that user requirements are reflected in the formulation of the Multiannual Statistical Programme (MSP), from which the annual statistical programmes are derived.

Furthermore, the ESS also coordinates activities with international organisations such as OECD, the UN, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

The European Statistics Code of Practice (ESCoP)

The ESCoP plays a central role with regard to the common quality framework of the ESS. The 16 principles broken down by a number of indicators serve as a reference for judging the appropriateness of National Statistical Institutes' (NSI) institutional environment, statistical processes and statistical products. Regularly conducted Peer Reviews in the ESS ensure that NSIs are independent while the community of the ESS checks on their adherence to the ESCoP.

The ESCoP was originally adopted in 2005 but underwent a revision in 2017 in order to take into account recent developments in production and dissemination of Official Statistics. It also addresses topics such as new data sources and modernisation of legal frameworks while taking into account the experiences made from Peer Reviews.











Interview with Geir Axelsen Director General, Statistik Sentralbyrå (Statistics Norway)

1. As a member of the European Economic Area, Norway participates fully in the European Statistical System (ESS), together with its EEA EFTA counterparts Iceland and Liechtenstein whereas Switzerland's ESS participation is based on the CH/EU bilateral Agreement.

a. Can you please tell us shortly how Norway relates to the other EFTA Member States with regard to the ESS and how you perceive the cooperation with the EU Member States and Eurostat within the ESS?

b. Following up on that question: What has been the impact of the EEA Agreement on official statistics produced by Norway and the EEA EFTA countries? First of all, I would like to underline that we have a very close, collaborative relationship within the EFTA community. Both with the EEA EFTA countries and certainly also with the Swiss. We have biannual meetings in the capitals, one of the EEA countries chair the group of EFTA Heads every second year, and we also coordinate closely before the ESSC meetings amongst the EEA EFTA countries. This is very helpful for our work towards the European Statistical System. When it comes to the cooperation within the ESS, we are treated as equal partners. For example, when the ESS revised the code of practice in 2011, one of our employees in Statistics Norway was a co-chair together with Eurostat, illustrating that we are indeed an equal partner.

2. The EFTA Statistical Office was originally founded in 1991 as a Liaison Office between the EFTA Member States, EU Member States and Eurostat, in the evolving ESS. Now, ESO also deals with statistical technical cooperation with third countries outside the ESS. How do you see ESO's contribution in both areas over the last three decades and how do you perceive the services provided by ESO to Statistics Norway?

The services of ESO are excellent. For example, there are more than 300 different statistical acts that are included in Annex 21, which is the statistical annex in the EEA Agreement that were administered by ESO. For the Norwegian statistical system, the EEA Agreement has affected all statistical areas. Of course, if you want to compare apples with apples, you need to have some joint quality standards, classifications, etc. All this is very important in the European Statistical System. If you go back 30 years and compare the situation with today, both the European Statistical System as such, and Norway as a partner in this cooperation have developed the statistical systems. Furthermore, the European Statistical System as a result of this work stands out internationally as a statistical system that really can deliver high-quality statistics that can be compared across nations.





3. National Statistical Offices play a central role in the production and coordination of Official Statistics in the so-called National Statistical Systems. How does Statistics Norway fulfil this task and what are the challenges in the face of fast growing amounts of large data in administrative contexts as well as in private ones?

In June 2019, Norway got a new statistical act. At that point, it was 30 years since the last time a statistical act was approved by the Norwegian Parliament in 1989. During these three decades a lot has happened when it comes to technological and political developments. For example, the EEA Agreement was not there in 1989. In the new statistical act from 2019, we got a much stronger mandate when it comes to demanding information from data owners. Both private and public entities are now required to share data with Statistics Norway as long as we can justify that this is necessary for the development, production, and dissemination of statistics. Thus, this mandate gives Statistics Norway in many ways a monopoly when it comes to accessing private and public data for the purpose of producing statistics in Norway. Of course, there are other statistical producers as well in the Norwegian statistical system. Therefore, the new statistical act also contains a national statistical programme where Statistics Norway is leading the work. Additionally, there are twelve other producers of Official Statistics delivering into this programme. Statistics Norway produces approximately 85% of the statistics in this programme, while 12-15% of the statistics are produced by the other entities.

4. Statistics Norway, as well as Statistics Iceland, provide on a regular basis Seconded National Experts to Eurostat (up to six years) as a contribution in kind and Short Term Experts (up to six months) to ESO. How does Statistics Norway benefit from such secondments of experts?

First, these experts bring knowledge about Statistics Norway, the EEA Agreement, and

Norway into Eurostat. They also bring knowledge back to Norway about the EEA Agreement and about the European Statistical System after having worked for Eurostat for some years. This sharing of knowledge is very important. In fact, Eurostat is the directorate within the European Union that has the biggest number of Norwegians working there. They have five to six Norwegian secondments in Eurostat. If you compare that with the size of Norway and with the other directorates, this is a significant number.

5. Finally, an outlook on the future – what are the main challenges of statistical cooperation in the ESS and how can the EFTA Statistical Office support the Norwegian Central Bureau of Statistics in this?

The most important role of ESO is to sustain and promote the EEA Agreement. We have to accept that as the years go by, the people who were working in Eurostat when the EEA Agreement was new and therefore knew the agreement very well, have perhaps retired and new people have come to Eurostat. We cannot expect that everyone has already a deep knowledge about the EEA Agreement. Therefore, to continuously explain the purpose and content of the EEA Agreement is a very important task. It is equally important to bring knowledge back to the member countries of the EFTA family. We too need to bring information about the European Statistical System back to the Norwegian public, to our government, etc. In this way, we can explain the value for the statistical area from being part of this huge and important statistical cooperation, which the European System of Statistics represents.





Interview with Georges-Simon Ulrich Director-General of the Bundesamt für Statistik (Swiss Federal Statistical Office)

1. Mr Ulrich, Switzerland fully participates in the European Statistical System (ESS), which brings together the National Statistical Offices of the EU and EFTA Member States. However, the respective legal provisions for participating in the ESS differ amongst EFTA countries. Can you please tell us in a few sentences about the respective legal setting and the challenges that Switzerland faces in this context?

Switzerland has decided not to be a Party to the European Economic Area (EEA) Agreement. Instead, we have negotiated and concluded with the EU a set of sectoral bilateral agreements. One of those sectoral bilateral agreements deals with statistical cooperation and it is in force since 1 January 2007. The rules governing statistical cooperation with the EU are largely similar in the EEA Agreement and in our bilateral statistical agreement with the EU. There are, however, some differences concerning for example the European statistics covered by the respective agreements. One particular challenge Switzerland faces since 2007 as regards its statistical cooperation with the EU, is that we cannot rely on the EFTA Secretariat to ensure the management of our bilateral statistical agreement with the EU. Except for a limited number of specific aspects, we have to do it largely by ourselves.

2. Although the statistical cooperation between Switzerland and the EU is managed bilaterally, ESO provides services to the Swiss Statistical Office, such as monitoring the inclusion of Swiss data in Eurostat publications and the organisation of training courses given by Swiss experts in the European Statistical Training Programme (ESTP). Another example of activities carried out by ESO also on behalf of Switzerland are its activities in the field of statistical technical cooperation with third countries. How do you perceive cooperation with ESO over the last decades in these areas?



We appreciate very much having EFTA Secretariat colleagues in Luxembourg, who can liaise rapidly and efficiently with Eurostat colleagues if necessary. In principle, the Mission of Switzerland to the EU in Brussels is the unit that takes care of the official contacts between Switzerland and the EU institutions. We work with our Swiss colleagues in Brussels for very official, almost political matters concerning Eurostat and our bilateral statistical cooperation with the EU. In the daily business however, and for rather technical matters, it greatly helps to work with our ESO colleagues in Luxembourg. For a limited number of specific aspects we rely almost completely on the services of ESO. For example as regards the inclusion monitoring of Swiss data in Eurostat publications, the participation of Swiss experts in Eurostat meetings, or the organisation of training courses in the framework of the European Statistical Training Programme. Overall, I consider that Switzerland and ESO in Luxembourg have developed over the years a fruitful and efficient cooperation that we are really happy to rely on. I look forward to continuing that cooperation





which is very important for us.

3. The increasing digitalisation of modern societies produces large data that hold the promise to enrich production of Official Statistics. What are the challenges for National Statistical Offices in this regard, and which role does the ESS play in this context?

I strongly feel that National Statistical Offices should broaden their activities to new areas of work that are different, but still connected to official statistics, like data management and data science for the entire national public administration. In Switzerland, the Federal Government recently mandated the Federal Statistical Office (FSO) to do so and the corresponding works at FSO are ongoing and proceeding steadily forward. In the years to come FSO will retain its original mission in the area of development, production and dissemination of official statistics, but it will be more than a traditional National Statistical Office. I understand that the ESS is undertaking now a similar journey in connection with access to privately held data and the emerging EU data ecosystem. We look forward to participating in and to contributing to that European undertaking with all our experience in the new areas of work we are currently developing at FSO: data management and data science for the entire national public administration.

4. Similar to the EEA EFTA countries, Switzerland contributes to statistical cooperation by providing Seconded National Experts to Eurostat as well as Short Term Experts to the EFTA Statistical Office. What is the motivation for these secondments and how do the Swiss Statistical Office benefit from this?

This year we have two Swiss statistical experts working at Eurostat as seconded national experts. I consider that those secondments as well as those to ESO are useful and important because they secure the transfer of knowledge and they promote the integration of the ESS. I note that Eurostat often expresses its interest in maintaining and whenever possible developing

the high level of EFTA experts involvement. When the seconded Swiss statistical experts come back to Switzerland and resume working at the FSO or elsewhere in the Swiss Statistical System, they have a distinctive European touch. The rich set of experiences they come back with from Eurostat or from ESO, is of great practical value for the management and the development of our statistical cooperation with the EU. For example, as regards our almost daily work in the ESS committees, working groups, or task forces convened by Eurostat.

5. Finally, a glimpse into the future — how do you see Swiss/EU cooperation in statistics in the next decade and how can the EFTA Statistical Office support the Swiss Statistical Office in this?

I think we should strive to improve even further the compliance with the bilateral statistical agreement as regards both the transmission of data to Eurostat and their dissemination by Eurostat. ESO has an important role to play in that respect. I am referring to its valuable monitoring work and to its yearly inclusion report, two services we very much appreciate in Switzerland. In addition, I hope that we will manage to develop further the bilateral statistical agreement with the EU in the years to come. That means that we will try to integrate in its coverage additional or new European statistics to be harmonised with the EU, with the necessary adaptations and derogations for Switzerland. Finally, I am confident that the ESS, as the most advanced statistical system in the world, will continue to lead the way forward towards modernised and innovative official statistics. My ambition is that Switzerland will be able to contribute usefully to the ongoing modernisation and innovation work in the ESS, for example in the emerging areas of data management and data science for the entire public administration. ESO can and should support us in that undertaking by continuing to liaise efficiently between the EFTA National Statistical Offices and Eurostat and by reporting on a continuous basis on important developments in the ESS.





Interview with Mariana Kotzeva, Director-General of Eurostat

We have the pleasure to interview the Director General of Eurostat, Mariana Kotzeva. Thank you for taking the time to meet with us today. It is a pleasure to be with you in the offices of Eurostat in Luxembourg for an interview.

1. The European Statistical System (ESS) institutionalises the cooperation between national statistical institutes (NSIs) from the EU and EFTA. How does the ESS relate to other international endeavours in coordinating statistics?

Thank you very much for this opportunity – it is an enormous pleasure for me to give this interview, because we have a longstanding cooperation with the EFTA countries. As with all partners, we have an agreement, which covers the broad areas in which we cooperate and I'm particularly pleased to say, that it has been a very long and fruitful cooperation.

2. The EFTA Member States are partners in the ESS together with Eurostat and the EU Member States. How would you characterise the cooperation between the EU, its Member States and EFTA Member States?

As I said, it has been a longstanding and very fruitful cooperation. Now, what I just wanted to share with you is, that it is a privilege to work in official statistics, because we are like a statistical family. We meet very often with all the national statistical institutes from both EU and EFTA member countries. We do exchange good practices, develop together new methodologies, work on joint projects to further enhance official statistics and to assure their comparability and usefulness. EFTA countries are indispensable members of the European Statistical System in this process.



3. As part of the cooperation, the EFTA Member States contribute financially to the overall budget for statistics in the ESS. The EFTA Statistical Office as well as the EFTA NSIs provide on a regular basis Seconded National Experts (SNEs) to EUROSTAT. How do the SNEs contribute to Eurostat's work?

Indeed, the EFTA countries contribute to the budget, which is used for statistical projects, in which the experts of their statistical offices participate together with those from other national statistical institutes in order to develop official statistics. In addition to that, as you said, we have the pleasure to have several – usually three, four or sometimes five – Seconded National Experts (SNEs) from EFTA countries working at Eurostat. They work in very interesting topics – for example we currently have SNEs working on the revision of economic classifications, in the field of prices and on agriculture. They work together with Eurostat experts to develop further statistical methodologies in these areas and they are very much welcomed and demanded members of the Eurostat team.





4. New information and communication technologies provide for larger amounts of data than ever before. How do official statistics profit from this and what are the challenges in this regard?

Thank you very much for this question. This is one of my favourite topics, because indeed the digital revolution has brought many opportunities for the statistical offices in terms of technologies and new data sources. It is an enormous treasure of data sources, which we have to use, because if we have sustainable access to this data and we use them. we could produce our statistics faster – almost in real time. Let me give you an example: if you are able to get information on the job vacancies which are published online, then you could very quickly produce statistics on labour demand – thereby explaining what kind of jobs are searched for and how big the demand is. Thus, you could provide information and insights on the situation of the labour market and follow the trends. This is indeed a great opportunity and we have been investing a lot in the European Statistical System – including EFTA countries – to learn how to work with these emerging data sources in order to make more statistics and to produce them faster.

5. The EFTA Statistical Office also cooperates closely with Eurostat by engaging in statistical technical cooperation with partner countries together with Eurostat. What is the aim of Eurostat's technical cooperation?

Thank you for that question. This is another specific area, in which we are coordinating and collaborating very well with the EFTA countries, since we both have a priority for technical cooperation and support to developing countries to enhance their national statistical system and their expertise. In particular, we have coordinated and joined efforts by organising workshops, training facilities and common projects in order to reach better results on the ground. We also have been working together with the EFTA countries to organise the so-called peer reviews, where experts from EFTA and EU Member States go to different countries and different statistical institutes to

assess the quality of different statistical domains, the state of the institutional development of the country in terms of official statistics and provide together some recommendations. This has been highly appreciated by the countries, which receive such kind of support. Again, this is due to the excellent cooperation, which we have with EFTA in that respect.

6. Finally, what do you see as the major challenges for the ESS in the next 5-10 years?

To work in official statistics in these days offers many opportunities and challenges alike. In one of the previous questions, you asked me about the new data sources, which are a challenge, but at the same time a great opportunity for us to produce faster and richer official statistics. Digital technologies and means of communication in general present other opportunities. Today we have a wide spectrum of tools with which we can better communicate our statistics and reach citizens, policy makers and the media. This is fantastic, because if our statistics are not communicated and used, we don't accomplish our mission. They have to reach people, everybody who needs high quality and objective information. So once again, if I have to conclude, the challenge – but also the opportunity – for us as official statisticians is to continue being the reference point for high quality statistics and data on Europe – whereby the term Europe includes the EFTA countries as well and to ensure that these statistics can be used for the sake of better lives and better decisions. Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mariana Kotzeva, for your time and the interesting perspectives that you provided.

On behalf of ESO, Pascal Bisang provided technical assistance.





ESO Activities with Third Countries

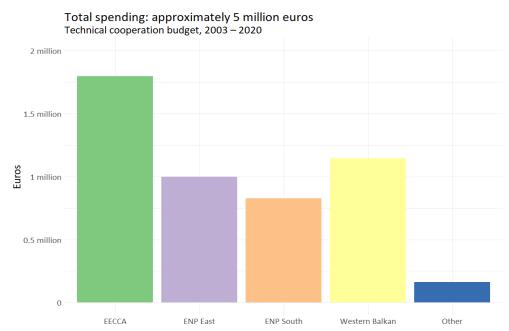


Volker Täube, Director of the EFTA Statistical Office, and Avis Benes, Head of Unit of Statistical Cooperation at Eurostat.

Together with partners like Eurostat or other international organisations such as the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) or the United Nations Statistical Division (UNSD), the EFTA Statistical Office (ESO) engages also in statistical capacity building in countries outside the ESS, often referred to as statistical technical cooperation with third countries. These actions aim at strengthening the production of official

statistics internationally which is understood as one of the basic ingredients to modern democracies, while providing impartial and reliable information for informed policy making, as well as general information to civil society. The legal basis of ESO's statistical cooperation activities is an Administrative Arrangement (AA) which is a declaration of intent to be agreed upon by EFTA and Eurostat for a renewable period of three years.

The activities are mainly limited to a transfer of technical knowledge by means of dedicated training courses or thematic conferences, targeting National Statistical Institutes or Offices in different regions. The regional focus is partially the result of a pragmatic approach, since National Statistical Institutes in certain regions are often confronted with similar problems, like the former Soviet Union countries in Eastern European, Caucasus and Central Asian countries (EECCA). On the other hand, this regionalisation is due to policy decisions formulated by the EU, such as the Enabling Neighbourhood Policies (ENP) for Eastern Europe (ENP-East), the Mediterranean countries (ENP-South) and similar.



EFTA spending for technical cooperation with third countries.





Some examples of technical cooperation projects in which ESO is active are as follows.

 Joint EFTA, Eurostat and UNECE formulation of a Generic Law on Official Statistics (GLOS)

The provision of a legal basis for data collection as well as for production and dissemination of official statistics is a fundamental ingredient for National Statistical Offices to successfully fulfil their role as an impartial information hub to society. EFTA together with Eurostat and UNECE have published a generic version of a statistical law that should help countries to formulate a national statistical law.

Joint EFTA-UNECE publications

ESO also regularly contributes in cooperation with UNECE to the production of statistical manuals and guidelines that aim at homogenisation and promoting best standards of statistical production in different topic areas. Recent examples are the <u>Guide to sharing economic data</u> or the <u>Practical guide to seasonal adjustment</u>.



The contributions from the presenters at the EFTA/UNECE session at the ISI World Statistics Congress 2019 were published in the Statistical Journal of the IAOS."

• EFTA contribution to UNSD Handbook on Statistical Organisation

Another example of ESO's cooperation with international organisations is the UNSD Handbook on statistical organisation (4th edition), to which ESO has provided an expert

editing a chapter. The handbook provides guidelines for the administrative organisation of National Statistical Institutes.

Regularly organised training courses

Since 2007 the EFTA Statistical Office has organised around 40 training courses for the staff of National Statistical Institutes of beneficiary countries in collaboration with the National Statistical Institutes of the EFTA Member States. The topics ranged from training courses on techniques for compiling price indices, the organisation of business registers or geographical information systems to environmental accounting, combination of data sources and statistical production with the software "R, to name but a few examples.



Elena Friso, Administrative Coordinator, providing support during an online session for EECCA countries on HR and Training organized by EFTA.

 Joint seminars and conferences on strategic and organisational issues

Together with Eurostat, UNECE or the UNSD, the EFTA Statistical Office has organised numerous seminars and conferences for different levels of management of NSIs addressing organisational and strategic issues in the production of Official Statistics. Although most activities presented so far are tailored to regions, certain offers are also made to individual countries like the so-called statistical stocktaking exercises in the form of Global Assessments, Peer Reviews and Sector Reviews (see also the paragraph on Statistical stocktaking exercises below).





Interview with Lidia Bratanova Director of the UNECE Statistical Division

1. Could you please tell us about UNECE in general and in particular the Statistical Division of UNECE?

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) was established in 1947 and is now based in Geneva. The UN definition of Europe is very broad, so in addition to European countries, our 56 Member States include the United States, Canada, Caucasian countries, and countries in Central Asia. As we say in UNECE, we cover countries from Vancouver to Vladivostok. It is both, fruitful and challenging to work with such a variety of countries with different economic and social development.

UNECE is part of the UN Secretariat and is much smaller than other UN departments. We cover 8 areas of work, also called sub-programmes, and one of these sub-programmes is statistics.

UNECE was established with the goal of being a technical organisation. Our work is demand driven; we do not engage in activities without member countries needing it. Consequently, our work is primarily the development of technical recommendations, as well as norms and standards. The work is driven by Member States. They are in the driving seat, as we often say. The Member States decide on the work programme in sectoral committees. One of these sectoral committees is the statistical committee, called the Conference of European Statisticians (CES), which meets once per year and is our governing body. Again, the name is slightly misleading, as the members are not only from Europe. CES is one of the oldest statistical bodies with roots all the way back to the League of Nations in 1928. Since the mid-1990s, all countries that are members of the OECD participate in the work of our conference, as any country that is a member of the UN can participate. Consequently, we work



with more than 60 countries. In addition to CES, there is a bureau composed of eight countries that works between the plenary sessions. The Statistical Division of UNECE is the secretariat to CES, and is responsible for execution. When CES and its bureau decide on the programme of work, the Secretariat implement this programme of work in Europe. Furthermore, we cooperate with other international organisations that are active in the region. For example, the EU and Eurostat, OECD, ESO, or IMF. A major part of our work is collaboration and coordination of international and interregional statistical work. Thus, in order to execute UNECE's programme of work, we rely on close collaboration with these international partner institutions/organisations.

2. The EFTA Statistical Office regularly engages in statistical capacity building. What are the common interests of the Statistical Division of UNECE and the EFTA Statistical Office?

Both the UNECE Statistical Division and ESO have an interest in supporting the capacity development of certain countries in Southeast





Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. We therefore combine our efforts and our expertise to provide this support, in order to avoid duplication of work, but also to strengthen our position and our financial and human resources to assist these countries. I have been the director of this division for 12 years now, and this collaboration was initiated before my time. With every year, this collaboration is becoming stronger and stronger, and it is an excellent example of how our collaboration has been strengthened.

ESO and UNECE collaborated over the years in several major areas, mainly economic statistics, which is of interest to both organisations, but also in population censuses. In particular, I would like to highlight our work with capacity development related to legislation and institutional arrangements of national statistical systems. Furthermore, we are very proud of the flagship project called the global assessment of national statistical systems that we have been working on together for quite some years in South East Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. Without the strong support from ESO and the EFTA Member States, we would not have been as successful. The global assessments lead to valuable recommendations improving capacity development work. ESO and UNECE have developed a common approach and understanding of how this capacity development should be done. It has to be focused, lead to a concrete outcome or outcomes, and be sustainable. Therefore, we greatly appreciate our cooperation with ESO and the EFTA Member States.

3. What are the main challenges of the Statistical Division of UNECE in order to ensure sustainability in statistical capacity building? How is the EFTA Statistical Office contributing?

For the Statistical Division of UNECE, external financial support, as well as additional expertise, has been important over the years. The Statistical Division of UNECE is not a big division and we cover a selected number of statistical areas.

Therefore, a very valuable contribution from ESO has been financial support. This often ensures participation from the countries I mentioned earlier. Additionally, ESO works as an intermediary to ensure the contribution of experts from EFTA Member States. This support has been extremely valuable. CES recently endorsed a new capacity development strategy. The purpose of this strategy is to ensure sustainability of our capacity development work and clarify the focus, which is building up institutions. Lately, we have successfully reoriented our work jointly with ESO on providing training on management topics like modernisation of statistical work, management of resources, and the use of geospatial information. This has become extremely important in recent years. The collaboration with ESO is excellent, it has been efficient and successful, and I cannot imagine our future work without it. We received feedback from the partner countries to which we provided development work and they enormously appreciate this valuable collaboration.

4. The Statistical Division of UNECE, the EFTA Statistical Office, and Eurostat jointly formulated a generic version of a national statistical law (GLOS) for Eastern Europe, Caucasus, and Central Asia in 2016. What are the plans for revising or updating the guidelines/GLOS?

The Generic Law for Official Statistics (GLOS) was initiated by countries that needed support. This challenging work was successfully completed with support from ESO. Initially, we thought GLOS would be needed or valuable only for the countries to which we provide capacity development. However, this generic law was appreciated broadly by all other Member States that participate in the work of CES, including members of the EU. Consequently, GLOS has become a global reference. Moldova, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan used it to change their statistical laws. Additionally, GLOS was adopted by other regional commissions, in Latin America, and in the Arab region. In November 2021, we will hold an expert meeting jointly with ESO on modernisation of





statistical legislation. In this meeting, we will organise a special dedicated session on the implementation of the generic statistical law and use the feedback we are currently collecting from the countries that have used GLOS in their institutional arrangements or to change their statistical law. We are therefore now discussing with ESO regarding launching the review, and, if needed, adjustments to GLOS. Evidently, in addition to the global assessment of national statistical systems, GLOS is another excellent example of good collaboration with a concrete outcome that even became a global reference.

5. What role do the Sustainable Development Goals play in international statistical cooperation?

When the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the indicators were adopted by the UN General Assembly we realised they would be quite challenging. Initially, there were quite a few indicators, and this is still the case, for which no methodology existed. Statisticians therefore had to develop the relevant indicators covering broad areas using official statistics. Thus, the SDG and the need for relevant indicators raised awareness of the value of official statistics. These indicators were produced by the UN Secretariat in cooperation with other independent UN agencies such as FAO, ILO, and UNICEF. Consequently, the SDGs and the need for relevant indicators led to strengthening collaboration within the UN Secretariat across the various departments, as well as across the whole UN system. More importantly, it strengthened the collaboration with international organisations outside the UN system. To develop the goals and the indicators, we had to agree on which agency is responsible for the collection of which data. Thus, the SDGs improved the collaboration of official statisticians across different agencies.

We have achieved a lot, but there is still a lot to be done. Now we are in the sixth year of the SDGs and we continue our work. I am looking forward to the next challenges. We had the Millennium Development Goals that were replaced by the Sustainable Development Goals, so I wonder what the next goals will be!











Interview with Steven Vale Senior Statistical Advisor, UNECE

1. Could you please elaborate on your role as a Regional Advisor with the Statistical Division of UNECE?

In UNECE, we have five different areas of work and I am the regional advisor for the statistics programme.

The role of the regional advisor is all about coordination of capacity development work in statistics. We have a lot of capacity development work across different areas of UNECE, even outside the statistical division, because we have areas of work on transport statistics, housing statistics, environment statistics, that are actually in other parts of UNECE. My role is to coordinate all the capacity development work. This includes big projects; sometimes we have donations from countries or organisations; sometimes we get money from other UN budgets for capacity development projects. Often these are large multi-year projects. I therefore act as a sort of a coordinator for those, making sure that they

are running to schedule, that we are meeting all the reporting requirements, that we are doing everything when we should, and so on. Related to that, we also have a number of other activities outside the big projects. We have a certain annual budget for capacity development activities, for example global assessments of national statistical systems which I will elaborate on later, but we also have a lot of workshops. These are areas where we work a lot with the EFTA Statistical Office. ESO has been a partner for a very long time, particularly in the area of economic statistics, national accounts, prices, business registers, etc. but increasingly also in a whole range of management and institutional capacity development topics for our statistical offices.

Recently, we started a new idea, which was to look at sector reviews of specific areas of statistics as a partnership between the EFTA Statistical Office and UNECE. We have been doing those particularly in statistical IT over the last couple of years, and that has proved very popular. In fact, we just had a demand for a possible new one also on the horizon. Another role of the regional advisors is to develop and to manage partnerships with other international organisations that are also active in capacity development in order to avoid overlapping work.

2. Why is capacity building in the field of statistical cooperation important?

For us in the UNECE region, it is important because we have such a range of countries and such a range of statistical capacities. We have countries that are classified as high income in North America, Western Europe, and then we have middle and lower-middle income countries through the Balkans and the Caucasus, and even one low-income country, Tajikistan. With that, there is a huge range in statistical capacity. What we are trying to do, is to help those that are further behind to catch up as quickly as possible; ideally by looking at the lessons learned from those that have gone before them and maybe avoiding some of the mistakes, learning





some of the good practices and helping them gradually to catch up across the region.

But capacity development in statistics has also become particularly important in the context of the SDGs. When the SDGs started a few years ago we had a discussion with various chief statisticians and we found that even in the most advanced countries, they were struggling to provide more than about 50% of the data that were needed.

Another big challenge that countries are facing in terms of developing their statistical capacity is modernisation of the statistical production. Here, modernisation is something that is not a one-off exercise; it has to become a way of life. This is because we are seeing changes in technology, data sources and in methodology really coming through all the time and perhaps at an increasing rate. So we needed to develop a strong international community to share ideas, share experience and share know-how.

3. The Statistical Division of UNECE and the EFTA Statistical Office share a lot of projects in statistical technical cooperation. Which regions or countries are the main beneficiaries?

For us the main beneficiaries are the countries in the Balkans that are not yet members of the European Union, the so-called candidate countries and pre-candidate countries, and then countries across the former Soviet Union, countries like Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, through the Caucasus and into Central Asia. And we find different issues, different challenges across all of those countries, but also sometimes some common challenges, some common threads, where we can perhaps help them together as a group as well.

One thing we have been doing, particularly during the Covid pandemic, is seeing what we can do in terms of moving capacity development online. We have had a very interesting partnership with the EFTA Statistical Office and a group called the Global Forum for Geography and Statistics, which is actually run by somebody from Statistics Norway, so another EFTA connection. We have come together and produced a series of webinars which are looking at issues of bringing together geography and statistics. We have had often over 100 participants from every continent. We have had Indonesia, South Africa, Brazil and Chile. So we found that, really, there has been a huge interest in the capacity development activities that we are able to offer across the world and of course there is no cost to us in expanding to cover all the countries. Obviously, what happens when we go back to face-to-face meetings, we will have to see. But I think we will probably keep some element of this online activity that we have been developing over the last year.

4. The Global Assessment with Kyrgyzstan has been finalised in cooperation between the Statistical Division of UNECE, the EFTA Statistical Office, Eurostat, and the Kyrgyz Statistical Office. Could you explain the objectives of such an assessment and how it is conducted?

The Kyrgyz global assessment has been a real challenge for us, because we had just got started and we just had the first mission of the global assessment before the pandemic hit. We had to really do most of the work on the global assessment during the pandemic, which is strange because the global assessments are normally very much in-country exercises. Really talking to people seeing how things work in the country. Finalising that one has been quite a challenge, but we had a good group.

As you mentioned, it is a partnership; UNECE, the EFTA Statistical Office and Eurostat. We had a very good lead expert, a former head of the





Icelandic Statistical Office for this one who was actually contracted by the EFTA Statistical Office. If you are doing capacity development work, a Global Assessment helps to know the starting situation. At some point in the future, then, it helps to know how far you have got and what the priorities are and how they have been changing over time. So Global Assessments typically take place about every six to seven years in the target countries in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia.

After we have conducted a Global Assessment, the usual next step is that they create a national strategy for the development of statistics; usually like a five year plan for statistical development. When that comes to an end, there needs to be evaluation and seeing where priorities are for the future, and that is the ideal time to come with the next Global Assessment. The final report is published on the EFTA Statistical Office website, on our UNECE website, Eurostat and on the National Statistical Office website. So it is there for anybody to see, and it provides a good basis, then, for developing capacity building activities for the coming period.

5. With statistics we measure, monitor, and evaluate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. What role do the National Statistical Institutes play in this context?

Previously we had the Millennium Development Goals and one of the big problems with the Millennium Development Goals is that the role of the national statistical offices was not particularly clear. It was something that was administered perhaps more by the international organisations. And that led to some complaints, sometimes even from National Statistical Offices that they did not recognise the data for some of the Millennium Development Goals.

Thus, right from the start, the idea with the SDGs was that the national statistical offices would have a much stronger role. And that fed through

various discussions of the United Nations Statistical Commission; which meets every year in March in New York, the heads of the statistical offices from around the world; and from them, also onto the UN General Assembly, which is where the central coordinating role of national statistical offices in the SDGs was really recognised and formalised. So there is a quite a strong mandate for National Statistical Offices to coordinate all of the data requirements of the SDGs.

This is quite a challenge. So what we have done in the UNECE region was to create something called the roadmap for SDG statistics. This was endorsed by our governing body, the Conference of European Statisticians about four years ago now. That provides a good basis for statistical officers to look at what this coordination role means in practice and to help them develop the new type of skills and roles that they need to put in place. They therefore have had to become much better at coordination, at communication, at dissemination, at partnerships and so on. And we have been focusing some of our capacity development work in those areas recently.

Maybe five years ago, most of our capacity development work was in statistical subject matter areas. Now, however, it is much more on these institutional and corporate topics. We have had some really great discussions recently on how to develop the skills within the statistical office, including with the chief statistician of Liechtenstein.

We have been working together with the EFTA Statistical Office over the last couple of years now to focus more on these institutional topics and on how we can help the statistical offices really respond to these challenges.





Statistical stocktaking exercises

Statistical stocktaking exercises like Global Assessments (GA), Peer Reviews (PR) and Sector Reviews (SR) form an integral and crucial part of the technical cooperation in statistics provided by ESO. In general, these type of reviews are performed in order to assess the conformity of national statistical systems, NSIs or specific statistical areas towards international governance and quality frameworks or specific requirements in different statistical areas. Therefore, these stocktaking exercises present a way for NSIs to enhance their compliance with such frameworks.

For EFTA, these exercises provide an important tool for designing technical cooperation actions for partner countries by addressing the challenges and shortages identified in these statistical stocktaking activities. Hence, EFTA and other international partners attach crucial importance to these type of reviews because of their value for designing technical cooperation activities.

Therefore EFTA organises and takes part in the following type of statistical assessments and reviews:

- Global Assessments (GA): The objective of Global Assessments is to compare the existing national provisions (legal, organisational, statistical production, etc.) against those requested by the European Statistics Code of Practice (ESCoP), the statistics part of the Acquis Communautaire (accumulated legislation) and the United Nations' Fundamental Principles of Statistics (FPoS).
- Peer Reviews (PR): The Peer Reviews have a similar intention as GAs but omit a detailed review of different statistical production areas in favour of highlighting legal and organisational aspects of National Statistical Institutes as stipulated in the European Statistics Code of Practice (ESCoP).

Sector Reviews (SR): Sector reviews
 analyse in detail the statistical production
 processes and statistical output in a specific
 statistical area or a horizontal area related
 to statistical production compared to the
 Acquis Communautaire. They are usually
 specifically tailored to selected partner
 countries that aim to align important sectors
 of statistics with European standards. Given
 the importance of IT tools and equipment
 for statistical production, and because the
 capacity of this sector is often highlighted in
 GAs, ESO provides in depth sector reviews for
 the IT sector of the NSI.

Dissemination / Weblinks

ESO frequently disseminates information regarding statistics and related topics on their website, via Twitter, and in a digital newsletter. The purpose of this is to make information about statistics that are relevant for the EFTA countries easily accessible for organisations, professionals, academics and the general public.

The website contains information about ESO's work in general, including information about statistics in the EEA Agreement and in the bilateral Swiss/EU Agreement, the ESS, ESO's statistical cooperation with partners beyond the ESS, meetings and events, statistical resources, as well as ESO publications and reports.

ESO produces publications approximately twice per year on a variety of economic, environmental and societal topics that are relevant for EFTA States and citizens, but also of interest to citizens of non-EFTA countries. Some examples of topics are comparisons of price levels, waste production and treatment, excess mortality during a pandemic and trade. Furthermore, ESO contributes to publishing educational content such as guides and factsheets to contribute to improved knowledge of statistical tools and





topics such as the Generic Law on Official Statistics (GLOS), a factsheet on statistical cooperation, as well as guidelines on seasonal adjustment and the sharing of economic data in official statistics.

ESO tweets regularly using the Twitter account <u>@EftaStatistics</u> to spread awareness of ESO's activities in the statistical and international relations community on Twitter. In addition to tweeting about <u>ESO publications and reports</u>, meetings and events, as well as other relevant information, ESO tweets highlight the work of the EFTA NSIs, such as new statistical "products and methodologies, as well as their special publications. Furthermore, ESO tweets about the work of Eurostat and partner organisations.

Every fortnight, ESO emails a newsletter summarising news from the four EFTA NSIs and from Eurostat. The purpose of this is to showcase the work of these statistical institutions and improve the knowledge of interested parties of how high-quality statistics are essential for making sense of society, compare policies and better understand our world.

Links to EFTA NSIs:

- Statistics Iceland
- Statistics Liechtenstein
- Statistics Norway
- Statistics Switzerland





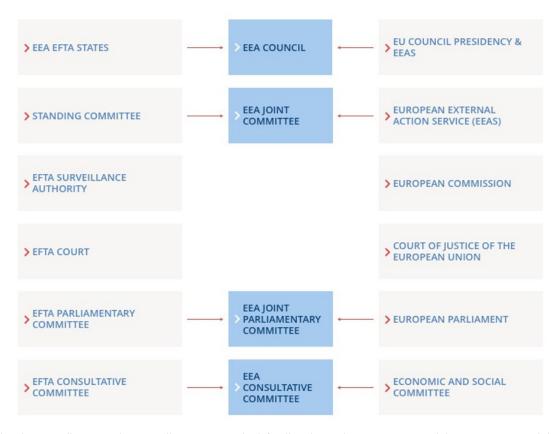






Annexes

Annex I - Two-pillar Stucture



This diagram illustrates the two-pillar structure. The left pillar shows the EFTA States and their institutions, while the right pillar shows the EU side. The joint EEA bodies are in the middle.



Annex II - Fields of work of Seconded National Experts

EEA EFTA EXPERTS

Field	Started work	Country
Agriculture Statistics	Oct-21	NO
Trade in Services, Globalisation	Sep-21	NO
Price Statistics	Jul-21	NO
National Accounts	Feb-19	NO
Government Finance Statistics	Mar-18	NO
Crime Statistics	Dec-16	NO
Structural business statistics and global value chains	Apr-15	NO
Labour Market	Sep-12	NO
Price Statistics	Apr-12	NO
Transport	Jun-11	NO
MEETS, Business Statistics	Mar-10	NO
Education Statistics	Apr-08	NO
Environmental Accounts	Feb-08	NO
National Accounts	Jul-07	NO
Public Finance	Mar-07	NO
Statistical Information Technologies	Sep-05	NO
Quality Methods	Nov-03	IS
Statistical confidentiality	Sep-03	NO
Structural Business Statistics	Jun-03	NO
Statistical Information Technologies	Sep-01	NO
Statistics on R & D	Sep-01	NO
National Accounts	Apr-00	NO
Labour Market	Nov-99	IS
Statistics on R&D	Sep-98	NO
Statistical Information Technologies	Apr-98	NO
Informatics	Jun-97	NO
Migration	Jan-97	NO
Trade	Jun-96	NO
Fishery	Feb-96	NO
GIS	Sep-95	NO
	May-95	NO
Balance of Payments	Aug-94	NO
Income distribution	Apr-94	NO





Legal matters	Feb-94	NO
Informatics	Jan-94	NO
Strategy databases, GIS	Jan-94	NO
Forestry	Jan-94	NO
National Accounts, Public Finance	Jun-93	NO
National Accounts	Oct-91	NO

EFTA EXPERTS IN TECHNICAL COOPERATION

Field	Started work	Country
	Startea Work	Country
EU Neighbourhood East; Desk officer Armenia and Georgia	Jan-20	IS
EU Enlargment/ Country officer Kosovo	Mar-18	NO
European Neighbourhood Policy	Jun-16	IS
Western Balkan and Turkey	Dec-12	NO
European Neighbourhood Policy	Feb-12	NO
European Neighbourhood Policy	Dec-09	NO
Western Balkan and Turkey	Sep-08	NO
European Neighbourhood Policy	Sep-05	CH
Western Balkan and Turkey	Aug-04	NO
PHARE/CARDS	Sep-01	CH
MEDSTAT	May-01	NO
MEDSTAT	Nov-97	NO
PHARE	Sep-95	CH

SWISS EXPERTS

Field	Started work	Country
Data and metadata services; Standards; NACE revision	Feb-20	CH
Income and living conditions	Jul-16	CH
Environmental accounts	Jun-14	CH
Labour market	Feb-12	CH
Environmental accounts	Oct-11	CH
Key indicators for European Policies	Mar-08	CH
Business registers	Mar-07	CH
Strategic planning	Mar-07	CH





Annex III - ESTP courses offered by EFTA since 2005

Topic of ESTP course	Organiser	Place	Year
Advanced Methods for Sample Surveys	Swiss Federal	Online, Switzerland	Nov. 2021
	Statistical Office		
Development & use of indicators for	Swiss Federal	Online, Switzerland	Sep. 2021
evidence-based decision making in the	Statistical Office		
context of SDG monitoring and other areas			
Introduction to statistics production with the	Statistics Norway	Online, Norway	Oct. 2021
use of geographical information systems (GIS)			
Tidying up official statistics with 'R' and GSBPM	Statistics Iceland	Online, Iceland	Jun. 2021
Introduction to business intelligence in public	Statistics Norway	Online, Norway	Apr. 2021
statistics (Power BI)			1
Introduction to statistics production with the	Statistics Norway	Online, Norway	Apr. 2021
use of geographical information systems (GIS)			(postponed
			from 2020)
Development & use of indicators for	Swiss Federal	Online, Switzerland	Nov. 2020
evidence-based decision making in the	Statistical Office		
context of SDG monitoring and other areas			
Tidying up official statistics with 'R' and	Statistics Iceland	Online, Iceland	Nov. 2020
GSBPM			
Making statistics by combining data from	Statistics Norway	Oslo, Norway	Sep. 2019
different sources			
Introduction to statistics production with the	Statistics Norway	Oslo, Norway	Jun. 2019
use of geographical information systems (GIS)			
Development & use of indicators for	Swiss Federal	Neuchâtel, Switzerland	Nov. 2018
evidence-based decision making	Statistical Office		
Designing & conducting business surveys for	Statistics Norway	Oslo, Norway	Nov. 2018
official statistics			
Introduction to statistics production with the	Statistics Norway	Oslo, Norway	Jun. 2018
use of geographical information systems (GIS)			
Advanced Methods for Sample Surveys	Swiss Federal	Neuchâtel, Switzerland	Nov. 2017
	Statistical Office		
Designing & conducting business surveys for official statistics	Statistics Norway	Oslo, Norway	Nov. 2017
Combining data from different sources	Statistics Norway	Oslo, Norway	Oct. 2017
Development & use of indicators for	Swiss Federal	Neuchâtel, Switzerland	Nov. 2016
evidence-based decision making	Statistical Office		
Survey Methodology and Sampling	Swiss Federal	Neuchâtel, Switzerland	Oct. 2016
Techniques	Statistical Office		
Combining data from different sources and	Statistics Norway	Oslo, Norway	Apr. 2016
modes		·	
Development & use of indicators for	Swiss Federal	Neuchâtel, Switzerland	Nov. 2015
evidence-based decision making	Statistical Office		
Designing & conducting business surveys for official statistics	Statistics Norway	Oslo, Norway	Oct. 2015



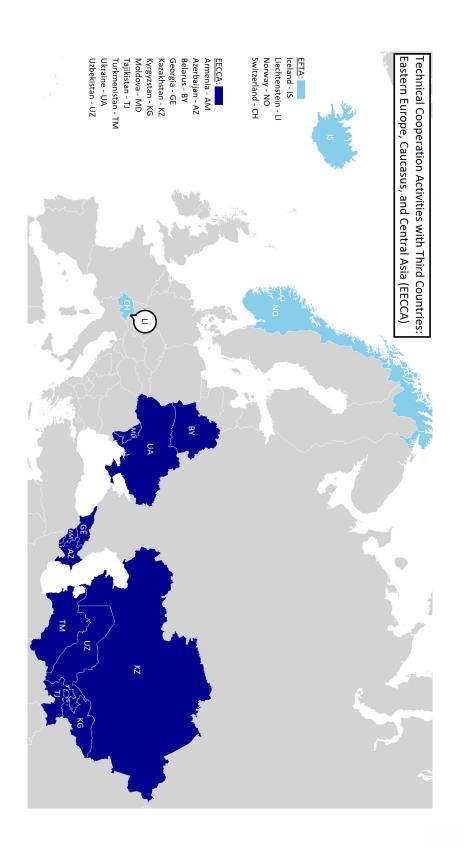
Topic of ESTP course	Organiser	Place	Year
Advanced Methods for Sample Surveys	Swiss Federal	Neuchâtel, Switzerland	Sep. 2017
	Statistical Office		
Combining data from different sources and	Statistics Norway	Oslo, Norway	Apr. 2015
modes			
Combining data from different sources and	Statistics Norway	Oslo, Norway	Oct. 2014
modes	Contac Fordered	Name a Atal Contractor of	1.1.2014
Data Analysis and Data Modelling	Swiss Federal Statistical Office	Neuchâtel, Switzerland	July 2014
Geographic Information Systems: GIS in	Statistical Office Statistics Norway	Oslo, Norway	May 2014
Statistics and preparations for INSPIRE	Statistics NOI way	Osio, Norway	IVIAY 2014
Reporting Obligations			
Survey Methodology and Sampling	Swiss Federal	Neuchâtel, Switzerland	Oct. 2013
Techniques	Statistical Office	Treatmater, emitzeriana	000.2020
Business registers: set-up, use and	Statistics Norway	Stockholm, Sweden	June 2013
maintenance	, , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , ,	, , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , ,	
Geographic Information Systems: Use of GIS	Statistics Norway	Kongsvinger, Norway	Mar. 2013
in NSIs – Basic Level	•		
User-friendly dissemination of statistics	Statistics Norway	Oslo, Norway	Nov. 2012
Data Analysis and Data Modelling	Swiss Federal	Neuchâtel, Switzerland	June 2012
	Statistical Office		
Geographic Information Systems: Use of GIS	Statistics Norway	Oslo, Norway	Mar. 2012
for making statistics in a production			
environment			
Survey Methodology and Sampling	Swiss Federal	Neuchâtel, Switzerland	Oct. 2011
Techniques	Statistical Office		
Data Analysis and Data Modelling	Swiss Federal	Neuchâtel, Switzerland	June 2011
Dusiness registers set up use and	Statistical Office	Osla Namusu	luna 2011
Business registers: set-up, use and maintenance	Statistics Norway	Oslo, Norway	June 2011
Advanced Methods for Survey Samples	Swiss Federal	Neuchâtel, Switzerland	Oct. 2010
Advanced Methods for Survey Samples	Statistical Office	Neuchatel, Switzerland	Oct. 2010
Business registers: set-up, use and	Statistics Norway	Oslo, Norway	June 2010
maintenance	Statistics Horway	osio, mormay	34110 2010
Use of Administrative Registers in production	Statistics Norway	Oslo, Norway	Sep. 2009
of Statistics	,	, ,	'
Data Analysis and Data Modelling	Swiss Federal	Neuchâtel, Switzerland	July 2009
_	Statistical Office		
Waste Statistics – different estimation	Statistics Norway	Oslo, Norway	May 2009
methods and the effects on international			
comparability			
Business registers: set-up, use and	Statistics Norway	Oslo, Norway	Nov. 2008
maintenance			
Use of Administrative Registers in production	Statistics Norway	Oslo, Norway	Sep. 2008
of Statistics			
Data Analysis and Data Modelling	Swiss Federal	Neuchâtel, Switzerland	Sep. 2008
	Statistical Office		



Topic of ESTP course	Organiser	Place	Year
Business registers: set-up, use and	Statistics Norway	Oslo, Norway	Nov. 2007
maintenance			
Use of Administrative Registers	Statistics Norway	Oslo, Norway	Sep. 2007
Data Analysis and Data Modelling	Swiss Federal	Neuchâtel, Switzerland	Sep. 2007
	Statistical Office		
User friendly dissemination of official	Statistics Norway	Oslo, Norway	Nov. 2006
statistics on Internet			
Data Analysis and Data Modelling	Swiss Federal	Neuchâtel, Switzerland	Oct. 2006
	Statistical Office		
Use of Administrative Registers	Statistics Norway	Oslo, Norway	Oct. 2006
Business registers: set-up, use and		Oslo, Norway	May 2005
maintenance			
Advanced Methods of Survey Sampling	Swiss Federal	Neuchâtel, Switzerland	Apr. 2005
	Statistical Office		



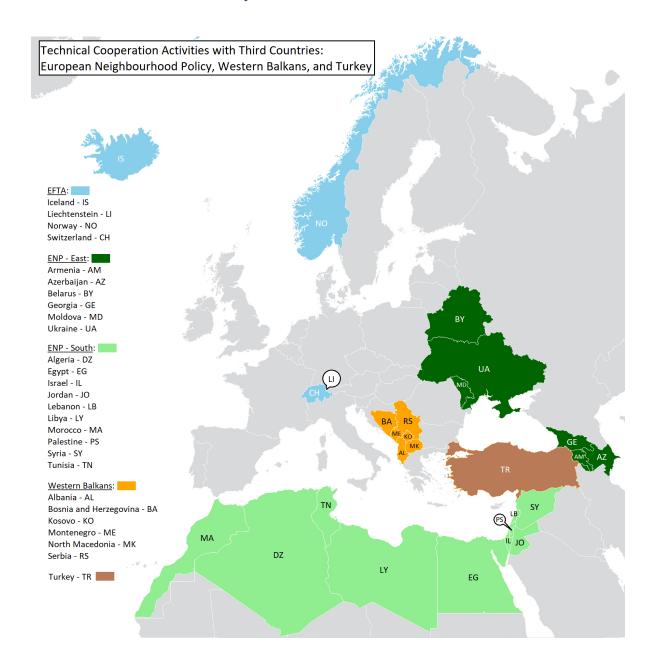
Annex IV – Technical Cooperation in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA)







Annex V – Technical Cooperation in the European Neighbourhood Policy, Western Balkans, and Turkey







Annex VI - Presentation of EFTA in Russian

ЕАСТ: ПАРТНЕР В ЕВРОПЕЙСКОЙ СТАТИСТИКЕ



Важность официальной статистики

Официальная статистика – это поистине международное дело - будь то оценки экономического роста или потребления энергии, цифры миграции, данные о выбросах парниковых газов или любой другой аспект современного общества. Статистика должна придерживаться общих практик и методологий, для того, чтобы обеспечить сопоставимость между странами и быть пригодной для принятия политических решений, экономического анализа и для общества в целом. Официальная статистика является незаменимым инструментом для принятия политических решений и осуществления контроля за уровнем эффективности таких решений.

ЕАСТ и европейская статистическая система

Европейская ассоциация свободной торговли (EACT) и ее государства-члены (Исландия, Лихтенштейн, Норвегия и Швейцария) являются активными участниками Европейской Статистической Системы (ECC), а также глобального международного статистического сообщества. ECC - это партнерство между Евростатом, статистическим бюро Европейского союза и национальными статистическими институтами (НСИ) 32 государств-членов ЕС и ЕАСТ. Хотя НСИ собирают и компилируют статистические данные на национальном уровне, основная роль Евростата заключается в том, чтобы руководить процессом гармонизации статистики в тесном сотрудничестве с ее партнерами по ЕСС. Евростат также играет важную роль в области публикации европейской статистики.

Комитет Европейской Статистической Системы (КЕСС) состоит из представителей Евростата и НСИ государств-участников ЕСС. Четыре государства-члена ЕАСТ участвуют в работе КЕСС наравне с государствами-членами ЕС, однако они не имеют право голоса. Европейская Комиссия советуется с КЕСС по вопросам мер, которые она намерена предпринять в отношении разработки, производства и распространения европейской статистики, многолетних и годовых программ работы, а также по вопросам, касающимся умеренности нагрузки, возлагаемой на респондентов, вопросов конфиденциальности и Европейского Статистического Кодекса Практики и методологии. Для государств ЕАСТ это означает, что механизм КЕСС предоставляет возможность влиять на разрабатываемое законодательство ЕС и на прочие инициативы Европейской Комиссии.

Место статистики в рамках договоров о Европейском Экономическом Пространстве и договоров между Швейцарией и EC

Цель статистического сотрудничества в Европейском Экономическом Пространстве (ЕЭП) заключается в предоставлении сопоставимой и надежной статистической информации для отображения и мониторинга всех областей сотрудничества, охватываемых договором о ЕЭП. Многолетняя Европейская Статистическая Программа (ЕСП) представляет собой основу для проведения статистических мероприятий ЕЭП. Хотя все основные области ЕСП открыты для полного участия трех государств-членов ЕАСТ, входящих в ЕЭП - Исландии, Лихтенштейна и Норвегии - фактическая программа работы устанавливается ежегодно в процессе, который основывается на консультациях с НСИ государств-членов ЕАСТ/ЕЭП, статистическим бюро ЕАСТ и Евростатом. На практике, ежегодная рабочая программа ЕЭП тесно связана с ежегодной рабочей программой Евростата.





Большинство правовых актов в области статистики включены в договор о ЕЭП, хотя иногда необходимы адаптации. Государства-члены ЕАСТ/ЕЭП участвуют в финансировании ЕСП и имеют право на получение грантов Евростата. Помимо финансирования, государства-члены ЕАСТ/ЕЭП предоставляют Евростату статистическую экспертизу путем предоставления четырех долгосрочных национальных экспертов. Дополнительно, ЕАСТ как организация, предоставляет двух экспертов.

Хотя, договор между Швейцарии и ЕС юридически и институционально отличается, в области статистики, он предусматривает практически те же права и обязанности, что и договор о ЕЭП. Швейцария, как и государства-члены ЕАСТ/ЕЭП, вносит финансовый вклад в ЕСП и предоставляет долгосрочных экспертов Евростату. Таким образом, все четыре государствачлены ЕАСТ имеют доступ к работе рабочих и целевых групп Евростата и также могут участвовать в самых ранних стадиях процесса принятия решений, наравне с государствамичленами ЕС. В отличие от договора об ЕЭП, договор между Швейцарией и ЕС является двусторонним соглашением, не имеющим официальной роли для ЕАСТ.

Статистическое Бюро ЕАСТ

Статистическое Бюро EACT (СБЕ) является центральным органом, осуществляющим связь между НСИ государств-членов EACT и Евростатом. Основная деятельность СБЕ включает в себя мониторинг нового законодательства ЕС в области статистики, оказание помощи НСИ в оценке соответствия между договором о ЕЭП и новыми правовыми актами ЕС и включение их в рамки договора о EAOC. Кроме того, СБЕ тесно сотрудничает с Евростатом в разработке ежегодной рабочей программы EAOC и следит за включением данных EAOC в публикации Евростата. В рамках своего сотрудничества с Евростатом и НСИ государств-членов EAOC, СБЕ также способствует организации курсов для специалистов в области статистики в рамках Европейской Программы Статистического Тренинга, а также участвует в финансировании статистического тренинга и программ, направленных на наращивание потенциала в третьих странах, прежде всего в приграничных регионах ЕС на востоке и на юге. Офис СБЕ находится в том же помещении, что и Евростат, в Люксембурге.

Европейская Ассоциация Свободной Торговли (EACT) является межправительственной организацией, созданной для содействия свободной торговле и экономической интеграции в интересах ее четырех государств-членов - Исландии, Лихтенштейна, Норвегии и Швейцарии — а также их торговых партнеров по всему миру. Основными задачами EACT являются:

- Поддержание и развитие Конвенции EACT, регулирующей экономические отношения между государствами-членами EACT
- Внедрение Договора о Европейском Экономическом Пространстве (Соглашение о ЕЭП), объединяющим государства-члены ЕС и три государства ЕАСТ Исландия, Лихтенштейн и Норвегия в единый рынок, также называемый «Внутренний рынок»
- Разработка сети договоров о свободной торговле ЕАСТ.

