

Adding more meaning to the statistics

CARDS 2001

Twinning, Administrative
Capacity Building

Country

Croatia

Implementation period

2003-2004

Funding

€0.85 million

Results

Upgrade statistics collection,
data control and analysis in line
with EU norms

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Partners

Statistics Denmark
(assisted by Finnish and
Swedish experts)

Reform of Croatia's statistics sector

Croatia's statistical system requires modernisation and development as the country harmonises itself with EU standards in the statistics field. As a candidate state for EU membership, early implementation of these standards is not only a condition of membership, but the statistics produced will contribute to membership negotiations.

The Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) faces problems of incoherent and inconsistent data-gathering in different counties and fields. The national statistical system is outdated, and the CBS's staff of less than 400 are being stretched to perform a growing range of activities other than statistics gathering.

This project, financed by the EU's CARDS programme and supported through Eurostat, aims to update the CBS's methods and practices, and help Croatia bring its statistics operations into the 21st century and closer in line with the European Union's *acquis communautaire* – body of laws.

Getting it right

The 18-month project kicked off in May 2003. Robert Knezevic, head of the director general's office at the CBS, stresses the importance of getting the statistics operations right: "In order to be ready to join the EU, Croatia's business register in particular needs to be harmonised."

"Three things are essential to making this possible, he notes: budgetary support and resources from the government, reliable information on infrastructure to carry out proper reform of the public administration, and simply more investment on staff and tools." He stresses how important it is that donor funds be used to finance realistic, sustainable projects.

Main tasks

The work of the project has focused on three major areas:

- Development of the statistical aspects of the business registry, so that detailed and reliable data, of either samples or full coverage, can be accessed to show the state of Croatia's industry. The project also worked to introduce and update EU classification systems for data in the business register.
- Harmonisation of Croatia's national accounts to EU norms in several areas, such as financial statistics and annual GDP at NUTS-2 level.
- Collecting and programming data (emphasis on quality assurance, sampling, standardised usage of statistical analysis methods, i.e. seasonal adjustments)

Good co-operation in Croatia

Despite some early hurdles to overcome, the team of EU experts – principally from Statistics Denmark, with help from Swedish and Finnish colleagues – has experienced a positive exchange with Croatian officials at the CBS and is pressing ahead with their task.

The team has been in regular contact with the EU's main statistical body, Eurostat, throughout the duration of the project.

They undertook a detailed analysis of the current system of data collection and handling and, in early 2004, are carrying out further fact-finding activities. The team is assembling recommendation reports from those involved in statistics operations both centrally and in the field, and will use this information to inform future actions.