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Statistical Office of Kosovo

Quality of official statistics in Kosovo. May 2004.

The Statistical Office of Kosovo (SOK) is responsible for all official statistics in Kosovo, except Balance of Payments (BoP). BoP is the responsibility of BPK (Banking and Payments Authority of Kosovo).

SOK is facing serious quality problems mainly due to:

- SOK had to start in principal from scratch 4-5 years ago in August 1999. During this period the statistical infrastructure has been built up; the statistical building has been renovated, IT-equipment bought and IT-systems built, transport means (cars) bought, creation of a sampling frame for household surveys, extensive staff training in English, IT and Statistics has been carried out.
- The basis for a statistical system is lacking in Kosovo. The last reliable population census was conducted in 1981, the last agricultural census in 1960. A statistical business register is also missing.

In spite of this SOK has managed to produce quite a lot of statistics (please refer to the SOK website www.sok-kosovo.org).

The quality measures taken so far have been of ad hoc nature. There is yet no systematic approach to manage and monitor the quality of official statistics within SOK. However, measures are underway to assess the data quality of national accounts and balance of payments statistics, and data sources used, based on the Data Quality Assessment Framework (DQAF) of the IMF.

The most serious quality problems are:

Household surveys. This is probably the most successful part of the Kosovo Statistical System. SOK uses a two stage sampling design. The sampling frame consists of about 3 500 Enumeration Areas (EA). In the first stage SOK usually select 400 EAs using PPS. All households in the selected EAs are listed and a random sample of usually 8 households is selected within each of these EAs. The quality of the sampling frame has improved and is now considered to be satisfactory. However, a much better sampling frame would be possible based on a population census. Other problems have been that the household listing was not complete in some cases. A very positive aspect is that there is almost no non-response in our household surveys. SOK carries out LFS (Labour Force Survey), HBS (Household Budget Survey) and AHS (Agricultural Household Surveys) regularly and on an ad hoc basis surveys like LSMS (Living Standard Measurement Survey) and DHS (Demographic and Health Survey).

National accounts and balance of payments (BOP). The largest problem in national accounts is the lack of data. Provisional estimates of GDP from the expenditure side and BOP are being done, even if some needed data are missing and must be roughly estimated. However, despite limitations, there are adequate key data available, to be supplemented by ad hoc inquiries and estimates to fill gaps, for compiling provisional estimates of GDP by expenditure approach and BOP. From the production side no GDP estimates have been possible to do so far. There is an urgent need to improve source data in range and quality, including business surveys and BOP collections, external trade statistics and other, providing a better expenditure-based GDP and BOP estimates and for some initial GDP estimates on a production basis.

Business register and business surveys. This is the most problematic area. There exists a business registration, but the quality is too low. The quality of the business surveys (BS) carried out so far has not been satisfactory due to many factors such as there is no tradition using the terminology of a market economy, accounting is far from perfect, enumerators need more training, there is a rather high rate of non-response. However, the last BS to Socially Owned Enterprises (SOE) seems to be of better quality.

Administrative data. Data collected from schools, courts, hospitals, civil registration offices etc. suffer from under coverage. Administrative data from minority areas are very difficult to obtain in most cases. However, it should be noted that in some areas this is working rather well, e.g. Social Welfare Statistics and External Trade Statistics based on Customs data. Also CPI and other price collection function well.

The top priority for SOK is to conduct a population and housing census as soon as possible, followed by an agricultural census, and to improve economic statistics, especially business register and business surveys. Business surveys should be carried out on a regular basis, preferably quarterly.

SOK has large support from different donors like EU (Eurostat/EAR), Sida/Statistics Sweden, UNFPA, WB, IMF. Also the funds given to SOK from the KCB (Kosovo Consolidated Budget) have increased. SOK will depend on international technical assistance for a long time. All local costs should be covered from the KCB.

There is still much to be done in the area of quality in official statistics in Kosovo. The most important steps taken so far are:

- Improving the sampling frame and household listing in household surveys.
- A small evaluation study in agricultural statistics, mainly on livestock estimates.
- Improving data entry programs and data processing.
- Improving skills how to clean the statistical databases.
- Staff training (including seminars on Total Quality Management (TQM)) and also increased participation in international statistical cooperation.
- Increased use of international statistical standards and recommendations.