



EUROPEAN
STATISTICAL
SYSTEM

PEER REVIEW REPORT

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

Norway

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
2.	INTRODUCTION	9
3.	BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE NATIONAL STATISTICAL SYSTEM	11
4.	PROGRESS/ADVANCEMENT IN THE LAST 5 YEARS	15
5.	COMPLIANCE WITH THE CODE OF PRACTICE AND FUTURE ORIENTATION	18
5.1	STRENGTHS OF THE NSI AND THE PARTICIPATING ONAs IN RELATION TO THEIR COMPLIANCE WITH THE CODE OF PRACTICE	18
5.2	ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS	21
5.2.1	Enhancing programme implementation	21
5.2.2	Strengthening human resources	22
5.2.3	Making the most of coordination and cooperation - for both Statistics Norway and the ONAs	23
5.2.4	Ensuring visibility of quality and strengthening user services	25
5.3	VIEWS OF THE NSI, AS THE NATIONAL COORDINATOR OF THE NSS AND THE PEER REVIEW, ON THOSE RECOMMENDATIONS WHERE THEY DIVERGE FROM PEER REVIEW EXPERTS' ASSESSMENT	28
	ANNEX A – AGENDA OF THE VISIT	29
	ANNEX B – LIST OF PARTICIPANTS	41

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Norway has a centralised statistical system with a solid foundation and Statistics Norway as the main actor. There are 11 other producers of official statistics, four of which produce European statistics and were thus included in the peer review. Statistics Norway is a member of the European Statistical System (ESS) according to Annex XXI to the EEA agreement (European statistics).

Remarkable developments have taken place since the previous peer review in 2014. A new Norwegian Statistics Act relating to official statistics and Statistics Norway was adopted in 2019 and entered fully into force on 1 January 2021. According to the Act, Statistics Norway is the central authority responsible for coordinating the development, production and dissemination of official statistics and for reporting on the quality of official statistics.

The new Statistics Act has resulted in several major advancements in the statistical system. The Council for Statistics Norway, composed of seven members with broad-ranging competencies, has been established. The Council provides advice to both the Director-General of Statistics Norway and to the Ministry of Finance and shall give its views on the criteria for selecting a new Director-General of Statistics Norway. The Committee for Official Statistics, consisting of public authorities responsible for official statistics and owners of registers being central sources for official statistics, led by Statistics Norway, was established, offering a forum for coordinating official statistics of Norway.

The first multi-annual national programme for official statistics (the National Programme for Official Statistics 2021-2023) was prepared by Statistics Norway in cooperation with other producers of official statistics. The programme provides a framework for the national statistical system, covers all official statistics and sets the ground for the quality requirements of official statistics.

A national system for the quality assurance of official statistics has been developed in cooperation with the Committee for Official Statistics. The framework is based on the Statistics Act and the European Statistics Code of Practice (ES CoP), and advances the commitment to quality even further, covering all the official statistics of Norway. Annual assessments on all producers of official statistics conducted by Statistics Norway will constitute the basis for the first annual report on the quality of official statistics to be finalised in 2022. The peer review team considers that the visibility and documentation of the well-established quality assurance of official statistics should be increased and encourages Statistics Norway to consider certifying its quality framework.

An important feature of the Norwegian statistical system is that official statistics production is to a large degree based on administrative systems or registers and the mandate to use register data has been strong for years. Statistics Norway uses more than 100 such registers from almost 30 public institutions as a basis for the production of official statistics. For all of these, there are separate access agreements and quality reports. The new Statistics Act also specifies access to other data, such as privately held data, for the development, production and dissemination of official statistics. Using new data sources is one of the goals in the strategy for Statistics Norway 2021-2023 as a means to provide better quality statistics and to remain relevant in the future, a goal also emphasised by both the Ministry of Finance and the Council for Statistics. The peer review team considers the entirety of activities around the use of new data sources as an example of innovative practice in this field.

Access to microdata is user funded and regulated through the Statistics Act. An improved and easier process to get access to microdata, Microdata.no, has been developed. Through this service, Statistics Norway provides access for researchers to anonymised results. In addition, a pricing policy of general microdata services outside Microdata.no has been developed and information about the pricing and service principles has been improved. However, the peer review team considers that improvements

to microdata services and communication with the research community are important long-term priority areas for Statistics Norway.

Overall, the peer review team considers that the Norwegian statistical system demonstrates a strong commitment to the European Statistics Code of Practice (ES CoP) and that progress since the last peer review has been significant. Hence, the peer review team encouraged Statistics Norway and the other national authorities developing, producing and disseminating official statistics to continue the good work and presented recommendations that could allow them to improve beyond compliance with the European Statistics Code of Practice.

RECOMMENDATIONS

I. Enhancing programme implementation

Programming and planning

The perception of the peer review team is that Statistics Norway is making serious efforts in the implementation of the new Statistics Act and the long-term plan, but that progress is sometimes slower than expected. This may be due in part to unclear priority setting, a lack of identified intermediate and final targets and deadlines, and vague processes in terms of consultation with stakeholders and decision-making. The peer review team feels in general that Statistics Norway could benefit from a more planned approach to development, redesigns and improvement.

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

1. Statistics Norway should identify concrete actions related to the implementation of its work programmes, in particular for development activities, based on explicit roadmaps for the activities covered by the programmes. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 1.5)

The National Programme for Official Statistics sets targets for a duration of 3 years (2021-2023) and should include all producers of official statistics. The link between the programme and the budget process for the other national authorities developing, producing and disseminating official statistics is however missing.

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

2. For future work programmes, Statistics Norway should strive towards a transparent and forward-looking priority setting of all official statistics, including potential new domains, and clear budget commitments covering development as well as modernisation activities. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 3.3, 3.4, 11.1 and 11.2)

71% of Statistics Norway's budget is based on government assignment and 29% on funds stemming from other sources. From an outside perspective, the reference to market funding gives the impression that non-governmental funding is substantial and a potential concern, while in reality only a small part of the budget comes from a truly market-related context. The peer review team believes that clarity about the budget allocations could strengthen the perception among both its own staff and the public that Statistics Norway is an independent statistical authority. Statistics Norway could achieve this by further specifying which are the sources qualified as external or "market" funding.

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

3. Statistics Norway should improve transparency about the budget structure. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 3.1)

II. Strengthening human resources

Statistics Norway has succeeded in accessing privately held data. This creates new opportunities for the production of official statistics, which require new methods and skills from statistical experts. Statistics Norway's Division for Methods is somewhat stretched in this setting, due to recurrent methodological demands from statistical departments for support for existing production. Consequently, it is difficult for staff at the Division for Methods to devote time to addressing methodological research needs.

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

4. Statistics Norway should further deepen and broaden methodological skills among statistical staff, thus allowing the Division for Methods to free capacity for present and future methodological development and research projects. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 7.6 and 3.1)

Statistics Norway acknowledges increased competition for human resources from public and private producers of statistical information. The Strategy for Statistics Norway 2021-2023 explicitly mentions the need to have competent and motivated employees and to increase engagement and job satisfaction. The framework for competence management and career paths is a solid step forward. However, the framework is not known by everyone, and its actions have not yet yielded tangible results among staff. In this context, involving staff in development projects, encouraging and facilitating secondments to international organisations and defining career paths for statisticians could make a difference.

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

5. Statistics Norway should proactively communicate the framework for competence management and career paths and intensify its implementation by taking actions that prioritise staff motivation, satisfaction and engagement. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 3.1 and 7.6)

III. Making the most of coordination and cooperation - for both Statistics Norway and the other national authorities developing, producing and disseminating official statistics

The national system to ensure quality in official statistics has been developed in cooperation with the Committee for Official Statistics. Annual assessments on all producers of official statistics conducted by Statistics Norway will be included in the quality system as of 2021. At the time of the peer review it was unclear how quality deficiencies would be treated to ensure improvement actions. In order for all parties to benefit and learn from the assessments, the peer review team considers it useful to draw up a list of improvement actions and a plan on how to tackle them.

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

6. After finishing the quality evaluation report of the national statistical system, Statistics Norway should draw up a roadmap and an action plan for the whole national statistical system, in consultation with the Committee for Official Statistics. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 1bis.2)

Each other national authority developing, producing and disseminating European statistics is responsible for its own quality. However, since Statistics Norway is the central statistical organisation

in Norway and is by law required to produce an annual report on quality in the national statistical system, it should consider what kind of means are available in the event that one or several other national authorities are not compliant with the European Statistics Code of Practice in spite of requests by Statistics Norway.

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

7. Statistics Norway should consider ways of ensuring compliance with the European Statistics Code of Practice by all other national authorities developing, producing and disseminating official statistics. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 1bis.2)

The four other national authorities reviewed (Norwegian Institute of Public Health (NIPH), Directorate of Fisheries (DoF), Directorate of Immigration (UDI) and Norwegian Institute of Bioeconomy Research (NIBIO)) considered the newly established Committee for Official Statistics useful for discussing and developing statistical processes and statistical output within their organisations. They are also looking for collaboration in areas such as developing quality templates, data sharing, microdata, dissemination and methodology, both nationally and internationally. The peer review team suggests that the other national authorities could take a more active role in the Committee for Official Statistics and in their cooperation respectively.

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

8. The four other national authorities reviewed (Norwegian Institute of Public Health (NIPH), Directorate of Fisheries (DoF), Directorate of Immigration (UDI) and Norwegian Institute of Bioeconomy Research (NIBIO)) should be proactive in their relations with both national and international peers with a view to sharing information about best practices and new developments. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 1bis.3)

The four other national authorities reviewed (Norwegian Institute of Public Health (NIPH), Directorate of Fisheries (DoF), Directorate of Immigration (UDI) and Norwegian Institute of Bioeconomy Research (NIBIO)) showed good quality in their statistical activities and knowledge. However, since statistics is a minor part of the activities of several of them, only a limited amount of information about official statistics and statistical quality is communicated on the respective organisation's website. It is important that there is public trust in the statistics produced by these other national authorities and in their professional independence when producing official statistics.

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

9. The four other national authorities reviewed (Norwegian Institute of Public Health (NIPH), Directorate of Fisheries (DoF), Directorate of Immigration (UDI) and Norwegian Institute of Bioeconomy Research (NIBIO)) should improve the transparency and visibility of the role of official statistics and statistical activities in their organisations and on their websites. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 1.6)

The Directorate of Immigration (UDI) produces statistics and data on immigration. The Statistics and Analysis Division within the UDI produces statistics and decides on statistical matters independently. However, this mandate is not visible within the organisation nor is it made visible to the users of the official statistics.

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

10. The Directorate of Immigration (UDI) should clarify internally and externally the delineation between its role as an authority providing services to the public and its role as a statistical authority. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 1.3, 1.4 and 6.7)

In the Norwegian Institute of Public Health (NIPH), responsibilities related to statistics are distributed among several divisions and departments. No department head or director has responsibility for official statistics or professional independence from other departments or bodies.

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

11. The Norwegian Institute of Public Health (NIPH) should formalise the professional independence of statistics, e.g. by including professional independence as well as the European Statistics Code of Practice in the job description or working arrangements of one of the department heads and giving them the formal responsibility for official statistics within the Norwegian Institute of Public Health. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 1.1, 1.3 and 1.4)

IV. Ensuring visibility of quality and strengthening user services

Both Statistics Norway and the other national authorities developing, producing and disseminating official statistics demonstrate a very strong commitment to quality. Statistics Norway has easily accessible “About Statistics” sections on its website pages for each statistical product. Although the “About Statistics” sections are informative, it would still be possible to publish more information on quality, e.g. documentation of general methods and the quality reports sent to Eurostat. Also, some kind of external review of the quality system as a whole, e.g. through certification, might be helpful in communicating quality assurance.

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

12. Statistics Norway should increase the visibility, transparency and documentation of its quality assurance of statistics and consider ways to certify its quality framework. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 4.1 and 15.7)

Statistics Norway and the other national authorities adhere to the disclosure requirements of the European Statistical System, the General Data Protection Regulation and the Norwegian Statistics Act. There seem to be several unresolved issues or uncertainties in the interpretation of the requirements stemming from the new Statistics Act. For example, since its introduction, some previous exceptions from statistical confidentiality have been removed. This is a dilemma in particular in domains that rely on detailed breakdowns of territorial units and categories of economic activity.

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

13. Statistics Norway should explore the potential for disseminating more and more detailed statistics to better serve its users, including further increasing its access to statistical data from other producers. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 2.4 and 11.1)

Statistics Norway has an extensive and impressive network for user contacts. Once every year, user satisfaction with the website is measured through a survey. Nevertheless, a somewhat more comprehensive and regular contact with for instance the administration of Stortinget (Parliament) or the members of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs could be useful. Also, the system of user contacts is not currently integrated into a unified framework, where gaps may be identified. For example, user satisfaction surveys could be expanded.

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

14. Statistics Norway should deepen and widen the current relationships with users by strengthening relations with specific user groups in Stortinget (Parliament) and by expanding the scope of user satisfaction surveys. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 11.1 and 11.3)

In the last few years Statistics Norway has taken important steps in improving its microdata services. In particular, users interested in more detailed data have expressed a wish for further improvements, for example in terms of speed, providing services, communication with Statistics Norway specialists, metadata, transparency and timeliness. Joint funding with other entities could be a model for further improvements in microdata services, such as for example the establishment of Microdata.no.

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

15. Statistics Norway should improve the microdata services, in consultation with users, and establish an explicit roadmap for improvement actions. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 15.4)

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

2. INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Although all principles of the ES CoP will be reviewed for all countries through the SAQ, the peer review experts are free to customise the country visit to concentrate on those principles where more clarification/explanation is needed. However, certain principles such as those concerning professional independence and coordination and cooperation, as well as principles including elements of modernisation, will be assessed during the peer review visit for every member of the ESS.

The principles of professional independence and coordination and cooperation were especially important for the review of the Norwegian Statistical System (NSS), because of major changes in this system following the recommendations of the previous peer review (see chapter 3).

In addition to the common principles to be assessed for every country, the peer review team also placed emphasis on commitment to quality (principle 4), adequacy of resources (principle 3), relevance (principle 11) and accessibility and clarity (principle 15).

Commitment to quality was a focus area for the peer review team because of the changes in the NSS since the previous peer review; Statistics Norway is now required to produce an annual report on the quality of all official statistics, whether produced by itself or by the ONAs.

Adequacy of resources was a second additional focus area because the SAQ expressed several concerns about scarcity of resources, external funding and priority setting.

Relevance was a third additional focus area because of the above-mentioned concerns about priority setting and because it was an element in the recommendations of the previous peer review.

Finally, accessibility and clarity was an additional focus area because of changes in the system of microdata services, following the recommendations of the previous peer review.

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

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

3. BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE NATIONAL STATISTICAL SYSTEM

Outline of the Norwegian Statistical System and the legislation (Statistics Act)

Norway has a centralised statistical system with Statistics Norway as the main actor. A new Statistics Act relating to official statistics and Statistics Norway was adopted in 2019 and entered fully into force on 1 January 2021. According to the Act, Statistics Norway is the central authority responsible for coordinating the development, production and dissemination of official statistics (section 6.1 in the Act) and for reporting on the quality of official statistics. Statistics Norway produces the majority of official statistics itself and has the overall responsibility for international statistical cooperation (section 6.5). In addition, it conducts extensive research and analysis activities. Statistics Norway's slogan is 'The stories behind the numbers'.

In the administrative organisation of Norway, Statistics Norway is placed under the Ministry of Finance. It is headed by a Director-General appointed by the King in Council on a six-year contract, with the possibility of reappointment for a second period of up to six years. The current Director-General was appointed in 2018. Statistics Norway's professional independence is established in the Norwegian Statistics Act. The King in Council also approves the multi-annual National Programme for Official Statistics while the Ministry of Finance appoints the members of the Committee for Official Statistics and may issue regulations in various domains covered by the Norwegian Statistics Act, for instance about Statistics Norway's access to data for statistical or research purposes.

Producers of official statistics are members of the **Committee for Official Statistics**, together with some important owners of administrative registers. The committee is described in the Statistics Act (section 6.2). It is headed by Statistics Norway and in 2021 consisted of 27 public institutions (including Statistics Norway). However, only 11 of these are producers of official statistics included in the first National Programme for Official Statistics 2021-2023, in addition to Statistics Norway. Four of those 11 authorities provide official statistics on different topics to Eurostat according to Annex XXI to the EEA agreement (European statistics) and were hence invited to participate in the peer review.

The producers of Norwegian official statistics are:

- Norwegian Directorate of Fisheries (other national authority producing European statistics (ONA))
- Norwegian Institute of Public Health (ONA)
- Norwegian Agricultural Agency
- Norwegian Environment Agency
- Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration
- Norwegian Institute of Bioeconomy Research (ONA)
- Norwegian Communications Authority
- Research Council of Norway
- Norwegian Water Resources and Energy Directorate
- Norwegian Petroleum Directorate
- Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (ONA)
- Statistics Norway

An important feature of the Norwegian statistics system is that statistics production is based to a large degree on administrative systems or registers. Statistics Norway uses more than 100 such registers from almost 30 public institutions as a basis for official statistics production. For all of these, there are

separate access agreements and quality reports. At the same time, many owners of these registers produce statistics for their own purposes.

The Norwegian Statistics Act also foresees the establishment of the **Council for Statistics Norway**. The Council is composed of seven members, representing broad-ranging competencies at high level. It provides independent and strategic advice to both the Director-General of Statistics Norway and to the Ministry of Finance, either upon consultation or on its own initiative. For example, the Ministry shall request the Council's viewpoints on the recruitment criteria for a new Director-General of Statistics Norway before the position is advertised. The Council has so far issued one annual report, touching upon a number of issues that it considers to be priorities for Statistics Norway. When meeting the peer review team, the Council emphasised that it is a Council for Statistics Norway and not for the Norwegian statistical system as a whole.

Organisation

Statistics Norway consists of eight departments of which three are statistical production departments; another department is focused on research and the remaining ones on horizontal issues, such as communication, IT, methodology and data collection as well as administration.

Appointment procedures for the head of the NSI

The Norwegian Statistics Act Section 18(2) states that Statistics Norway shall be led by a Director-General who is appointed by the King in Council, on a six-year contract with the possibility of reappointment for a second period of up to six years. The recruitment and appointment of the Director-General of Statistics Norway are also regulated through the general legislation for employment of civil servants.

Statistical programmes

The Norwegian Statistics Act foresees that a multi-annual **National Programme for Official Statistics** shall be established (section 4). The first such programme was prepared by Statistics Norway in cooperation with other producers of official statistics, represented in the Committee for Official Statistics. It was adopted by the Government at the end of 2020. The programme defines the requirements for and the content of official statistics, and which authorities will be responsible for the production of these statistics. The programme covers the period 2021-2023. A total of approximately 350 official Norwegian statistics were included in the programme in 2021, of which Statistics Norway is responsible for approximately 300. This means that Statistics Norway produces 85 percent of all Norwegian official statistics counted by the number of statistical products.

Resources

As part of the national budget process in Norway, the Ministry of Finance and Statistics Norway hold an annual management dialogue, leading to a Letter of Allocation from the Ministry to Statistics Norway. The Letter is established in an iterative process between the Ministry and Statistics Norway. It establishes the overall budget for Statistics Norway and its priorities for the year, including challenges, expected achievements and result indicators. Statistics Norway's reporting obligations towards the Ministry - which are established in the Statistics Act - are also clarified in the Letter of Allocation.

Statistics Norway has around 830 staff spread over two locations and operated on an annual budget of around 875 million NOK in 2021.

Coordination of the national statistical system - Other national authorities

According to the Statistics Act, Statistics Norway has a defined coordination role in the national statistical system (Section 6(1)-(3)). European statistics are explicitly included in official statistics in Norway.

The National Programme for Official Statistics forms the framework for coordination within the national statistical system. The other national statistical authorities are listed in that Programme. They are also members of the Committee for Official Statistics, through which Statistics Norway ensures the coordination work with regular meetings as well as bilateral meetings and contact via other means of communication.

There are four other producers of European statistics in Norway, which thus qualify as other national authorities under the European Statistics Code of Practice and were selected to participate in the peer review and to meet the peer review team. These were:

The Norwegian Directorate of Fisheries, which produces input, including statistics, to policy making in domains of marine resources, aquaculture management and coastal zone management;

The Norwegian Institute of Public Health, which collects data and makes analyses about the health status of the population, to a large extent based on the mandatory health registers that it maintains;

The Norwegian Institute of Bioeconomy Research, whose activities are mostly focused on research within food, forestry and other biobased industries, but which also produces statistics. The Institute produces information about all aspects of land resources and contributes to the European Agricultural Accounts at EU level;

The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration, which produces official statistics on immigration and immigrants. It is the biggest provider of European statistics, other than Statistics Norway, measured in number of datasets and volume.

The Directorate of Fisheries and the Institute of Public Health are relatively small providers of European statistics, but those statistics are important and are expected to increase in volume depending on the future identification of official statistics. From an organisational perspective, these four authorities are placed under the responsibility of a Ministry. Their independence in producing official statistics is established in the Norwegian Statistics Act, section 5, and made explicit to varying extents in specific mandates or job descriptions within the organisation, or confirmed by processes and practices in place. They were selected for the peer review because they are important for European statistics and because they serve key national needs for official statistics.

These other national authorities produce statistics using data they normally hold in administrative registers based on their own legal bases. Their main tasks are activities other than the production of official statistics, the latter often counting for a minor part of their business. However, their work on official statistics (including European statistics) is described in their annual plans. Appointments of the heads of their statistical entities are made according to Norwegian legislation for the employment of civil servants. They disseminate official statistics on their respective websites, to which links can be found on Statistics Norway's website. In principle, their official statistical functions are to be separated from their administrative ones, and this will be reviewed and controlled by Statistics Norway, which will make an annual report on the quality of all official statistics.

Data access

The Norwegian Statistics Act gives Statistics Norway a clear legal basis for access to data, including both traditional sources and administrative data and, in addition, new data sources such as privately held data.

Relations with users/dissemination of statistical products

The main principles of Statistics Norway's communication and dissemination are transparency, accessibility, comprehensibility, independence and confidentiality. There is an established dissemination policy, including a release calendar, which is publicly available. Principles of communication and dissemination and for equal treatment of users in releasing statistics and analyses are documented and communicated to staff. Statistical products are disseminated via Statistics Norway's website <https://www.ssb.no/en/> as the main channel. This includes a database ([StatBank Norway](#)) for its own tabulation and self-service. Statistics Norway performs regular user satisfaction surveys which show a high level of trust in the statistics that it produces. The satisfaction rate is consistently high and stable at 85% or higher.

4. PROGRESS/ADVANCEMENT IN THE LAST 5 YEARS

Progress since the previous peer review visit in 2014 has been remarkable. Statistics Norway and other key actors of the national statistical system, such as the Council for Statistics Norway, explicitly acknowledge that the 2014 Peer Review process was a key driver and contributor to the progress achieved over the period. Other drivers that have played a role were the need to align to the amendment of Regulation 223/2009 on European Statistics (April 2015) and the need to revise the Norwegian Statistics Act of 1989, which had become obsolete due to technological developments. Compliance issues raised in the previous report have been addressed for the most part through improvement actions and recent developments in all areas of concern, which included legal aspects, central monitoring, quality management, dissemination and resources.

Legal aspects

The Statistics Act of June 2019, which entered fully into force in January 2021, puts forward a new governing structure addressing all the concerns flagged in 2015. The new Act provides a clear definition of official statistics (section 3b) and replaces the previous Board with the Council for Statistics Norway. This independent advisory body clarifies and resolves the accountability tensions flagged in the last report, such as the lack of clarity on whether Board members were an integral part of Statistics Norway and whether they were independent of their nominating authority, the Ministry of Finance. The establishment, composition and mandate of the Council for Statistics Norway is now fully incorporated in the Statistics Act (section 19), as recommended by the previous review team. In addition, sections 18(2) and 19 of the Statistics Act feature dispositions that guarantee the Director-General's role and professional independence.

Central monitoring

The new Statistics Act confers a clear and distinct role for Statistics Norway to coordinate all the development, production and dissemination of official statistics in Norway. This addresses the need to amend the statistical legislation to strengthen Statistics Norway's coordination role. Furthermore, the establishment of the Committee for Official Statistics and the National Programme for Official Statistics 2021-2023 – which includes obligations on European Statistics - set out the coordination mechanisms to be used by Statistics Norway within the national statistical system. Therefore, the Statistics Act sets the ground for Statistics Norway to strengthen the coordination of ONAs when planning and monitoring European statistics, which was a concern raised in the previous peer review report. Although the legal and operational mechanisms are in place, the actual implementation of monitoring functions is still nascent. This report presents suggestions for improvement in this regard.

Quality management

Progress in terms of quality management has also been noteworthy. Following the stipulations of the new Statistics Act and the annual Letter of Allocation from the Ministry of Finance, Statistics Norway has recently put forward a proposal for a system for quality assurance of official statistics. This comprehensive system has four pillars. A framework for the quality of official statistics (which includes the ES CoP), methods and tools for measuring the quality of official statistics, systems and processes to follow up on quality, and a description of the main actors and their roles and responsibilities in the quality system for official statistics. The National Programme for Official Statistics 2021-2023 features quality requirements and considerations.

Progress has also been made in improving the completeness and public accessibility of quality documents on statistical outputs. Statistics Norway updates quality management information on the

website, which also features a section on quality in official statistics and a document on quality work in Statistics Norway. The document contains quality principles, frameworks for quality work and quality assurance tools. Statistics Norway is working on three lines of action on quality management: quality reports for administrative data, quality reviews covering statistical production processes and, recently, an annual report on the quality of Norway's official statistics to be submitted to the Ministry of Finance.

These developments address most of the concerns and recommendations for a more transparent quality system raised in the previous peer review, which also made suggestions about the division of work on quality management and enhancing the institution-wide monitoring system for quality management. Regarding the first point, the responsibilities for the central coordination of quality management have been transferred to the Division for Methods. This division has been given a Quality Manager position. Statistics Norway has also adopted a systematic approach to quality, with some statistical divisions conducting half-day quality seminars right after the publication of statistics, an approach inspired by Total Quality Management (TQM).

Regarding enhancement of the institution-wide monitoring system for quality management, Statistics Norway has established a network for statistical methodology, which includes ONAs, to support the development of quality in official statistics. Furthermore, Statistics Norway has started to conduct quality evaluations involving members of the Committee for Official Statistics producing official statistics. These evaluations, which use the ES CoP as a reference, go beyond production processes and look at institutional elements. These evaluations will provide evidence that will feed the annual quality review report to the Ministry of Finance in 2022.

Dissemination

There has been significant progress in the dissemination sphere over the period. A relatively comprehensive section on principles of communication and dissemination has been published on the Statistics Norway official website, addressing the need to enhance the content of the dissemination policy document. Statistics Norway has expanded the StatBank Norway and made its user interface more user-friendly. Statistics Norway has also recently established the first version of a common data platform called DAPLA. This new production platform, which allows metadata to be derived more automatically, has been tested on a few production chains (e.g. tax statistics) and needs to be revised and further developed. DAPLA features tools and services that enable statistical production chains for self-service and increased efficiency. The expansion of the StatBank and the development of DAPLA, albeit incipient, constitute tangible progress towards addressing improved access to and updating of metadata content.

The Statistics Norway website also has a publications section featuring a search engine covering available products with their timing and scope. The new portal for microdata access (Microdata.no) constitutes a significant improvement for user accessibility, an aspect explicitly acknowledged and valued by researchers. Microdata is now readily available, and regulations and guidelines on access and use are clearer and more at hand. Researchers also recognise that the cost of microdata has decreased over the last few years. The cost of microdata refers to the price charged by Statistics Norway to process microdata applications. However, some hiccups remain, such as Statistics Norway's speed in responding to applications for microdata and unmet demands for cost estimates. Statistics Norway's management acknowledges these problems, which are being discussed in a user forum set up two years ago.

Resources

Issues in terms of resources signalled in 2014 have also been addressed. The Long-Term Plan for Statistics Norway 2021-2023 is now the basis for the annual planning and budgeting processes. The plan lays out the priorities to reach the goals of the Strategy for Statistics Norway 2021-2023. This plan has added clarity and transparency about the priorities and particular development areas and their resources. Concerns regarding human resources have been largely overcome. Statistics Norway has conducted competency mapping and competence transfer activities over the past few years. Training opportunities are now widely available, and there is an increasing focus on staff competencies and career development. One of the five priority areas of the Strategy for Statistics Norway 2021-2023 is to have competent and motivated employees. The Long-Term Plan 2021-2023 puts forward several measures and indicators of progress, and Statistics Norway has recently developed a framework for competence management and career paths. Last but not least, tangible progress has been made in visualisation and increased use of infographics and interactive figures and charts on the Statistics Norway website (ssb.no), a stream of work that is in progress.

Despite the substantial progress made over the last five years, some aspects still require attention. These aspects, however, are not a matter of compliance but of room for improvement and further alignment with the European Statistics Code of Practice.

5. COMPLIANCE WITH THE CODE OF PRACTICE AND FUTURE ORIENTATION

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

Solid institutional framework

The institutional environment (principles 1-6 of the European Statistics Code of Practice) for statistics in Norway is enshrined in a new legal framework. The process that led to the adoption of the new Statistics Act in 2019 (fully entered into force as of January 2021) increased awareness among most stakeholders, including the media and the wider public, about the importance and the fundamental values of official statistics. The legal context is deeply rooted in a solid administrative and practical framework that is characterised by high public trust in official statistics.

The Statistics Act confirms Statistics Norway's strong mandate to develop, produce and disseminate official statistics. At the same time, it strengthens Statistics Norway's role as coordinator of the national statistical system and clarifies the governance structure in that respect. The establishment of the Committee for Official Statistics and the Council for Statistics Norway, and their tasks within the national statistical system, contribute to clarifying the roles and responsibilities within the system, in line with requirements for professional independence.

The Statistics Act also gives Statistics Norway a strong mandate for data collection, including by imposing a duty to provide information on parties that have data at their disposal whose use for statistical purposes could be cost-beneficial. Other innovations in the Statistics Act, which strengthens the institutional framework, are an explicit definition of official statistics and a provision foreseeing adoption of a National Programme for Official Statistics 2021-2023 covering all official statistics in Norway, coordinated by Statistics Norway.

Strong coordination and cooperation role

The coordination role of Statistics Norway in the national statistical system is defined in the Statistics Act. The framework for coordination is the National Programme for Official Statistics and other statistical authorities are listed therein. The execution of coordination is done through the Committee for Official Statistics chaired by Statistics Norway and the members are appointed by the Ministry of Finance. ONAs and authorities in charge of the main administrative registers are members of the Committee. The national system for quality assurance of official statistics is also part of the coordination. The peer review team considered coordination to have a solid legal ground, well-functioning procedures and active collaboration.

Statistics Norway is active in international as well as national cooperation. Nationally, cooperation takes place with organisations representing users of statistics as well as holders of data, administrative registers and privately held data. Through this cooperation, Statistics Norway has been able to have an impact on the content and quality of the administrative registers, while on the other hand privately held data is used in good cooperation with the data holders. With the representatives of the scientific community, a user council and a user forum have been established to discuss improvement needs and practical solutions to microdata access.

Comprehensive quality framework for official statistics

Statistics Norway has a long-standing commitment to quality. Recently the national system for quality assurance of official statistics has been developed in cooperation with the Committee for Official Statistics. The framework is based on the Statistics Act and the European Statistics Code of Practice.

The national system for quality assurance offers methods and tools that help measure the quality of official statistics, such as quality reviews, annual quality reports on the registers used, quality evaluations and the user perspective on quality. Reviews of selected statistics in Statistics Norway have been performed since 2011, and similar reviews of other official statistics will be performed as from 2022. Annual assessments of all producers of official statistics conducted by Statistics Norway have been included in the quality system since 2021. Systems and processes to follow up the quality have been developed and these will help gather information for the annual report on the quality of Norwegian statistics. The first annual report on the quality of official statistics will be sent to the Ministry of Finance in 2022.

Strong trust in Statistics Norway statistics by institutional and individual users

Statistics Norway is a well-known, respected and trusted institution in Norwegian society. This puts the organisation in a position of strength to foster the implementation of several ES CoP principles, in particular, principle 1 on professional independence, principle 6 on impartiality and objectivity, and principles 11 to 15 on statistical output. Trust in Statistics Norway and applying these principles reinforce one another in a virtuous loop. Peer review interviews and group discussions, which encompassed a wide range of actors, pointed clearly to a very high degree of trust in Statistics Norway from all stakeholders. Three interrelated factors explain this high trust: credibility, long-standing relationships and the solid institutional framework.

Statistics Norway is perceived as a very credible organisation. This is due, in turn, to two aspects: technical expertise and integrity. Data providers, for instance, see Statistics Norway as a responsible and trustable data handler, and individual users – such as researchers and the media – have high confidence in the level of quality of Statistics Norway’s statistical output, viewed as trustworthy. Statistics Norway figures are trusted. The second aspect behind the credibility is the widespread perception that Statistics Norway is a non-partisan, independent and transparent organisation that stands for its mandate and deals with independence issues when they arise. Statistics Norway has come forward when controversies have occurred and data accuracy problems have appeared. The organisation has reacted promptly, retracting tables and offering clear explanations.

Long-standing relationships characterised by smooth cooperation and open engagement with the institutions of the statistical system also contribute to Statistics Norway being perceived as a trustable organisation. Statistics Norway assists data producers to work on improvements and accompanies ONAs and holders of administrative registers in their transformation processes. Statistics Norway does that by engaging in an open and accessible manner (see the next strength for more details).

A third contributing factor to trust in Statistics Norway is the governance structure that stems from the new Statistics Act. This structure deploys a solid institutional framework, which is rooted in high public trust in official statistics while at the same time reinforcing confidence in the system by putting in place further independence and quality safeguards.

Competent and enthusiastic staff

Statistics Norway and the ONAs have highly competent and enthusiastic staff. Several factors contribute to this. Methodological courses are offered to all staff; training in communication is available when relevant. Staff are hired in an open and transparent selection process, based on standard and general descriptions of content and qualifications for all posts; diversity is also actively pursued. Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and competence management have been developed for IT staff and are to be expanded to other competence areas. Staff have a yearly performance assessment, and staff opinion and satisfaction surveys are held on a regular basis. Statistics Norway has an open learning environment, which contributes to staff competence and enthusiasm.

Very open working and management culture

Statistics Norway has a remarkably open working and management culture. This feature is a strength because it enables Statistics Norway to fulfil its mandate within the national statistical system and for European Statistics. Statistics Norway's working culture operates both externally, in the way it relates to other relevant actors, and internally, within Statistics Norway.

Externally

Most stakeholders interviewed during the peer review consider Statistics Norway, overall, to be a receptive, responsive and accessible organisation, willing to listen and open to discussions and technical exchanges. This perception is particularly intense in organisations with long-standing working relationships with Statistics Norway. Some examples of Statistics Norway's culture of engagement are the periodical meetings, informative sessions, ad-hoc dialogues with administrative data providers and the establishment of user forums – including the scientific community – to resolve tensions and difficulties and find feasible solutions through dialogue with users. Statistics Norway's interaction with the Council for Statistics Norway also shows this open organisational mind-set. This independent body does not only advise Statistics Norway but also challenges and questions Statistics Norway's decisions. This open culture translates into a healthy degree of communication and engagement with ONAs and holders of administrative registers, ultimately benefiting the quality of statistics. It does so by creating an open dialogue where ONAs might come forward with quality flaws or challenges to be discussed and solutions to be figured out. Ultimately, Statistics Norway and ONAs can enter into a trusted technical dialogue and a continuous improvement process. The Network for Methodology recently promoted by Statistics Norway is an example.

Statistics Norway's open culture of engagement, coupled with trust in Statistics Norway as a technical body, puts the organisation in a good position to promote quality and to coordinate (principle 1bis) the national programme for official statistics and play its new leading role in the Committee for Official Statistics. This is highly conducive to applying principles 1bis on coordination and cooperation and 4 on the commitment to quality.

Internally

The peer review visit also revealed clear indications of an open internal working culture. Such culture is reflected in the organisation's strategy, plans and practice. Managers are accessible, and staff can voice their concerns and disagreements and feel heard. Statistics Norway presents a relatively flat organisational structure, offers an open learning environment and favours flexitime, which results in a reasonable work-life balance. Furthermore, the organisation promotes mentoring and on-the-job support, periodically providing spaces for exchanges between staff and supervising managers. This people-centred organisational culture has recently been anchored in the Strategy for Statistics Norway and the Long-Term Plan for Statistics Norway, which seek increased engagement and turnover of talent. Competency plans for employees have recently been piloted in the IT and Statistics Departments and will be scaled up shortly. Seemingly, employees play an active role in developing the plans, which are based on a fluid dialogue.

Innovative practices

The peer review team identified innovative practices that are noteworthy and possibly applicable in some way in other national settings. The peer review team would like to highlight the following important initiatives from the Norwegian statistical system:

- quality management within Statistics Norway and its set-up within the Norwegian Statistical System as a whole is comprehensive and makes it an integral part of all activities of the Norwegian Statistical System;
- Statistics Norway has by law the right to access administrative data and to consult with the providers, resulting in agreements with them about the quality and delivery conditions of the

data, in cooperation with administrative data holders. Statistics Norway has developed processes and agreements to provide quality checks for registers benefitting both parties;

- The Statistics Act giving Statistics Norway the right to access privately held data;
- research and development into the possible uses of new data sources, so-called big data with practical applications and concrete improvements in statistical processes and products;
- the production of monthly national accounts and their publication within about 40 days.

5.2 ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.2.1 Enhancing programme implementation

Programming and planning

The Statistics Act that has been fully in force since 1 January 2021 has given Statistics Norway the role of central body for the preparation and dissemination of official statistics. Based on the Act, Statistics Norway has recently established a first National Programme for Official Statistics 2021-2023 and a Long-Term Plan for Statistics Norway 2021-2023. The perception of the peer review team is that Statistics Norway is making serious efforts in the implementation of the new Statistics Act and the long-term plan, but that progress is sometimes slower than expected. This may be due in part to unclear priority setting, lack of identified intermediate and final targets and deadlines, and vaguely defined processes in terms of consultation with stakeholders and decision-making. The peer review team feels that in general Statistics Norway could benefit from a more planned approach to development, redesign and improvement. This would include roadmaps and action plans with visible steps, concrete targets, who does what and when, deliverables, deadlines, contingencies and risks. This could be applied to such areas as modernisation, quality assurance and microdata services. More generally it would ensure that Statistics Norway maintains its advanced position in the European Statistical System (ESS).

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

R1. Statistics Norway should identify concrete actions related to the implementation of its work programmes, in particular for development activities, based on explicit roadmaps for the activities covered by the programmes. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 1.5)

The first National Programme for Official Statistics 2021-2023 under the new Statistics Act was presented by Statistics Norway as mostly status quo. It was meant to serve as a stock-taking of all existing official statistics and an assessment of whether they should remain as such, under the general condition of an unchanged budget. The next National Programme for Official Statistics should be more holistic and forward-looking, with potentially more producers of official statistics included. Some entities represented in the Committee for Official Statistics, for instance the police, produce statistics that are not yet official statistics but are perceived by the public as such.

The National Programme for Official Statistics sets targets for a duration of 3 years and affects all producers of official statistics. It is partly financed by the Ministry of Finance (for statistics produced by Statistics Norway), partly by other ministries (for statistics produced by ONAs and some statistics produced by Statistics Norway). However, the link between the programme and the ONAs' budget process is missing. Thus, there might be a situation where an ONA's budget is reduced, making it impossible to implement the Programme. The current separation of budget decisions for separate parts of the same Programme is being discussed at government level. According to Statistics Norway it is not necessarily a problem. Other ministries are interested in and associated with the National

Programme for Official Statistics, since their needs are covered therein. This association could easily get lost if all financing were to be run through the Ministry of Finance and Statistics Norway.

Independently of the separate budget decisions, to improve beyond compliance with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

R2. For future work programmes, Statistics Norway should strive towards a transparent and forward-looking priority setting of all official statistics, including potential new domains, and clear budget commitments covering development as well as modernisation activities. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 3.3, 3.4, 11.1 and 11.2)

71% of Statistics Norway's budget is based on government assignment and for 29% on funds stemming from other sources. During the peer review, Statistics Norway explained that a majority of those other sources were also within government but from ministries other than the Ministry of Finance or other public authorities. Only a very small part, approximately 5% of the 29%, comes from non-government sources. From an outside perspective, the reference to market funding gives the impression that non-governmental funding is substantial and a potential concern, while in reality only a small part of the budget comes from a truly market-related context, subject to competition from market actors. Without claiming that Statistics Norway is not challenged by resource constraints or by priority-setting needs, the peer review team believes that clarity about the budget allocations could strengthen the perception among both its own staff and the public that Statistics Norway is an independent statistical authority. Statistics Norway could achieve this by further specifying which are the sources qualified as external or "market" funding.

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

R3. Statistics Norway should improve transparency about the budget structure. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 3.1)

5.2.2 Strengthening human resources

Statistics Norway has succeeded in accessing privately held data, such as purchase receipt data and debit card data. This creates new opportunities for the production of official statistics, which require new methods and skills from statistical experts. The methodologies involved in combining new data types with more traditional ones such as administrative registers and survey data are comparatively more advanced, and thus more demanding, and still need work to be fully developed. This occurs in a context where there is also a demand for methodological support for the existing production.

Statistics Norway's Division for Methods is somewhat stretched in this setting due to recurrent methodological demands from statistical departments. However, existing guidelines are not enough to enable statistical staff to update and develop the required methodologies without sufficient help from the methodology department. One of the side effects of this demand for methodological resources is that it makes it very difficult for staff at the Division for Methods to devote time to addressing methodological research needs.

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

R4. Statistics Norway should further deepen and broaden methodological skills among statistical staff, thus allowing the Division for Methods to free capacity for present and future methodological development and research projects. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 7.6 and 3.1)

Statistics Norway acknowledges increased competition for human resources from public and private producers of statistical information. This aggravates the risk of a brain drain in a context in which Statistics Norway salaries are below those paid by private and public institutions for statistics-related positions. In this scenario, the Strategy for Statistics Norway 2021-2023 explicitly mentions the need to have competent and motivated employees and to increase engagement and job satisfaction. To this end, Statistics Norway started developing a framework for competence management and career paths in January 2021, which is a solid step forward. However, the framework is not known by everyone, and the effects of the actions included in the framework have not yet yielded tangible results among staff. In this context, involving staff in development projects, encouraging and facilitating secondments to international organisations, and defining career paths for statisticians could make a difference.

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

R5. Statistics Norway should proactively communicate the framework for competence management and career paths and intensify its implementation by taking actions that prioritise staff motivation, satisfaction and engagement. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 3.1 and 7.6)

5.2.3 Making the most of coordination and cooperation - for both Statistics Norway and the other national authorities developing, producing and disseminating official statistics

Statistics Norway has established a national system to ensure quality in European and other official statistics based on the ES CoP. The system has been developed in cooperation with the Committee for Official Statistics. Annual assessments on all producers of official statistics by Statistics Norway will be included in the quality system as from 2021. These assessments will be followed by meetings with other producers to discuss statistical and quality matters. The first annual report on the quality of official statistics will be sent to the Ministry of Finance in 2022. At the time of the peer review it was unclear how quality deficiencies would be treated to ensure improvement actions. In order for all parties to benefit and learn from the assessments, the peer review team considers it useful to draw up a list of improvement actions and a plan on how to tackle them. In order to effectively train the staff of ONAs on specific issues in single institutions without focusing only on deficiencies/pointing out their improvement needs, bilateral contacts should be developed to give detailed support and follow-up for improvement actions.

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

R6. After finishing the quality evaluation report of the national statistical system, Statistics Norway should draw up a roadmap and an action plan for the whole national statistical system, in consultation with the Committee for Official Statistics. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 1bis.2)

According to the Letter of Allocation, Statistics Norway shall oversee the monitoring of compliance with the requirements for quality in official statistics. The national quality system for official statistics establishes methods and tools for monitoring, measuring and developing the quality of official statistics. Each ONA producing European statistics is responsible for its own quality. However, since Statistics Norway is the central statistical organisation in Norway, and is by law required to produce an annual report on quality, it should consider what kind of means are available in the event that one or several ONAs are not compliant with the ES CoP in spite of requests by Statistics Norway.

To improve beyond compliance with the ES CoP, the peer reviewers recommend that:

R7. Statistics Norway should consider ways of ensuring compliance with the European Statistics Code of Practice by all other national authorities developing, producing and disseminating official statistics. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 1bis.2)

Statistics Norway leads the Committee for Official Statistics, which was appointed by the Ministry of Finance in November 2019. ONAs and authorities in charge of the main administrative registers are members. Statistics Norway's coordination work is implemented through the Committee for Official Statistics with regular meetings as well as bilateral meetings and contact via other means of communication. The four ONAs reviewed (Norwegian Institute of Public Health (NIPH), Directorate of Fisheries (DoF), Directorate of Immigration (UDI) and Norwegian Institute of Bioeconomy Research (NIBIO)) considered the newly established coordination forum useful for discussing and developing statistics and statistical processes within their organisations. They are also looking for collaboration in areas such as developing quality templates, data sharing, microdata, dissemination and methodology. The peer review team suggests that the ONAs could take a more active role in the Committee for Official Statistics and in their collaboration respectively. This would allow them to learn from Statistics Norway and from each other while sharing best practices. In addition to national collaboration, international statistical forums and expert groups could offer ONAs professional support and cooperation possibilities.

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

R8. The four other national authorities reviewed (Norwegian Institute of Public Health (NIPH), Directorate of Fisheries (DoF), Directorate of Immigration (UDI) and Norwegian Institute of Bioeconomy Research (NIBIO)) should be proactive in their relations with both national and international peers with a view to sharing information about best practices and new developments. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 1bis.3)

The four ONAs reviewed showed good quality in their statistical activities and knowledge. However, since statistics is a minor part of the activities of several of them, only a limited amount of information about official statistics and statistical quality is communicated on the respective organisation's website. It is important that there is public trust in the statistics produced by these ONAs and in their professional independence when producing official statistics.

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

R9. The four other national authorities reviewed (Norwegian Institute of Public Health (NIPH), Directorate of Fisheries (DoF), Directorate of Immigration (UDI) and Norwegian Institute of Bioeconomy Research (NIBIO)) should improve the transparency and visibility of the role of official statistics and statistical activities in their organisations and on their websites. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 1.6)

The Directorate of Immigration (UDI) produces statistics and data on immigration. The Statistics and Analysis Division within the UDI in practice produces statistics and makes decisions on statistical matters independently. However, this mandate is not visible within the organisation nor is it visible to the users of the official statistics.

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

R10. The Directorate of Immigration (UDI) should clarify internally and externally the delineation between its role as an authority providing services to the public and its role as a statistical authority. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 1.3, 1.4 and 6.7)

In the Norwegian Institute of Public Health (NIPH) responsibilities related to statistics are distributed among several divisions and departments. No department head or director has the responsibility for official statistics or professional independence from other departments or bodies.

To improve beyond compliance with the ES CoP, the peer reviewers recommend that:

R11. The Norwegian Institute of Public Health (NIPH) should formalise the professional independence of the statistics, e.g. by including professional independence as well as the European Statistics Code of Practice in the job description or working arrangements of one of the department heads and giving them the formal responsibility for official statistics within the Norwegian Institute of Public Health. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 1.1, 1.3 and 1.4)

5.2.4 Ensuring visibility of quality and strengthening user services

Commitment to Quality

The Norwegian Statistical System (NSS), both Statistics Norway and the ONAs, has a very strong commitment to quality. Statistics Norway has a specific quality system for official statistics, while the ONAs have a quality system and often have specific quality assurance for the official statistics they produce [see section 5.2.3 for recommendations to the ONAs]. Statistics Norway has very accessible “*About Statistics*” sections on its website pages for each statistic; these sections give an overview of various quality aspects of the official statistics for which Statistics Norway is responsible. Although the “*About Statistics*” sections are informative, it would still be possible to publish more information on quality, e.g. documentation of general methods and the quality reports sent to Eurostat.

Statistics Norway also has an extensive and excellent quality review system for reviewing the processes and products of several statistics each year, which results in an improvement plan that is followed up in subsequent years. The statistics to be reviewed are selected through a risk-based approach. The reviews are carried out by the quality team in cooperation with the statistical departments. Given the comprehensiveness of the review approach, it is inevitable that the frequency of reviewing a statistic is rather low.

The Ministry of Finance (MoF) has requested Statistics Norway to produce an annual report on the quality of official Norwegian statistics, not only those of Statistics Norway but also those of the ONAs. The work that will lead to the first report is now under way.

A potential consequence of the quality system as a whole could be that it might take some time for stakeholders and users to completely understand all the interlinkages and be fully assured of the quality of the official statistics. Some kind of external review of the quality system as a whole, e.g. through certification, might be helpful in communicating quality assurance and in encouraging and ensuring more frequent internal quality reviews by the statistical departments themselves. Since most elements needed for a regular external review or certification seem already to be in place, such a review would not use too many resources.

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

R12. Statistics Norway should increase the visibility, transparency and documentation of its quality assurance of statistics and consider ways to certify its quality framework. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 4.1 and 15.7)

Relevance

Statistics Norway and the ONAs adhere to the disclosure requirements of the ESS, the GDPR and the Statistics Act. There seem to be several unresolved issues or uncertainties in the interpretation of the requirements of the new Statistics Act. The previous Statistics Act contained the notion of harm when it comes to disseminating identifiable data; using this clause Statistics Norway could balance the relevance of the information against the harm of publishing it and was not required to use a strict non-disclosure rule. The new Statistics Act does not contain such a clause and, as a consequence, some previous exceptions from statistical confidentiality have been removed. This is a dilemma in particular in domains that rely on detailed breakdowns of territorial units and categories of economic activity. Also, Statistics Norway does not at present fully exploit the possibility foreseen in Article 25 of Regulation 223/2009 on European Statistics whereby data available to the public “shall not be considered confidential for the purpose of dissemination of statistics”.

All official statistics, with one exception (NIBIO), are published on the websites and public databases of Statistics Norway and the ONAs. There is no common single website and database for all official statistics. Given the availability of APIs (application programming interfaces) for most of the Statistics Norway and ONA databases, it would be possible to develop a common database and from this possibly also a common website for all official statistics.

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

R13. Statistics Norway should explore the potential of disseminating more and more detailed statistics to better serve its users, including further increasing its access to statistical data from other producers. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 2.4 and 11.1)

Statistics Norway has an extensive and impressive network for user contacts. There is a range of advisory councils and committees, as well as reference, working and focus groups for statistical topics. The use of data is monitored through website counters. About 30 percent of Statistics Norway’s budget comes from additional statistical and research programmes financed by specific users. These programmes also constitute a basis to inform Statistics Norway about user needs for data, statistics and analysis. Once every year, user satisfaction with the website is measured through a survey. Nevertheless, a somewhat more comprehensive and regular contact with for instance the administration of Stortinget (Parliament) or the members of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs could be useful. Also, the system of user contacts is not currently integrated into a unified framework, in which gaps may be identified. For example, user satisfaction surveys could be expanded. Also, some users have expressed concerns about the availability of specialists for contacts, the efficacy of search-engine routines, the limited size of API requests and the timeliness of some statistics.

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

R14. Statistics Norway should deepen and widen the current relationships with users by strengthening relations with specific user groups in Stortinget (Parliament) and by expanding the scope of user satisfaction surveys. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 11.1 and 11.3)

Accessibility and Clarity

In the last few years Statistics Norway has taken important steps in improving its microdata services. Through Microdata.no there is much improved and easier access to microdata for researchers. The procedure for obtaining microdata is described on the website. A user council and a user forum have also been established. For more detailed and more specific research purposes it is possible to obtain relevant datasets, and this is described on the website. In particular, users interested in these more detailed data have expressed a wish for further improvements, for example regarding service ability and Statistics Norway's speed of response to requests, communication with Statistics Norway specialists, metadata, transparency and timeliness. The establishment of Microdata.no was jointly funded by the Norwegian Research Council (Forskningsrådet), which might be a model for further improvements in microdata services. At present there are separate microdata services by Statistics Norway and each of the ONAs.

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

R15. Statistics Norway should improve the microdata services, in consultation with users, and establish an explicit roadmap for improvement actions. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 15.4)

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

None

ANNEX A – AGENDA OF THE VISIT

Timing	Topic	Participants
Day 1		
09:00-09:45	Preparatory meeting with the national coordinator and other national participants	Peer review team: All Statistics Norway coordination team: All
09.45-10:00	Welcome and introduction, adopting the agenda and organisational matters	Peer review team: All Statistics Norway: General Director Director of Department of administration Director of Department for economic statistics Director of Department of social statistics Director of Department for business and environmental statistics Statistics Norway coordination team: National peer review coordinator and five members of the coordination team
10:00-11:00	Presentation of the National Statistical System	Peer review team: All Statistics Norway: General Director Director of Department of administration Director of Department for economic statistics Director of Department of social statistics Director of Department for business and environmental statistics Head of International secretariat National statistical programme coordinator Statistics Norway coordination team: National peer review coordinator and three members of the coordination team
11:00-11:15	Coffee break	

11:15-12:45	<p>Coordination and cooperation</p> <p>ES CoP principle 1bis</p>	<p>Peer review team:</p> <p>All</p> <p>Statistics Norway:</p> <p>General Director Head of International secretariat Head of Division for methods Legal officer Quality manager National statistical programme coordinator</p> <p>Statistics Norway coordination team:</p> <p>National peer review coordinator and one member of the coordination team</p>
12:45-13:45	Lunch	
13:45-15:15	<p>Professional independence and the Law on Official Statistics and related legislation</p> <p>ES CoP principles 1, 2, 5 and 6</p>	<p>Peer review team:</p> <p>All</p> <p>Statistics Norway:</p> <p>General Director Director of Research department Head of International secretariat Legal officer Security officer</p> <p>Statistics Norway coordination team:</p> <p>National peer review coordinator and one member of the coordination team</p>
15:15-15:30	Coffee break	

15:30-17:00	<p>Programming, planning and resources</p> <p>ES CoP principles 1, 3 and 10</p>	<p>Peer review team:</p> <p>All</p> <p>Statistics Norway:</p> <p>General Director Director of Department of administration Director of Department of IT Head of Division for human resources Head of Division for methods Two senior advisers from Division for financial management and corporate governance Senior adviser from Division for human resources</p> <p>Statistics Norway coordination team:</p> <p>National peer review coordinator and two members of the coordination team</p>
17:00-18:00	Peer review expert team discussion	
Timing	Topic	Participants
Day 2		
09:00-10:30	<p>Dissemination and confidentiality</p> <p>ES CoP principles 5, 6 and 15</p>	<p>Peer review team:</p> <p>All</p> <p>Statistics Norway:</p> <p>Director of Department of communications Head of Division for user insight and web development Head of Division for methods Head of Division for microdata Legal officer Security officer Senior adviser from Division for IT architecture Researcher from Division for methods</p> <p>Statistics Norway coordination team:</p> <p>National peer review coordinator and one member of the coordination team</p>
10:30-10:45	Coffee break	

10:45-12:15	<p>Quality (organisational structure, tools, monitoring)</p> <p>ES CoP principles 4 and 11 to 15</p>	<p>Peer review team:</p> <p>All</p> <p>Statistics Norway: Director of Department for economic statistics Director of Department for methodology and data collection Head of Division for methods Quality manager Senior adviser from Division for methods</p> <p>Statistics Norway coordination team: National peer review coordinator and one member of the coordination team</p>
12:15-13:15	Lunch	
13:15-14:15	<p>Methodology, data collection, data processing and administrative data</p> <p>ES CoP principles 2, 7, 8 and 9</p>	<p>Peer review team:</p> <p>All</p> <p>Statistics Norway: Director of Department for business and environmental statistics Director of Department for methodology and data collection Director of Department of IT Head of Division for methods Head of Division for business surveys Head of Division for social surveys Senior adviser from Division for IT architecture</p> <p>Statistics Norway coordination team: National peer review coordinator and one member of the coordination team</p>
14:15-15:45	<p>Modernisation and development of statistical processes</p> <p>ES CoP principles 2, 7, 8 and 9</p>	<p>Peer review team:</p> <p>All</p> <p>Statistics Norway: General Director Director of Department of administration Director of Department for economic statistics Director of Department of social statistics Director of Department for business and environmental statistics Director of Department of IT Researcher, Division for methods</p>

		Statistics Norway coordination team: National peer review coordinator and two members of the coordination team
15:45-16:00	Coffee break	
16:00-17:00	Meeting with junior staff	Peer review team: All Statistics Norway junior staff: Researcher from Research department Higher executive officer from Division for national accounts Higher executive officer from Division for labour market and wage statistics Adviser from Division for energy, environmental and transport statistics Higher executive officer from Division for methods Senior adviser from Division for human resources
17:00-18:00	Peer review expert team discussion	
Timing	Topic	Participants
Day 3		
09:00-09:30	General opening session with all ONAs taking part in the peer review	Peer review team: All ONAs: Three representatives from the Norwegian Institute of Public Health (NIPH) Two representatives from the Directorate of Fisheries (DoF) Two representatives from the Directorate of Immigration (UDI) Two representatives from the Norwegian Institute of Bioeconomy Research (NIBIO) Statistics Norway coordination team: National peer review coordinator and national statistical programme coordinator
09:30-11:00	Meeting with NIPH	Peer review team: Two members of the peer review team ONA: Three representatives from the Norwegian

		Institute of Public Health (NIPH) Statistics Norway coordination team: National statistical programme coordinator
09:30-11:00	Meeting with DoF	Peer review team: Two members of the peer review team DoF: Two representatives from the Directorate of Fisheries (DoF) Statistics Norway coordination team: National peer review coordinator
11:00-11:30	Coffee break / PR expert team meeting	
11:30-12:00	Closing session with NIPH	Peer review team: Two members of the peer review team NIPH: Three representatives from the Norwegian Institute of Public Health (NIPH) Statistics Norway coordination team: National statistical programme coordinator
11:30-12:00	Closing session with DoF	Peer review team: Two members of the peer review team DoF: Two representatives from the Directorate of Fisheries (DoF) Statistics Norway coordination team: National peer review coordinator
12:00-13:00	Lunch	
13:00-14:30	Meeting with UDI	Peer review team: Two members of the peer review team Directorate of Immigration (UDI): Two representatives from the Directorate of Immigration (UDI) Statistics Norway coordination team: National statistical programme coordinator
13:00-14:30	Meeting with NIBIO	Peer review team: Two members of the peer review team NIBIO:

		Two representatives from the Norwegian Institute of Bioeconomy Research (NIBIO) Statistics Norway coordination team: National peer review coordinator
14:30-15:00	Coffee break / PR expert team meeting	
15:00-15:30	Closing session with UDI	Peer review team: Two members of the peer review team Directorate of Immigration (UDI): Two representatives from the Directorate of Immigration (UDI) Statistics Norway coordination team: National statistical programme coordinator
15:00-15:30	Closing session with NIBIO	Peer review team: Two members of the peer review team NIBIO: Two representatives from the Norwegian Institute of Bioeconomy Research (NIBIO) Statistics Norway coordination team: National peer review coordinator
15:30-16:30	Peer review expert team discussion	
16:30-17:30	Meeting with the Council for Statistics Norway	Peer review team: All Members of the Council: Chair, vice chair and three members of the Council Statistics Norway coordination team: National peer review coordinator and national statistical programme coordinator
17:30-18:00	Peer review expert team discussion	
Timing	Topic	Participants
Day 4		
09:00-10:15	Meeting with main data providers	Peer review team: All

		<p>Main data providers: Representative from the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV) Representative from the Norwegian Agriculture Agency Representative from the Norwegian Mapping Authority Two representatives from the Norwegian Tax Administration Three representatives from the Norwegian Directorate of Health</p> <p>Statistics Norway coordination team: National peer review coordinator and one member of the coordination team</p>
10:15-10:30	Coffee break	
10:30-11:30	<p>Overview of work on new data sources</p>	<p>Peer review team: All</p> <p>Statistics Norway: Head of Division for methods Senior adviser from Division for methods Head of Division for business cycle statistics Head of Division for health, care and social statistics Adviser from Division for health, care and social statistics Senior adviser from Division for income and living conditions statistics Legal officer</p> <p>Statistics Norway coordination team: National peer review coordinator</p>
11:30-12:30	<p>Meeting with main users – Media</p>	<p>Peer review team: All</p> <p>Media: Journalist from the national newspaper Aftenposten Journalist from the national newspaper Finansavisen Journalist from the national news service NTB Development editor for the public sector publication Kommunal rapport</p>

		<p>Statistics Norway observer: Head of Division for editing and publishing</p> <p>Statistics Norway coordination team: National peer review coordinator and one member of the coordination team</p>
12:30-13:30	Lunch	
13:30-15:00	<p>Meeting with main users – Ministries, public/private institutions (including the Central Bank) and trade unions</p>	<p>Peer review team: All</p> <p>Ministries, public/private institutions (including the Central Bank) and trade unions: Representative from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs Representative from the Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation Representative from the Central Bank of Norway Representative from Innovation Norway Representative from the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions (LO)</p> <p>Statistics Norway coordination team: National peer review coordinator and one member of the coordination team</p>
15:00-15:45	<p>Meeting with the Ministry of Finance</p>	<p>Peer review team: All</p> <p>The Ministry of Finance: Director General for the Agency Governance Unit Senior adviser from the Agency Governance Unit Deputy Director General from the Tax Policy Department Two deputy Director Generals from the Economic Policy Department</p> <p>Statistics Norway coordination team: National peer review coordinator and one member of the coordination team</p>
15:45-16:00	Coffee break	
16:00-17:00	<p>Meeting with main users – Scientific community</p>	<p>Peer review team: All</p> <p>Scientific community:</p>

		<p>Representative from the Work Research Institute (AFI)</p> <p>Representative from the Institute for Social Research</p> <p>Representative from the Norwegian Computing Centre</p> <p>Representative from the Ragnar Frisch Centre for Economic Research</p> <p>Representative from the research foundation Fafo</p> <p>Statistics Norway coordination team: National peer review coordinator and two members of the coordination team</p>
17:00-18:00	Peer review expert team discussion	
Timing	Topic	Participants
Day 5		
09:00-10:30	Peer review expert team discussion	
10:30-10:45	Coffee break	
10:45-12:45	Clarifications, remaining or additional issues and focus areas	<p>Peer review team: All</p> <p>Statistics Norway: Director of Department of social statistics Head of Division for microdata Security officer</p> <p>Statistics Norway coordination team: All</p>
12:45-13:45	Lunch	
13:45-15:00	Meeting with the senior management of the NSI and representatives of ONAs: conclusions and recommendations	<p>Peer review team: All</p> <p>ONAs: Three representatives from the Norwegian Institute of Public Health (NIPH) Two representatives from the Directorate of Fisheries (DoF) Two representatives from the Directorate of Immigration (UDI) Two representatives from the Norwegian Institute of Bioeconomy Research (NIBIO)</p> <p>Statistics Norway:</p>

		<p>General Director Director of Department of administration Director of Department for economic statistics Director of Department of social statistics Director of Department for business and environmental statistics Director of Research department Director of Department of communications Director of Department of IT Director of Department for methodology and data collection Head of Division for methods Head of International secretariat National statistical programme coordinator</p> <p>Statistics Norway coordination team: National peer review coordinator and six members of the coordination team</p>
15:00	END OF PEER REVIEW VISIT	

ANNEX B – LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Statistics Norway management

Director General
Director of Department of administration
Director of Department for economic statistics
Director of Department of social statistics
Director of Department for business and environmental statistics
Director of Research department
Director of Department of communications
Director of Department of IT
Director of Department for methodology and data collection

Statistics Norway coordination team

Senior adviser, International secretariat (national peer review coordinator)
Head of International secretariat
Senior adviser and national statistical programme coordinator, International secretariat
Senior adviser, International secretariat
Senior adviser, Director General's staff
Senior adviser, Division for methods, Department for methodology and data collection
Senior adviser, Division for corporate communication, Department of communications (peer review communication coordinator)
Senior adviser and quality manager, Division for methods, Department for methodology and data collection
Senior adviser and legal officer, Department of administration

Other Statistics Norway staff

Head of Division for methods, Department for methodology and data collection
Head of Division for human resources, Department of administration
Head of Division for user insight and web development, Department of communications
Head of Division for microdata, Department of social statistics
Head of Division for business surveys, Department for methodology and data collection
Head of Division for social surveys, Department for methodology and data collection
Head of Division for editing and publishing, Department for communications
Head of Division for business cycle statistics, Department for business and environmental statistics
Head of Division for health, care and social statistics, Department for social statistics
Senior adviser and security officer, Department of administration
Senior adviser, Division for financial management and corporate governance, Department of administration
Senior adviser, Division for financial management and corporate governance, Department of administration
Senior adviser, Division for human resources, Department for administration
Senior adviser, Division for IT architecture, Department for IT
Senior adviser, Division for IT architecture, Department for IT
Senior adviser, Division for methods, Department for methodology and data collection
Senior adviser and legal officer, Department of administration
Adviser, Division for health, care and social statistics, Department for social statistics
Senior adviser, Division for income and living conditions statistics, Department for social statistics
Researcher, Division for methods, Department for methodology and data collection
Researcher, Division for methods, Department for methodology and data collection

Junior staff

Researcher, Research department

Higher executive officer, Division for national accounts, Department for economic statistics

Higher executive officer, Division for labour market and wage statistics, Department for social statistics

Adviser, Division for energy, environmental and transport statistics, Department for business and environmental statistics

Higher executive officer, Division for methods, Department for methodology and data collection

Senior adviser, Division for human resources, Department for administration

Representatives of other national authorities (ONAs)

Representative, Directorate of Fisheries (DoF)

Representative, Directorate of Fisheries (DoF)

Representative, Norwegian Institute of Bioeconomy Research (NIBIO)

Representative, Norwegian Institute of Bioeconomy Research (NIBIO)

Representative, Directorate of Immigration (UDI)

Representative, Directorate of Immigration (UDI)

Representative, Norwegian Institute of Public Health (NIPH)

Representative, Norwegian Institute of Public Health (NIPH)

Representative, Norwegian Institute of Public Health (NIPH)

Representatives of the Council for Statistics Norway

Chair of the Council

Vice chair of the Council

Member of the Council

Member of the Council

Member of the Council

Representatives of main data providers

Representative, The Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV)

Representative, The Norwegian Agriculture Agency

Representative, The Norwegian Directorate of Health

Representative, The Norwegian Directorate of Health

Representative, The Norwegian Directorate of Health

Representative, The Norwegian Tax Administration

Representative, The Norwegian Tax Administration

Representative, The Norwegian Mapping Authority

Representatives of the media

Journalist, Finansavisen

Journalist, NTB

Development editor, Kommunal rapport

Journalist, Aftenposten

Representatives of the Ministry of Finance

Deputy director general, Economic Policy Department

Deputy director general, Economic Policy Department

Director general, Agency Governance Unit

Senior adviser, Agency Governance Unit

Deputy director general, Tax Policy Department

Representatives of ministries and public/private institutions

Representative, The Central Bank of Norway

Representative, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs

Representative, Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation

Representative, The Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions (LO)

Representative, Innovation Norway

Representatives of the scientific community

Representative, Work Research Institute (AFI), OsloMet

Representative, Institute for Social Research

Representative, Norwegian Computing Centre

Representative, The Ragnar Frisch Centre for Economic Research

Representative, the research foundation Fafo