

RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE



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Annual Report of the Official Statistics Authority 2009

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Institutional Framework and Composition of the Official Statistics Authority

The institutional framework of official statistics in France was modified by the Law on Modernisation of the Economy (LME) of 4 August 2008.

It is based on three pillars.

The *Conseil national de l'information statistique* (CNIS - National Council for Statistical Information) provides a forum for users and producers of official statistics. It highlights new needs for information, guides programming of official statistical work and suggests ways to ensure that these statistics correspond as closely as possible to the questions of society.

The CNIS is chaired by Jean-Pierre Duport.

The official statistical service drives conception, production and dissemination of official statistics. It comprises INSEE and 15 Ministerial Statistical Offices. It is coordinated by INSEE.

INSEE is headed by Jean-Philippe Cotis.

The Official Statistics Authority ensures that official statistics are prepared in all professional independence and according to the fundamental principles in the "European Statistics Code of Practice": impartiality, objectivity, relevance and data quality.

One of its missions is to write an annual report on official statistical activity. This report is handed in to Parliament and made public.

This report covers 2009, the first year of existence of the Authority which met for the first time in June 2009.

Decree n° 2009-250 of 3 March 2009 on the Official Statistics Authority sets out its missions
<http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000020343162&dateTexte=&categorieLien=id>

Composition of the Official Statistics Authority

(notice published in Official Journal n° 0121 of 27 May 2009):

Mr Paul Champsaur, President, appointed by a decree of the Council of Ministers of 25 March 2009

Mr Francis Mer, appointed by the President of the National Assembly

Mr Yves Fréville, Vice-President, appointed by the President of the Senate

Mr Philippe Le Clézio, appointed by the President of the Economic, Social and Environmental Council

M. Jean Gaeremynck, President of the Statistical Confidentiality Committee, appointed by the President of the Council of State

M. François Écalle, appointed by the First President of the Court of Accounts

M. Philip Dane, appointed by the Department Head of the General Inspectorate of Finances

M. Pascal Penaud, appointed by the Head of the General Inspectorate of Social Affairs

M. Bruno Durieux, appointed by the Minister for the Economy, Industry and Employment

Official Statistics Authority

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Preface

The Law on Modernisation of the Economy (LME) of 4 August 2008 and its application decrees endowed France with a body, the Official Statistics Authority, which is responsible for safeguarding the principles of professional independence in the conception, production and dissemination of official statistics, and the principles of objectivity, impartiality, relevance and reliability of the data that is produced.

The Official Statistics Authority must guarantee the independence of official statistics, define its scope and specify quality criteria in reference to the European Statistics Code of Practice. It must be attentive to all or any applications by individuals or legal entities wishing to inform it of certain discrepancies in the “conduct” of official statistics. This implies that the Authority must fulfil its role in a manner that is open, rigorous and flexible.

The opinions of the Authority are based on the fifteen principles in the European Statistics Code of Practice, which is the reference in the Regulation of the European Parliament and Council of 11 March 2009 on European statistics. In its work, the Authority will place the emphasis on anticipation, prevention and dissuasion. In the event of any notable breaches of the principles of the Code of Practice, the Authority will issue opinions and public remarks. The composition of the Authority and the determination of its members leave no doubt as to the fact that they will indeed react publicly if it should prove necessary. It is in this spirit that the Authority set down to work when it was set up on 8 June 2009.

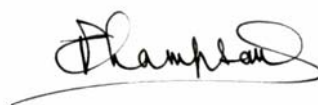
Three work themes were selected for 2010. First of all, the explicit enlargement of the notion of official statistics to include statistics produced by bodies that do not belong to the official statistical service, which is to say INSEE and the Ministerial Statistical Offices. This implies that an audit must be carried out to assess the quality of the statistics in question. This enlargement is very clearly provided for by law. Next, the enlargement of the list of those statistics for which the publication schedule is announced in advance: the current list is limited to the main economic outlook statistics. The goal of these two steps is to make the working of official statistics more precise, to enhance the professional independence of the producers concerned and to achieve greater quality through dialogue. Finally, the Authority will report on its activity to Parliament and to the Government.

In conclusion, it is important to point out that although statistical skills are indispensable to good statistics, good statistics are not just a matter of statisticians. From conception through to dissemination, the quality of official statistics depends closely on the quality of the information provided, and on the careful attention paid to it by professionals, researchers, users and the media...

The broadest possible use of these statistics, paired with critical insight, must surely be the best guarantee of the ability to produce figures that are of use to society as a whole.

The producers and the CNIS are working on this.

The Authority addresses its encouragement to them in these efforts.



Paul CHAMPSAUR
President

1. Production and dissemination of official statistics in France in 2009

Two economic and social events raised particular issues for official statistics in 2009.

The economic crisis tested its ability to describe and anticipate economic fluctuations and their social consequences.

The rise of sustainable development policies, meanwhile, has brought into question the ability of official statistics to describe growth in terms of quality of life and ecological balance.

Official statistics has demonstrated an ability to respond to these new expectations.

It has also largely responded to the needs expressed by its users through the CNIS.

However, some statistical information has been the focus of criticism, or even public polemics, such as property market figures and employment estimates.

The CNIS also mentions some difficulties in taking account of some of its opinions.

Official statistical activity in 2009 can therefore be judged positively as far as its response to social demand is concerned. It would suggest, however, a number of points to be watched by the Official Statistics Authority.

1.1 Outlook analyses in 2009

French official statistics regularly publishes outlook indicators on key themes of the French economy: prices, labour market, GDP, household consumption and income, foreign trade, etc.

These indicators are the basis for a large number of economic analyses and short-term forecasts that are relayed throughout society by the media.

In 2009, they largely contributed to providing an insight into the economic and social situation of France, despite a situation of crisis.

However, in the face of unusual fluctuations in markets and economic and social behaviour, the efficiency of some of these indicators was the subject of debate in 2009.

There were various discussions and studies on this subject in 2009; the Authority has noted the following conclusions.

➔ The need for official statistics to enhance its ability to diagnose and anticipate in times of crisis. On this subject, see the comments of Jean-Philippe Cotis,¹ INSEE Director General, on developing financial statistics and making better use of indicators on the boundary between the real and the financial spheres.

➔ The need to improve and clarify property market indicators. The price index for existing housing is the fruit of collaboration between the Notaries and INSEE. While the robustness and scientific validity of this index are unquestionable, the crisis has emphasised the need for it to be quicker, more visible and provide better coverage of local markets.

An addendum to the partnership between the Notaries and INSEE was signed in 2009 and should provide some progress in this respect in 2010.

¹ Cf speech by Jean-Philippe Cotis at an ADIES round-table discussion entitled "The Statistical System at the Heart of the Crisis" http://www.idies.org/public/Publications/idies_note_de_travail_8_BAT.pdf

→ The absolute need to restructure provisional employment estimates, the robustness of which was brought into question in the slump in activity in 2009. A working group with INSEE, DARES,² ACOSS³ and Pôle Emploi (Employment Centre) will present its analysis in 2010. It will have to find the right balance between information that is not only robust and consistent, but also provided early.

→ Finally, mention should also be made of the unemployment figures, which have once again been the subject of public polemics. This appears to be primarily a problem of communication. The official statistical service made a significant attempt to clarify its concepts in 2008. The information has been enriched to take better account of under-employment and of the “halo” around unemployment. This has resulted in a certain complexity.

The pedagogical efforts to explain these figures must be continued.

1.2 The other contributions of official statistics in 2009

In parallel with these needs for clarification on the short-term outlook, for several years, official statistics has been faced with growing demand for its outputs.

New themes are appearing: sustainable development, globalisation, measuring inequalities and well-being.

The geographical scales of this demand are also becoming more diversified. Europe and local authorities are experiencing growing needs to help them steer their policies.

The nature of social demand, finally, is changing. Citizens no longer recognize themselves in “average” indicators on purchasing power or consumption, for example. They expect official statistics to provide a description that is more representative of society in all its diversity.

Official statistics work in 2009 has largely responded to these new expectations.

- **In sustainable development, several types of action were initiated in 2009**

The publication of sustainable development indicators on three geographical scales has demonstrated the contribution statistics can make in this field:

- indicators tracking the European commitments,
- 11 key indicators situating France in relation to the rest of Europe on sustainable development criteria,
- regional sustainable development indicators.

Consultations were launched in mid-2009 between the Economic, Social and Environmental Council, the General Commission for Sustainable Development and the CNIS, via a commission encompassing the five stakeholders from the Grenelle environmental forum. Its goal is to enhance the relevance of the national sustainable development strategy indicators to the expectations of civil society. A scorecard of some twenty indicators has been

² Department for the Coordination of Research, Studies and Statistics: a Ministerial Statistical Office which reports jointly to the Ministry for the Economy, Industry and Employment, and the Ministry for Work, Labour Relations, the Family, Solidarity and the City.

³ Central Agency of the Social Security Organisations

prepared, among other things. It will serve to facilitate citizens' understanding of the issues involved in this strategy. At the same time, official statistics has drawn up a plan of action to implement the recommendations of the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Commission on measuring economic performance and social progress. Each of the three parts in this Commission's report has been taken into account in the official statistics work programmes: measuring GDP, measuring quality of life and the environment.

French official statistics is also playing a focal role in debates and action to ensure that the outcomes of the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Report are taken into account internationally, in collaboration with Eurostat and the OECD.

- **The ties between French and European statistics are getting closer**

In 2009, half of official statistical surveys contributed to European statistics. In some cases, it was simply a question of passing on results. In others, it could mean carrying out a survey using a questionnaire defined on the European level.

This French contribution to European statistics is a response to demand from users, for whom Europe is now an indispensable framework for comparisons.

It is also a source of methodological and conceptual progress.

In 2009, for example, France took part on an experimental basis in the "Outward FATS",⁴ coordinated by Eurostat. This system offers an opportunity to study the settlement of groups of French people abroad, and should enhance our knowledge of the effects of globalisation on our economy.

- **Regional statistics were considerably enriched in 2009**

The publication of the results of the **population census** represented a particular event in 2009.

For the first time, these results were produced by a new methodology based on a cycle of five annual census surveys. They will now be published each year.

This represents the culmination of a major project to place recent information at the disposal of all those involved in the economic, social and environmental development of our regions.

The completion of the project as announced should be lauded.

The rapid publication of both summarised and very detailed data, available to all, is a particularly notable achievement.

The "Permanent Facilities Database" was also added to the range of regional statistics in 2009. It serves to locate public or private facilities in municipalities or districts: schools, health services, banks and post offices, trades activities, businesses... It is an essential source of information for regional development. It can be used to analyse access of the population to various facilities and services.

Two longer-term projects should also provide a response to complementary expectations for regional data: the production of local indicators on inequalities and on the property and real-estate market.

⁴ Outward Foreign Affiliates Statistics

- **A more diversified view of purchasing power and consumption**

Official statistics made rapid progress in 2009 towards providing something more than a vision that is considered as being too focused on averages and as failing to capture certain phenomena properly.

The notion of “built-in expenses” is now included in purchasing power and consumption indicators. It identifies expenditure over which households have little control, at least in the short term, because they are subject to contracts that are not easy to renegotiate: housing, insurance, school meals, financial services...

Purchasing power is now therefore estimated in terms of the income that is "available", which is closer to the perception the households have and is defined as their disposable income once these "built-in" expenses have been deducted.

The view of household consumption modes is thus more detailed in that it takes account of this "built-in" portion and is differentiated according to income.

- **Key current issues**

We should also note some important ongoing work in 2009, the conclusions of which may be examined by the Official Statistics Authority in 2010:

- on statistics in the property and construction sectors, within the framework of a CNIS working group chaired by Bernard Vorms, Director General of the ANIL,
- on the most suitable statistical tools for understanding “inequalities and discriminations”, within the framework of the Committee for the Measurement of Diversity and the Evaluation of Discriminations (COMEDD), chaired by François Héran, Former Director of the INED and a Member of the Scientific Board of Sciences-Po.

1.3 Conclusion on official statistical activity in 2009

See the 2009 Review presented by the National Council for Statistical Information (CNIS), in Annexe 3.

In the light of its various observations and hearings, the Authority draws four main conclusions on official statistical activity in 2009:

- Relevance and responsiveness were rather satisfactory in 2009
- The pressures of high demand, however, will require more trade-offs to be made in coming years
- The importance of developing statistics on financial activities
- The need to enhance knowledge of individual trajectories

Relevance and responsiveness were rather satisfactory in 2009

- The Authority notes with satisfaction that French official statistics is making every effort to adapt its work programme to the needs expressed by society, both short and medium term.
- It emphasises, in particular, the effort that has been made, which is of capital importance for the future, in its work in the domain of sustainable development, in

liaison with the relevant partners. Its rapid investment of significant scale and on the international level will be followed with attention by the Official Statistics Authority.

The pressure of demand will require more trade-offs to be made in coming years

The Authority is particularly aware of the concern of the CNIS on the consequences an increase in European demands could have on the responsiveness of official statistics to national needs.

Growing participation in European statistics is a necessity. Among other things, it is a source of credibility and comparability. It does, however, raise the question of the compatibility of demands from Eurostat and national demands.

This concern of the French Authority matches that of the European Authority⁵ which lists measures to be taken in the face of limited resources in these awkward times for public finances.

The right balance needs to be found between European and national demands.

More generally, the Authority has concerns as to the consequences of growing demands on official statistics, arising from European needs or from other clients. This pressure from demand in a context that is increasingly marked by budgetary difficulties increases the risk of seeing longer lead times in production and dissemination. This would go against the objective of enhancing the image of public statistics.

The Authority encourages INSEE to move quickly to enhance coordination of official statistics programming and to enter into dialogue with the CNIS to ensure that priorities are outlined for coming years regarding new work to be undertaken and current work to be suspended.

The importance of developing statistics on financial activities

The development of official statistics on financial activities is of the utmost importance, notably in the current economic context. This field must be a priority for official statistics.

In this respect, the Official Statistics Authority lauds the work of the CNIS commission on the “Financial System and Financing the Economy” and will be highly attentive to the follow-up to three of its working themes:

➔ “Reconciling” the notions of financial institution net banking income and value added, which was the focus of considerable and interesting work by INSEE and the Banque de France.⁶ The Authority will be attentive to the annual publication of the proposed indicators.

➔ The introduction of statistics on financial groups according to their activities, as recommended by a working group chaired by Gilles de Margerie.⁷ These activities are, for

⁵ The European Statistical Governance Advisory (ESGAB) published its first report in November 2009. It may be consulted on the following website:

<http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/esgab/documents/ESGAB-2009-Annual-Report-FR.pdf>

⁶ See the publication by the Banque de France /INSEE: http://www.banque-france.fr/fr/publications/telechar/bulletin/etu178_1.pdf

⁷ See the report “Statistiques sur les groupes financiers” on the CNIS website:

example: retail banking, finance and investment banking, consumer credit, etc. This proposal is essential to a better understanding of financial processes.

→ Enriching the publication of financial institution solvency and liquidity indicators, based on a European framework to the extent possible.

The Official Statistics Authority calls for broader public dissemination of these indicators using statistical aggregates complying with the strict application of rules on access to individual information and those on statistical confidentiality.

The calculation and dissemination of aggregates based on individual data collected by the financial regulation authority may be carried out under the responsibility of the said authority or under that of the official statistical service. The latter has the powers and competence to handle such data, as it does when it processes fiscal data, for example.

The Official Statistics Authority will contact the European authorities, if necessary, to ensure that the dissemination methods being envisaged in France are harmonised on the European level to the extent possible.

The need to enhance knowledge of trajectories

An understanding of trajectories is becoming increasingly necessary to enlighten policies on equal opportunities, professional integration and social integration.

However collection of such data comes up against genuine issues of confidentiality in the case of tracking schooling.

It is indispensable that the information system used to elaborate statistics on school trajectories must not be used for other purposes. The supply of information that is essential to French society depends on its integrity.

Those responsible for official statistics should move towards a dialogue with the relevant administrations and with the population to come to a decision on this question, with the support of the Official Statistics Authority, if necessary.

2. Official statistical practice

This paragraph concerns the conditions in which official statistics were produced in 2009 in the light of the European Statistics Code of Practice.

As this is the first annual report, this chapter will first describe and comment on two fundamental aspects of the context:

- the notion of “official statistics” in France (§ 2.1),
- the official statistics “quality” procedure in France (§2.2).

We will then move on to a critical review of the fundamental principles of the Code, to which the Authority will be particularly attentive in 2010: professional independence (§ 2.3), relevance (§ 2.4) and compliance with standards and publication schedules (§ 2.5).

2.1 Official statistics

The law⁸ makes a distinction between:

- the official statistical service
- official statistics.

The official statistical service comprises the *Institut National de la Statistique et des Etudes Economiques* (INSEE) and the Ministerial Statistical Offices (see list in Annexe 2).

Official statistics encompasses all the output from:

- the statistical surveys in the list defined each year by a ruling of the Minister for the Economy;
- the processing, for general information purposes, of data collected by administrations, public bodies or private entities fulfilling a public service role.

→ *Statistical surveys in 2009*

In 2009, 133 statistical surveys were listed in the Official Journal.

The breakdown of the bodies producing them was as follows:

- INSEE: 51 surveys
- Ministerial Statistical Offices: 66 surveys
- Other bodies: 16 surveys

The list of the “other bodies” taking part in the production of official statistics may vary each year.

In 2009, for example, the list was as follows:

- Artema (professional organisation),
- Banque de France,
- CEREQ (Centre for Studies and Research into Qualifications),
- DGER (Studies and Research Department of the Ministry for Agriculture),
- INED (National institute for Demographic Studies),
- INSERM (National Institute for Health and Medical research),
- IRDES (Institute for Research and Documentation in Health Economics),
- OND (National Delinquency Observatory).

⁸ See Law n° 51-711 of 7 June 1951 on legal obligation, coordination and confidentiality in the field of statistics (<http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT00000888573>), as amended by the Law on the Modernisation of the Economy (LME) n°2008-776 of 4 August 2008 - Art. 144

→ *Output from the processing of data collected “for general information purposes” in 2009*

The detailed review of the CNIS for the year 2009 also mentions a large number of statistics that do not come from surveys, but from processing administrative sources.

Here are a few illustrations:

- the statistics on job-seekers published by the *Pôle Emploi* and the DARES,⁹
- the statistics on salaried employment or total wages elaborated by the ACOSS (Central Agency of the Social Security Organisations),
- the statistics on family benefits published by the CNAF (National Fund for Family Benefits),
- the business demography based on the enterprise and establishment list managed by INSEE,
- the figures on new construction based on building permit declarations, published by the MEEDDM (SOeS),
- ...

- ***The need for compliance with the Code of Practice***

The law also sets out the quality criteria that go with the definition of official statistics. These statistics must be elaborated in total professional independence and must satisfy the principles of objectivity, impartiality, relevance and quality.

This quality requirement in official statistics is fundamental: it contributes to their credibility in the eyes of users and public opinion.

It is the responsibility of the Authority to safeguard this.

To this effect, the Official Statistics Authority is in favour of awarding compliance certificates to sets of statistical indicators. When information has been declared to be “compliant”, it will mean that it has been demonstrated that it was prepared in accordance with the recommendations of the European Statistics Code of Practice.

The advantages expected of such certification are many:

- inform all users of the quality of the available information.
- make the scope and role of official statistics more clearly visible.
- provide an incentive to enhance the quality of official statistics.
- offer those producing and disseminating “compliant” statistics with public acknowledgement of the quality of their work, whether those producers belong to the official statistical service or not.

The Official Statistics Authority will therefore examine with great attention the proposals made to it on this subject at the end of 2010 by the INSEE General Inspectorate.

- ***An indispensable transition phase***

The ideal thing would be to be able to define a general map of official statistics, so that they can be easily identified and qualified.

⁹ Department for the Coordination of Research, Studies and Statistics: a Ministerial Statistical Office which reports jointly to the Ministry for the Economy, Industry and Employment, and the Ministry for Work, Labour Relations, the Family, Solidarity and the City

Such an objective can only be for the long term, as it supposes taking the time to study the issues and engage in dialogue with the producers.

The next few years will therefore be a transition phase during which the scope of certified statistics will gradually be extended.

2.2 The official statistical service “quality” procedure

See annexe 4: “The Official Statistical Service ‘Quality’ Procedure since 2006”

A “quality” procedure was introduced by INSEE in 2006. It was extended to most of the Ministerial Statistical Offices over the following years.

This procedure encourages statisticians to take more systematic account of quality objectives in their processes, from conception through to dissemination of their statistical products.

In practical terms, this procedure provides working tools and methods that facilitate the sharing of common practice by statisticians to work towards greater quality.

➔ The Official Statistics Authority notes with satisfaction that this procedure has been in place since 2006 in the official statistical service.

It notes with satisfaction:

- that official statistical service practice is now compliant with a large part of the recommendations in the European Code of Practice.
- that in most cases, the action taken goes further than these recommendations.

➔ The Official Statistics Authority notes three domains in which particularly significant progress seems to have been made:

- *Compliance with statistical confidentiality.* This is an essential condition for the credibility of the official statistical service, which must be beyond reproach in its knowledge of, and compliance with the rules of statistical confidentiality.
- *User satisfaction.* This is the guarantee of the usefulness of official statistics. Regular checks must be conducted to ensure that the official statistics offering matches the needs of the different audiences.
- *Accessibility of data and supporting documentation.* This is the major condition if official statistics are to be widely used.

The working tools and methods introduced in recent years in response to these three objectives are considerable and appreciable.

➔ For the future, the Authority takes note of the recent decision by INSEE to create a Methodology Division to enhance the quality of official statistics production and its efficiency.

➔ The Official Statistics Authority is pleased to note the announced opening of a “secure remote access centre” that will enable researchers to carry out their research, while protecting confidential data.

The speedy supply of elementary data files to experts from different backgrounds can contribute to public debate by offering a variety of analyses. This availability must be taken into account from the beginning of all statistical operations. It contributes to increasing the impact of official statistics, and is of benefit to users and producers alike.

The Official Statistics Authority will be attentive to ensuring that the centre does actually promote more exchanges, and that these exchanges between the research world and producers of official statistics are quicker and simpler than today.

The Authority does raise two questions regarding this “quality” procedure:

- the degree of involvement in this procedure of the Ministerial Statistical Offices, and possibly other bodies,
- how to ensure that the practices and tools set up within the procedure are used and produce effects over the longer term.

The Official Statistics Authority will propose more in-depth exchanges with those responsible for this procedure.

2.3 Professional independence

Reference to the European Statistics Code of Practice:

“Principle 1: Professional independence – The professional independence of statistical authorities from other policy, regulatory or administrative departments and bodies, as well as from private sector operators, ensures the credibility of European Statistics.”

- **De facto independence written into the law since 2008**

Since 4 August 2008, the principle of professional independence in the conception, production and dissemination of official statistics has been written into the law:¹⁰

“The conception, production and dissemination of official statistics are carried out in full professional independence.”

Writing this independence into French law was one of the recommendations of the evaluation of INSEE by its European “peers” in 2007.

It provides a clear legal framework for one of the essential missions of the Authority: to safeguard the principle of professional independence in the elaboration of official statistics.

This legal provision reinforces the *de facto* independence of the French official statistics service, linked to two of its specific features:

- its management comes from the corps of statisticians trained in the schools run by INSEE, and is therefore keenly aware of professional ethics,
- its coordination by INSEE facilitates the emergence of a common culture, in compliance with "good practice", in the Ministerial Statistical Offices and INSEE.

These particularities provide guarantees of the necessary independence and competence in the production of official statistics.

- **Keeping a watch on independence**

However, while this functional oversight of the official statistical service by INSEE plays a positive role in ensuring the professional independence of official statistics, it is not enough.

¹⁰ See Law n° 51-711 of 7 June 1951 on legal obligation, coordination and confidentiality in the field of statistics (<http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000000888573>), as amended by the Law on the Modernisation of the Economy (LME) n°2008-776 of 4 August 2008 - Art. 144

INSEE remains a ministerial department and it can therefore not be ruled out that there might be the possibility of attempts to influence its work.

The Ministerial Statistical Offices, meanwhile, are in an ambiguous situation: they take part more broadly in steering the public policies of their ministry, and this activity can make it difficult to work impartially and independently.

The Ministerial Statistical Offices may be subject to pressures of different kinds, which might cause them not to publish the official statistics under their charge in a timely manner.

The ministerial officials to whom they report might give priority to other work, for example, or might wish to postpone publications that might not appear politically opportune to them.

The Official Statistics Authority will be attentive to ensuring that the official statistical service can carry out its work and publication programme in full professional independence.

- **The statistics publication calendar: a guarantee of professional independence.**

Public display of the official statistics information that will be published in the coming months, quarters and years represents a strong commitment to all users by the statisticians and their administrative hierarchy.

It represents a strong guarantee of the compliance of the indicators with the set deadlines, and therefore of the professional independence of the producers in carrying out their work programme.

Most of the outlook indicators are already listed in a public calendar

Most of the “outlook indicators” in official statistics are now announced three or four months prior to their publication.

These outlook indicators correspond to some sixty sets of statistical data published monthly or quarterly in the following fields: activity in major economic sectors, business demography, foreign trade, employment and the labour market, prices, household income and consumption, national accounts.

The main producers in question are: INSEE, the Banque de France, the DARES,¹¹ the SOeS,¹² the SSP,¹³ and the Customs Service.

Most of these indicators were defined a little over ten years ago.

The objective at the time was to provide users, and notably financial markets and institutional users in Europe and internationally, with the main economic indicators for steering economic policy within known and short deadlines.

The scope of the official statistics publication calendar could be extended

¹¹ Department for the Coordination of Research, Studies and Statistics: a Ministerial Statistical Office which reports jointly to the Ministry for the Economy, Industry and Employment, and the Ministry for Work, Labour Relations, the Family, Solidarity and the City

¹² Department for Observation and Statistics: Ministerial Statistical Office reporting to the General Commission for Sustainable Development (CGDD)

¹³ Department for Statistics and Forward Studies: Ministerial Statistical Office reporting to the General Secretariat of the Ministry for Food, Agriculture and Fisheries.

A certain amount of data that is published annually, or even more episodically, by the official statistical service could also be the subject of a provisional publication calendar displayed in public.

- The indicators extracted from the “major” surveys with the CNIS quality label:
 - Business surveys
 - Population census
 - Agricultural census
 - ...
- The “key figures” or “memos” published regularly by the various producers: key figures on justice, agriculture, national education....

The provisional publication dates could be confirmed more precisely as the time approaches.

The Authority encourages INSEE and the Ministerial Statistical Offices to continue their work on extending the calendar for publications.

The Authority proposes that this calendar should be drawn up on the basis of the seven working themes of the CNIS,¹⁴ which cut across the official statistical service.

The Authority will take steps, if necessary, with the authorities concerned by the implementation and monitoring of this calendar.

2.4 Relevance

Reference to the European Statistics Code of Practice:

“Principle 11: Relevance - European Statistics must meet the needs of users.”

French official statistics has two systems to ensure its relevance:

- The National Council for Statistical information (CNIS), which provides a forum for dialogue between users and producers of official statistics,
- a permanent system of opinion surveys, steered by INSEE, which conducts ex-post checks on the satisfaction level of users.

- **The National Council for Statistical Information (CNIS)**

In France, the National Council for Statistical information (CNIS) handles consultation between users and producers of official statistics.

It pinpoints new information needs and the concerns of users. It examines the usefulness of each new project, whether a survey, a census, a panel or the use of administrative files...

¹⁴ The CNIS works on 7 themes: 1. Demography and social issues; 2. Employment, qualification and earned income; 3. Enterprises and market strategy; 4. Environment and sustainable development; 5. Public services and services to the public; 6. Financial system and financing the economy; 7. Regions

The debate is organised so that it can serve to adapt work programmes to the needs that are expressed. It was recently reorganised into seven themed commissions to extend its reach to new users and focus its debates on the major themes of debate in society.

The Official Statistics Authority attaches particular importance to the responsiveness of the working groups set up by the CNIS on topical themes.

Producers and users work jointly in them to make recommendations which often produce effects.¹⁵

The Authority considers that the opinions expressed by the CNIS are, without question, representative of social demand. *The Authority will also emphasise those recommendations that it sees as being priorities in the light of ongoing public debates, and any discrepancies or difficulties it might observe between the demands of the CNIS and the work programme presented by the official statistical service.*

For the year 2009, the Authority's remarks concerning the relevance of the subjects addressed by official statistics are presented in the first paragraph of this report

- **INSEE satisfaction surveys : assessing quality against public expectations**

The objective of INSEE satisfaction surveys is to assess the quality of the information offering in the light of the expectations of the public: relevance of information, ease of access, choice of materials etc.

In 2009, the following surveys were carried out:

- Telephone response by the "INSEE Contact" department
- Access to local data on the insee.fr website
- Specialised access for enterprises on the insee.fr website
- Satisfaction of readers of the "*Tableaux de l'économie française*" (TEF)
- The paper and electronic versions of the TEF.

Each of these surveys has given rise to a plan of action to improve the quality of the offering.

INSEE has acquired considerable know-how in satisfaction surveys that could be of benefit to the official statistical service as a whole, given that the Ministerial Statistical Offices do not have this kind of skill.

In 2009, INSEE also had SOFRES carry out a study to establish a regular "barometer" of the image of INSEE and the credibility of the indicators it publishes.

Although this barometer does conclude that INSEE has a good image as an institution, it also confirms that there are growing doubts in the public as to just how representative some indicators are. The indicators perceived as being the least effective in reflecting reality are: purchasing power, unemployment rate, consumer price index and public debt.

15 Mention can be made, for example, of the work groups that have completed their work :

- "Corporate Groups" chaired by Edouard Salustro
- "Indicators of employment, unemployment, under-employment and casual employment" chaired by Jean-Baptiste de Foucauld
- "Standards of living and social inequalities" chaired by Jacques Freyssinet
- "Financial sector groups" chaired by Gilles de Margerie, and the working group currently underway on "Statistics in the property and construction sectors" chaired by Bernard Vorms.

The Official Statistics Authority will keep an attentive eye on the implementation and effects of the measures announced by the CNIS and INSEE to ensure more regular communication that is better adapted to the general public, to respond to the feeling that there is a gap between the figures and the actual situation.

2.5 Other aspects of the Code of Practice

- **Transparent dissemination placing all users on an equal footing**

The European Code of Practice states that “All users have equal access to statistical releases at the same time and any privileged pre-release access to any outside user is limited, controlled and publicised” (excerpt from Principle 6 : “Impartiality and objectivity”).

Regarding the release of the main economic indicators, France adhered to the SDDS (Special Data Dissemination Standard) standard of the International Monetary Fund in 1996.

This standard guarantees equal access to information for all users: the dates and times of publication of the main economic indicators are announced in advance. All users have access to statistical publications at the same time and in the same conditions.

Part of the information, however, is communicated in advance and subject to embargo to the offices of the President of the Republic, the Prime Minister and the Ministries in question.

Compliance with these embargo rules by all the parties concerned is essential. It guarantees users the transparency that is necessary for information to be credible. The Authority will therefore keep a close watch for any breaches of these principles.

- **A release calendar announced in advance and complied with**

The Code states that “European Statistics must be disseminated in a timely and punctual manner” (excerpt from Principle 13: Timeliness and Punctuality).

The project to extend the scope of the statistics announced in the provisional calendars will allow progress to be made towards satisfying this principle.

This project was already mentioned in Chapter 2.3 as it also contributes to the principle of independence.

3. Activity of the Official Statistics Authority in 2009

The Official Statistics Authority effectively started its activity on 8 June 2009, under its President Paul Champsaur and Vice President Yves Fréville, unanimously elected to their positions at the first meeting of the Authority.

In the course of the following months:

- the practical terms of its workings were established with the publication of its Rules of Procedure,
- it introduced itself to the official statistical service as well as to a broader audience through the preparation of its website,
- it familiarised itself with its French and European institutional environment,
- it discussed the criteria on which it can issue an opinion on the accreditation of an administrative unit as a “Ministerial Statistical Office”,
- it prepared this annual report.

3.1 Rules of Procedure

The Rules of Procedure of the Official Statistics Authority were published in the Official Journal, further to its deliberations of 29 September 2009.

The writing of these Rules was an opportunity, in particular, for the Authority to specify the procedure for referring matters to it, in the hope that this procedure will be transparent and broadly used, to allow the Authority to examine all breaches of the Code of Practice.

The Rules specify that any “individual or legal entity may apply to the Authority for it to take up a case. In this case, the Authority appraises the application and may decide, at its own discretion, to take the matter up.” (Article 9, paragraph b)

3.2 Communication

The Official Statistics Authority wishes to promote its roles and activities widely

The Authority was presented by its President, Paul Champsaur, to the INSEE Regional Directors and heads of the Ministerial Statistical Offices. Other presentations to producers are planned in 2010.

A website was prepared in 2009. Its opening is scheduled to coincide with publication of this report.

3.3 Institutional environment

- Jean-Michel Charpin presented the European Statistical Governance Advisory Board (ESGAB) to the Authority.

Jean-Michel Charpin is a member of the said Board and a former INSEE Director General.

He pointed out, among other things, that the ESGAB does not wish to compete with the national authorities and therefore only looks into matters concerning the European statistical system as a whole.

- Philippe Cuneo, INSEE Director of Statistical Coordination and International Relations, gave a presentation to the Authority on comparable statistical organisations in the countries of the European Union and international organisations.
- Jean-Pierre Le Gléau, Head of the INSEE Statistical Coordination Department, gave a presentation of the Ministerial Statistical Offices to the Authority: their missions, the criteria defining them, their rights and obligations.

3.4 Ministerial Statistical Office accreditation

Concerning the accreditation of Ministerial Statistical Offices, the Official Statistics Authority proposes to adopt a pragmatic approach.

Today, it is not possible to define an exhaustive list of approval criteria for such structures. The right criteria will have to be discussed on a case-by-case basis.

The accreditations that are issued will be followed up regularly by audit procedures that must indicate whether they are still contributing to compliance with good practice in the statistics that are produced and released by the office that has been accredited.

Concerning the application for accreditation of the SIES (Sub-Department for Information Systems and Statistical Studies of the Ministry for Higher Education and Research), the following deliberation was adopted:

“The Official Statistics Authority issues a favourable opinion by a unanimous vote on the draft order to recognise the Sub-Department for Information Systems and Statistical Studies of the Ministry for Higher Education and Research as a Ministerial Statistical Office. The Authority indicates that it will take the necessary provisions for this approval to be followed up in coming years regarding the statistics produced by this service. The Authority encourages the Sub-Department for Information Systems and Statistical Studies of the Ministry for Higher Education and Research to pursue its efforts to improve the quality of its statistics on the student population.”

3.5 The Report on Official Statistics

The preparation of this report was based on four main points:

1. The hearings of Jean-Pierre Duport, President of the CNIS, and Jean-Philippe Cotis, INSEE Director General, as the coordinator of official statistics.

For this first year, the aim was not only to draw up a review of 2009, but to present prospects for official statistics through to 2013.

The presentations and debates were rich.

They confirmed the effective working and consistency of the three-party governance system of French official statistics.

They enabled the Authority to identify the essential points on which it is likely to intervene in order to improve the relevance of official statistics.

2. The detailed 2009 annual review of the CNIS (provisional), presenting all the statistical operations and the opinions of the CNIS for the year.
3. The annual reports for 2006 to 2009 (provisional) of the INSEE “quality” procedure.
4. Documentation on official statistics in France, Europe and the rest of the world, via a press review and current awareness work.

3.6 Referrals

No cases were referred to the Official Statistics Authority in 2009, and it did not take up any cases at its own initiative.

Annexes

Annexe 1: Recipients of the Report

“This report is submitted to Parliament and made public” (Article 2 of the Decree of 3 March on the Official Statistics Authority)

This report will therefore be submitted:

- to the Presidents of the National Assembly, the Senate and their commissions

To the other representatives of the Nation and institutions represented within the Authority

- President of the Republic
- Prime Minister
- Minister for the Economy, Industry and Employment
- President of the Economic, Social and Environmental Council
- Vice-President of the Council of State
- First President of the Court of Accounts
- Head of the General Inspectorate of Finances
- Head of the General Inspectorate of Social Affairs

To the representatives of French official statistics

- President of the CNIS
- INSEE Director General and all the heads of the Ministerial Statistical Offices
- Banque de France and other producers
- Members of the INSEE board
- Ministers responsible for the Ministerial Statistical Offices

To the representatives of European official statistics

- President of the ESGAB (European Statistical Governance Advisory Board).
- Members of the ESGAB
- Eurostat
- European Statistical Advisory Committee (ESAC)
- UK Statistics Authority

This report is also published on the website of the Authority: www.autorite-statistique-publique.fr

Annexe 2: Ministerial Statistical Offices

*Annexe to Decree n° 2009-250 of 3 March 2009 on the Official Statistics Authority
Consolidated version of 31 January 2010, as amended by the Order of 25 January 2010*

The following are regarded as Ministerial Statistical Offices:

Among the departments reporting to the Minister of State for Ecology, Energy, Sustainable Development and the Sea, in charge of green technologies and climate negotiations:

1. The Department for Observation and Statistics of the General Commission for Sustainable Development.

Among the departments reporting to the Minister of State for Justice and Freedoms:

2. The Sub-Department for Statistics and Studies of the General Secretariat.

Among the departments reporting to the Minister for the Interior, Overseas Territories and Local Authorities:

3. The Department for Local Studies and Statistics of the General Directorate for Local Authorities.

Among the departments reporting to the Minister for Work, Social Relations, the Family, Solidarity and the City and the Minister for the Economy, Industry and Employment:

4. The Department for Coordination of Research, Studies and Statistics.

Among the departments reporting to the Minister for the Budget, Public Accounts, Civil Service and State Reform:

5. The Office for Statistics, Studies and Evaluation of the General Directorate of the Administration and the Civil Service;
6. The Department for Statistics and Economic Studies of the General Directorate of Customs and Indirect Taxes.

Among the departments reporting to the Minister for National Education:

7. The Education Ministry Statistical Office, comprising the Sub-Department for Statistical Studies and the Office for Statistical Studies on School Education, within the Department for Evaluation, Forward Studies and Performance.

Among the departments reporting to the Minister for Higher Education and Research:

8. The Sub-Department for Information Systems and Statistical Studies of the General Directorate for Higher Education and Professional Integration and the General Directorate for Research and Innovation.

Among the departments reporting to the Minister for Defence:

9. The Defence Economic Observatory in the Division of Financial Affairs.

Among the departments reporting to the Minister for Health, Sport, the Minister for Work, Social Relations, the Family, Solidarity and the City, and the Minister for the Budget, Public Accounts, Civil Service and State Reform:

10. The Department for Research, Studies, Evaluation and Statistics.

Among the departments reporting to the Minister for Food, Agriculture and Fisheries:

11. The Statistics and Forward Studies Department of the General Secretariat; the departments specialised in statistical activities in the Regional Departments for Food, Agriculture and the Forest;
12. The Office for Statistics on Fisheries and Aquaculture in the Department for Maritime Fisheries and Aquaculture.

Among the departments reporting to the Minister for Culture and Communication:

13. The Department for Studies, Forward Studies and Statistics of the Delegation for Development and International Affairs.

Among the departments reporting to the Minister for Immigration, Integration, National Identity, Solidarity and Development:

14. The Department for Statistics, Studies and Documentation of the General Secretariat.

Among the departments reporting to the High Commissioner for Youth:

15. The Mission for Studies, Observation and Statistics of the Department for Youth, Popular Education and Associative Life

Annexe 3: CNIS review of official statistics activity in 2009

In the light of the medium-term orientations for 2009-2013 of the CNIS

The following information is taken from the CNIS detailed review for 2009 and the hearing of Jean-Pierre Duport, CNIS President, by the Official Statistics Authority on Friday 18 December 2009.

It presents the review of official statistics activity in 2009 organised around the seven themes of the CNIS commissions and in the light of their medium-term orientations for 2009-2013.

1. Demography and social issues

Commission chaired by Claire Bazy-Malaurie

To gain knowledge of inequalities in standards of living and purchasing power is a medium-term objective for 2009-2013, and one that seems all the more significant in the current crisis.

References: the CNIS "Freysinet" Report and that by Alain Quinet on measuring purchasing power.

Growing differences within society mean that many people no longer recognise themselves in the average figures of official statistics. The two reports cited as references propose to develop publication of indicators that show these contrasting phenomena. These recommendations were also taken up in the Stiglitz – Sen Report.

On these issues, the CNIS notes considerable progress in that INSEE now regularly publishes the recommended inequality indicators and information on purchasing power by income bracket or social category. Household accounts have also been broken down to make the distinction between consumption, built-in expenses and savings.

This work is now well underway but must be completed by a **more detailed analysis of high incomes**, which should then make it possible to complete the current renovation of the INSEE assets and fiscal income survey.

Knowledge of housing, a second essential aspect in two respects: improper housing conditions and the property market outlook.

The methodology work carried out in 2009 should make it possible to detect improper housing conditions or situations of exclusion; but the CNIS will be particularly attentive to ensuring that the necessary resources are available to address this difficult question. In particular, a survey of the homeless is scheduled in 2012. It is a costly but necessary operation.

The property crisis has shown the limits of the housing outlook observation system: observation of existing housing and housing starts, and also prices and rents. At the request of Mrs Lagarde, Mr Borloo and Mr Appar, the CNIS has created a working group chaired by Bernard Vorms, Director General of the ANIL. The report must be completed in February/March 2010.

Ethnic statistics

The President of the Republic asked Mr Yazid Sabeg to endow France with "statistical tools to measure diversity, to identify precisely any issues and measure progress". A committee chaired by François Héran, former Director of the INED, will be making proposals on official statistics. The CNIS undertakes to organise the broadest possible debate on the subject within the framework of the CNIS.

2. "Employment, qualification and earned income"

Commission chaired by Raoul Briet

A better description of employment, unemployment and its "halo"

Further to the controversies surrounding the postponement of publication of the unemployment rate in 2007 by INSEE, a CNIS working group chaired by Jean Baptiste de Foucauld made recommendations to achieve a better understanding of the "halo" effect around unemployment. In parallel, Minister Bruno Durieux of the General Inspectorate of Finances and Marie-Ange du Mesnil du Buisson from the General Inspectorate of Social Affairs, handed in a report on methods for estimating unemployment. The recommendations of these two reports are references for the CNIS in this domain.

A lot of progress has been made, the measurement of employment, unemployment and casual work has improved, and the restructuring of the employment survey is underway in line with the recommendations of the General Inspectorates of Finances and Social Affairs, and the "De Foucauld" working group.

It has not been possible to implement all the recommendations in such a short space of time. The question of the recurrence of unemployment, in particular, requires a dynamic approach based on studies of the trajectories of the unemployed

Likewise, the work undertaken by the DARES on the employment offering, recruitment needs and measuring vacant positions must be continued.

However, the De Foucauld group did strongly emphasise the issue of the understanding, communication and dissemination of indicators to the media. Despite efforts to modify publications and inform the media, uptake by the press has not been what the group was hoping. **This raises the question of official statistical indicators and government communication.**

The incidence of working conditions on health benefits from satisfactory monitoring. The observation tools would seem to be in place and the proposals of the scientific committee in charge of implementing the recommendations of the Nasse-Légeron Report on stress at work will be presented in Spring 2010.

Concerning **life-long learning and skills**, several international surveys are underway. The CNIS stresses the difficulty of the international comparisons the official statistical service risks coming up against in interpreting the results of the protocol selected by the OECD.

3. “Public services and services for the public”

Commission chaired by Pierre Yves Geoffard

This commission looks into the offering of public services, whether produced in a public or a private framework. This includes, in particular, statistical monitoring of pensions reform, the education system, safety, questions of access to care and the fifth pillar of social security on autonomy.

For the medium term of 2009-2013, the CNIS places the emphasis on questions of methods:

- More and more often, the Ministerial Statistical Offices present **public policy observation and monitoring systems**, such as implementation of the RSA, for example.

The CNIS insists on the need to respect the **professional independence** of statisticians to conduct good-quality evaluation, and points out that the results of the operations conducted with the official statistics label must be **widely published** which does not always seem to be the case.

- Evaluation of the impact of policies before they are generalised by the **“random sample method”** raises questions of an ethical nature. This method used frequently in epidemiology, the “placebo effect”, consists in offering the benefit of a system to some people while others do not have access to it, and thus raises a number of questions. The debate must continue in the medium term to highlight good practice in the participation of the Ministerial Statistical Offices in experimental schemes.
- To account for the diversity of economic and social situations, it is necessary to **follow individual paths** such as school careers, integration into the labour market and the transition from employment to retirement. To do this, administrative data must be coupled with surveys. These sophisticated methods must be used in compliance with the Code of Practice, and notably with the rules on privacy.
- The **“Pupils” database** is the subject of repeated criticisms on the grounds that it contains information reaching far beyond the objective of administrative management – enrolment of the child, in particular – it was thought to have. Information on nationality and even on the social category of the parents has therefore been withdrawn from the database. Teachers and some parents are not necessarily wrong on some points. The CNIS intends to organise a specific meeting on this theme: it is necessary to work together to eliminate any ambiguities and find a solution to suit everyone.

4. “Enterprises and market strategy”

Commission chaired by Lionel Fontagné

The current restructuring of business statistics (“Resane” project) will provide a coherent business observation system using administrative sources to the extent possible. It will reduce the response burden on enterprises. The CNIS is impatiently awaiting the dissemination of the results of accounting data by major sector.

Two other subjects are also to be developed:

- First of all, a **better understanding of the socio-economic impact of the activities of multinational corporations**. For this, it will be necessary to develop knowledge of **groups of enterprises** following on from the report of the CNIS on “structural statistics on groups of enterprises and their sub-groups” and trade, notably international, between their subsidiaries.

- Next, **monitoring of small and medium-sized enterprises and intermediate enterprises** should be improved. Further to the proposals of a CNIS working group chaired by Michel Didier, Managing Director of Rexecode, a decree defined four enterprise size classes: micro enterprises, medium-sized enterprises, intermediate enterprises and large enterprises. It is now possible to construct the necessary indicators and the CNIS awaits their publication.

Effect of globalisation and the situation of SMEs. On these two points, the responsiveness of the official statistical services has not been sufficient to measure the effects of the crisis.

Knowledge of **associations**: a working group is to be created at the suggestion of the Conference of Associative Life.

5. “Financial system and financing the economy”

Commission chaired by Jean-Paul Pollin

- For many years, the CNIS has demanded that the statistics produced by the ACAM on insurance and mutual insurance companies be placed at the disposal of those statistical services that so request. **Since 2009, the Banque de France has been exploiting this data and publishing some results.**

- A working group chaired by Gilles de Margerie on “**financial groups**” highlighted the gap between the measurement of the value added of financial services from the national accounts and that of net banking income from the accounts of the profession. It also pointed to the need for more in-depth **analysis on the basis of sub-sectors of activity or “professions”** on a more detailed level that would correspond better to the expectations of professionals.

The CNIS wishes to set up a working group including the financial regulation institutions concerned, the Banque de France, INSEE and representatives of the professional associations to define the relevant subsectors of activity and to enable statistics to be established on this level.

- **Access to credit must be observed more effectively.** For SMEs, a survey is underway on their financing. The CNIS also set up a working group chaired by Pierre Valentin, Deputy Managing Director of the Crédit Coopératif, on measuring and observing **microcredit** for those seeking economic reintegration.

- More generally, on knowledge of the financial system and the consequences of the organisation of this system on enterprises and on private individuals, the official statistical service sometimes comes up against the difficulty of obtaining the necessary information, and of the commitment to place the information at the disposal of researchers and the public. The CNIS hopes that the contract that INSEE and the Banque de France are set to sign on the provision of data and sharing of roles in the official statistical system will allow progress to be made on this question. It is possible, however, that a solution to this may only be found on the European level.

6. “Environment and sustainable development”

Commission chaired by Guy Paillotin

Sustainable development is a cross-cutting approach to issues, taking an interest in the economy, social and environmental issues.

Several of the questions posed by the Stiglitz Commission are already being addressed in the CNIS commissions, such as the question of exclusion or the diversity of incomes, assets, consumption or green jobs. The official statistical service as a whole, meanwhile, is mobilised to respond to these issues. This is of course more particularly the case of the statistical office of the Ministry for Ecology, Energy, Sustainable Development and the Sea, notably on questions of urban spread and mobility, sustainable consumption, energy savings or knowledge of eco-activities.

To enhance the evaluation of growth via GDP, studies are underway at INSEE.

It is as yet too early to establish a detailed review, but the **observation systems are in place and many indicators have already been published.**

The CNIS wishes to make particular mention of the **consultation** undertaken jointly by the Economic, Social and Environmental Council, the Sustainable Development Commission and the CNIS to add to the indicators linked to the challenges of National Sustainable Development Strategy for 2010 and to organise the National Conference provided for by the Grenelle Forum on 20 January.

This conference will mark the starting point of work that will be continuing at the CNIS.

7. "Regions"

Commission chaired by Jean-Marie Vanlerenberghe

The population census of course remains the key source of information. The official population figures were transmitted on time for this new census and the CNIS is pleased to note that the schedule announced for the release of the results was met.

This census is still new and the information is complex. A working group of the CNIS, chaired by Maurice Belliot, General Delegate of the National Federation of Urban Planning Agencies, has been set up to study, discuss and guide dissemination of results to different categories of users.

Local stakeholders need statistical tools to analyse their local territory and steer the policies under their responsibility on three main points: **social inequalities, new trends in the location of the population and activities, and sustainable development.** In these three domains, the official statistical service is making progress by using the census or processing administrative sources.

Over and above the need for even more local information, it is the question of the **consistency of data** that is now posed. The variety of local stakeholders and the sources of information that are used require tools that are shared by all - nomenclatures, concepts, methods or indicators – to guarantee the consistency of information and thus facilitate comparisons.

Regarding local information, one difficulty remains: the description demanded of **local expenditure of the State.** The General Directorate for Public Finances (DGFIP) should be one of the pilots of this work. It is infinitely regrettable that this information that does exist is not made available.

Finally

This 2009 review of the official statistics work programme in the light of the needs that have been expressed is a positive one, on the whole. Although it is still provisional, the CNIS will be monitoring implementation of the proposed programmes over time, notably regarding the release of information in a manner that is clear, accessible and rapid. Understanding the effects of globalisation and the entrepreneurial world, and the development of a sustainable development information system, are two important projects to be undertaken. **The key orientations of the INSEE medium-term programme would appear to take due account of these priorities.**

The CNIS will be attentive, however, to making sure that the organisation is put in place to carry through these projects. Demand for information is growing and is changing quickly. The CNIS demands that the resources dedicated to the demands of Eurostat should not exceed a reasonable proportion of those of the official statistical service. The official statistical service must retain the ability to respond to national demand in good conditions. **To this effect, the CNIS calls upon the official statistical service to take part more actively in the conception of European surveys to relay national demands.** It is no doubt necessary to implement procedures on the level of Eurostat to arbitrate between the different demands.

Annexe 4: The official statistical service “quality” procedure since 2006

Introduction

This note summarises the “quality” action of the official statistical service since 2006, steered by the INSEE “quality” unit.

This unit conducts and monitors annual “quality” action plans drawn up with the production departments of INSEE and the Ministerial Statistical Offices. *See the background to its implementation in Annexe 4.1.*

The action plans were strongly guided, from 2007, by the recommendations of the Eurostat “peer” review in January 2007. *See Annexe 4.2.*

The objective of the INSEE “quality” procedure is not to assess quality, but to encourage and help producers to progress towards better quality. The primary objective is the compliance of their work with the recommendations in the European Statistics Code of Practice. The action that has been decided upon goes further, however.

The real evaluation of the quality of official statistics in France will be carried out in future Eurostat peer “reviews”.

1. Main quality improvements since 2006

A-Institutional environment (first part of the Code)

Professional independence (principle 1 of the Code)

In 2007, the peers recommended “that INSEE be accorded legal independence”.

Independence is now written into the law *for all official statistics*: “the conception, production and dissemination of official statistics are carried out in full professional independence.” (Law on Modernisation of the Economy, or LME, of 4 August 2008, Article 1).

Quality commitment (principle 4 of the Code)

Implementation of the “quality” procedure at INSEE, then its extension to certain Ministerial Statistical Offices, has allowed **the various producers of official statistics to appropriate the principles of quality**. Knowledge of the Code of Practice is now part of the “basics” for all statisticians in the official statistical service. Widespread training has been conducted to achieve this.

The commitment of French official statistics to the European Code of Practice has been **publicised** via the INSEE website since 2008. The systems implemented to meet this commitment are also publicised. Any citizen can now get information about the ethical framework within which the official statistical service works.

Statistical confidentiality (principle 5 of the Code)

Four measures have been taken to enhance awareness of, and compliance with the rules of statistical confidentiality.

On the one hand, newly-appointed statisticians in the Ministerial Statistical Offices must systematically **give a written confidentiality undertaking** for the data they will be using.

In addition, the **powers of the Statistical Confidentiality Committee**, once limited to the “business” domain, have now been extended to “households”. This change corresponds to a recommendation by the Eurostat “peers” that there should be a single, clear procedure for access to individual data.

This new system comes at the same time as the introduction by INSEE of a “**secure remote access centre**” allowing researchers to conduct their work while protecting confidential data. This statistical calculation centre has not yet achieved its target configuration.

Finally, a **guide describing rules and good practice in compliance with statistical confidentiality** is available to all on insee.fr.

In statistical confidentiality matters, the provisions taken by the Official Statistical Service have now brought it into compliance with all the recommendations in the European Code of Practice.

Impartiality and objectivity (*principle 6 of the Code*)

Notes describing the French and international (IMF) **dissemination rules** and relations with the **press**, along with the **schedules** for the main outlook indicators have been made available on internet.

B-Statistical procedures (*second part of the Code*)

Sound methodology (*principle 7 of the Code*)

INSEE has long since developed a project culture.

The “quality” procedure provided an opportunity to enhance the dissemination and appropriation by staff of a **general project method**. This method serves to identify the objectives, players, stages and tools in the project approach.

Two new tools, in particular, have been placed at the disposal of statisticians to enhance their mastery of project management. A description of the project management process for **studies carried out in partnership** is at the disposal of all those responsible for regional action. More recently, the deployment of a method to **assess the interest of projects** before making a launch decision has been introduced (known as the “Mareva” method).

Appropriate Statistical Procedures (*principle 8 of the Code*)

An important step has been achieved in statistical procedures¹⁶ with the generalisation of the “**CORE**” **tool**¹⁶ for conducting household surveys. This method describes all the stages involved in conducting a “household” survey according to a defined schedule and in compliance with quality criteria.

Cost effectiveness (*principle 10 of the Code*)

In recent years, the “quality” procedure has contributed to defining and implementing **major and innovative statistical procedures**. These have allowed productivity gains while ensuring better quality results, often within shorter deadlines. In particular, mention can be made of major projects such as Resane (structural business statistics), the population census (released annually since 2009) and restructuring of the ongoing employment survey.

C-Statistical results (*third part of the Code*)

Relevance (*principle 11 of the Code*)

Procedures to appraise user satisfaction have been introduced.

The consultation of users has been enhanced by INSEE conducting **satisfaction surveys**. These surveys are now subject to annual programming.

¹⁶ Organisational framework for carrying out surveys (*Cadre organisationnel de réalisation d'enquêtes - Core*)

The CNIS has introduced an **opinion follow-up** procedure to estimate the extent to which the recommendations have effectively been fulfilled in official statistics.

Accessibility and clarity (*principle 15 of the Code*)

The aim of the creation and regular updates of a **“Definitions and Methods”** section on the insee.fr website is to inform users more effectively. At the end of 2009, the description of over 100 statistical sources and that of a thousand or so definitions was made available.

This documentary information can be consulted directly from the results tables. In addition, the definition is identical whatever the source or the table being used.

2. Action underway

The main domains of action are the following.

The extension of collection by internet

The growth in internet data collection has been genuine in recent years in the Ministerial Statistical offices and INSEE, where the annual production survey and outlook surveys are now done by internet.

The project to collect data for the population census by internet has been launched. It links in with the more general project to restructure data collection, known as “Homere”, the target date for which is 2013.

Generalisation of “quality reviews” and “quality information sheets”

Quality reviews serve to report on the conduct of a survey, to provide some information about the accuracy of its results and, in the case of regular surveys, to provide points of reference to improve the following survey. These reviews already exist for a large number of “business” surveys and for household surveys linked to a European regulation.

The objective, by a date yet to be defined, is to produce “quality information sheets” systematically. These information sheets are a summarised version of the reviews, made available to users for all surveys (business and household domains).

Development of operation quality evaluation procedures

Regular audits of the main statistical operations are recommended in the Code of Practice.

Two evaluation experiments have been conducted: one in 2008 on registry office statistics, and the other in 2009 on the “Statistics on income and living conditions” survey (SILC).

These experiments will produce a grid called the “quality assurance framework” which will serve progressively as a basis for more systematic quality audits.

Annexe 4.1: Background to the INSEE “quality” procedure

2004-2005: INSEE “quality” procedure launched

The introduction of quality monitoring at INSEE was the consequence of a decision by the board on **15 November 2005**, as recommended in a report by the INSEE General Inspectorate (Michel Blanc and Philippe Domergue). The report followed on from the recommendations of the General Inspectorate of Finances on the comparative analysis of INSEE¹⁷ in **December 2004**.

2005-2007: Code of Practice implemented giving rise to evaluations of the European statistical system

The focus on quality procedures was accentuated by promulgation of the European Statistics Code of Practice (**May 2005**), resulting in a two-phase operation steered by Eurostat and aiming to assess the components of the European statistical system in terms of compliance with the Code:

- self-assessment of all the NSI (National Statistical Institutes), conducted in **December 2005** at INSEE,
- an assessment of this self-evaluation by experts. INSEE was examined by its “peers” in **January 2007**.

2008: Two new laws enhance compliance with the European Statistics Code of Practice.

The Law on Modernisation of the Economy (2008-776 of 4 August 2008 - Article 144) officialising:

- A definition of official statistics
- Recognition of the professional independence of official statistics
- The creation of an Official Statistics Authority
- A new organisation of the CNIS

The Law on Archives (n° 2008-696 of 15 July 2008 on archives – Articles L213-2 & L213-3), reinforcing the role of the CNIS Statistical Confidentiality Commission, clarifies accessibility to the individual data held by the official statistical service. The Statistical Confidentiality Commission now addresses both business and individual data.

Annexe 4.2: Main conclusions of the evaluation of INSEE by its peers in 2007

January 2007: evaluation of INSEE by its “peers”¹⁸ (on principles 1 to 6 and 15 of the European Statistics Code of Practice).

2007 was marked by the Eurostat peer review.

Among other things, this evaluation concluded that while INSEE satisfied the principles of the Code on the whole, there was still progress to be made in the fields of the **quality commitment** and, above all, for **better visibility of its practice for users**.

Concerning the **evaluation of the indicators** of the “Code”, the peers noted that all the indicators were totally satisfied for two principles: principle 2 on the mandate for data collection, and principle 3 on the adequacy of resources.

However, INSEE ranked well behind most of the Member States on two points of a legal nature

- indicator 1.1 stipulating that **professional independence must be written into law**
- indicator 5.2 stating that staff must sign a **confidentiality undertaking** on being employed at the National Statistical Institute.

Mention should also be made of a comment on the **insufficient publication of online information on the INSEE website**.

¹⁷ Dane Report: main lessons from the INSEE international comparative analysis mission (http://www.CNIS.fr/agenda/DPR/Dpr_0211.pdf)

¹⁸ Report of the Peer Review of the French Statistical Office (INSEE) on the implementation of the European statistics Code of Practice, 24-26 January 2007 (http://www.INSEE.fr/fr/INSEE-statistiquepublique/connaitre/rapport_fr.pdf)

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