

Annual Report 2004

National Statistics Office, Malta,
2004

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30 November 2004

Chairman
Malta Statistics Authority

In accordance with the provisions of subsection 5(g) of the Malta Statistics Authority Act XXIV of 2000, I hereby submit to you this report on the operations of the National Statistics Office for the year ended 30 September 2004.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'A. Camilleri', written in a cursive style.

Alfred Camilleri
Director-General

Our Mission

To serve the statistical information needs of Parliament, Government, and the community by striving for excellence through rigorous protection of confidential data, quality information from respondents and a timely, objective and responsive statistical service

INTRODUCTION

The National Statistics Office (NSO) is Malta's official national statistical agency. It provides statistics on a wide range of social and economic matters, covering the population in general, Government and the business sectors. The NSO also has an important coordination function with respect to the statistical activities of other official bodies in Malta.

The NSO was established by virtue of the Malta Statistics Authority Act XXIV of 2000 and replaced the Central Office of Statistics as from 1 March 2001. Section 10 of this Act determines the functions and responsibilities of the Office which include the collection, compilation, extraction and release of official statistics relating to the demographic, social, environmental, economic and general activities and conditions of Malta. Specifically, the brief of the NSO is to:

1. Provide on an impartial basis, quantitative and representative information about the economic, demographic, gender, social and environmental situation in Malta to all users including Parliament, the Government, institutions, social and economic operators, academic institutions and bodies, and the general public. Where possible such data should be provided with a regional perspective.
2. Produce data subject to the principles of reliability, objectivity, relevance, statistical confidentiality, transparency, specificity, and proportionality. In its statistical production, the Office will aim to:
 - portray real situations faithfully;
 - disseminate results to the public and users thereof in a neutral and impartial manner;
 - focus on the phenomena that are essential for the decision-making process;
 - honour citizens' right to public information.
3. Ensure that information collected for statistical purposes is published in an aggregate form with no possibility of identification of individual entities.
4. Make accessible the methods used for the collection and production of official statistics and supply the information necessary to evaluate their quality.
5. Provide technical explanations in order to avoid erroneous interpretation.
6. Carry out research for the further development of statistical methodology and technology.
7. Monitor and coordinate the carrying out of tasks with statistical implications imposed on other public bodies.
8. Coordinate the production of official statistical systems. These include methodologies; timeliness and standardisation of information; accommodation of user requirements; integration of appropriate classifications; and conformity with international standards.

ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Since the enactment of the Malta Statistics Authority Act in 2000 and its subsequent enforcement as from 1 March 2001, the NSO carried out intensive work for the development of an organisation structure that meets current needs and serves as a good platform for future challenges.

ORGANISATION STRUCTURE

The Office was organised into four divisions that in turn were organised into a number of functional units as follows:

SOCIAL STATISTICS

- Population
- Education and Culture
- Labour Market
- Living Conditions

BUSINESS STATISTICS

- Business Structures
- Enterprise Short-term Statistics
- Agriculture and Fisheries
- Tourism
- Transport

ECONOMIC STATISTICS

- National Accounts
- Government and Financial Institutions
- Balance of International Payments
- International Trade
- Consumer Prices and Purchasing Power Parities
- Environment, Energy and Regional Statistics

CORPORATE SERVICES

- Management Services
- Information Services
- Information Systems

In addition to the above-mentioned divisions and units another unit, Research and Methodology, has been placed under the direct responsibility of the Director-General. Its objectives include statistical coordination among all public sector organisations.

The creation of the new organisation structure was accompanied by the drawing up of unit descriptions that provide an analysis of the work of each unit as well as by a staff complementing exercise. In addition to this, new staff positions were created while detailed job descriptions in respect of each position were devised.

Following the appointment of a number of unit managers, the management structure was consolidated further through the appointment of two directors. More details are given in the Human Resource Management section.

In the course of this year, the organisation structure was strengthened further through the creation of an International Relations Office. This office caters for the ever-developing relationship between the NSO and Eurostat and the other 24 Member States of the European Union. It is also charged with keeping track of all proposals for new legislation in the statistical field and with providing the necessary support for the required consultation on statistical matters with third parties both in Malta and abroad.

COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT

The first Collective Agreement for the staff members of the Office expires at the end of 2004. In the course of this year, preparations were made for the re-negotiation of this Collective Agreement.

CODE OF CONDUCT AND PRACTICE

The adoption of this Code aligns the NSO with current developments in more advanced countries. This Code is also deemed to be a natural extension and a reinforcement of the provisions of the Malta Statistics Authority Act. In particular it was established that:

- (a) The Code of Conduct and Practice demands the exercise of the highest professional standards on the part of all MSA employees and encapsulates the enduring principles guiding the production and dissemination of official statistics. These are enshrined in the seven principles of statistical integrity, impartiality, reliability, objectivity, relevance, statistical confidentiality and transparency - basic principles that the MSA expects all its employees to respect and observe.
- (b) Employees are to conduct themselves in line with the Code of Conduct and Practice.
- (c) In carrying out their statistical work, employees have clear and distinct obligations towards their funding agencies, society at large, the data providers and users and their professional colleagues. Therefore, in carrying out their statistical work, employees are expected to:
 - Operate with the utmost honesty, independence and integrity;
 - Produce statistics in an objective, scientific and unbiased manner;
 - Be open about all aspects of the statistical process;
 - Continuously seek to improve their professional competence, with respect to both their technical and management skills;
 - Set challenging service and quality standards and seek to achieve them;

- Continuously seek to provide better value for money;
- Maintain the relevance of their statistical activities to the needs of Parliament, the Government and the wider community;
- Provide statistics that are fit for the purpose intended;
- Complement statistics with interpretation and statistical advice;
- Make statistics accessible to all;
- Place as minimal a load as possible on data providers and treat them with honesty;
- Respect the confidentiality of all information given in confidence.

STATISTICAL POLICIES

In implementing the provisions of the Malta Statistics Authority Act and the above-mentioned Code, the NSO continued to draw up and to introduce a number of statistical and other policies to act as guides to its operations and actions. These policies, covering revisions to official statistics; the consultation process on official statistics; environment-friendly procurement; the library collection development policy; and the pricing policy for NSO services are being reproduced as appendices to this report.

A draft policy and procedures for the implementation of the coordinating functions of the NSO have already been drawn up. These have been presented to Government for consultation purposes prior to their adoption and implementation.

DATA PROTECTION

Although since its inception the NSO has always operated within a culture of strict confidentiality, it is also bound by the provisions of the Data Protection Act, 2000 which came fully into effect as from 15 July 2003.

This Act seeks to make provision for the protection of individuals against the violation of their privacy by the processing of personal data.

In this respect, the NSO has appointed one of its officials as Data Controller, responsible to ensure that all NSO processes involving personal data relating to individual persons conform fully to the Data Protection Act.

In March 2004, the NSO submitted the notification of its work processes involving personal data to the Commission of Data Protection in terms of Article 29 of the Data Protection Act.

In the course of the year, the NSO carried out a substantial number of bilateral meetings with a number of public and private sector data providers in order to clarify the duties and obligations of all parties concerned with regard to data collection and within the context of the Malta Statistics Authority Act and the Data Protection Act.

STATISTICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Apart from the strengthening of the necessary legal framework, the statistical infrastructure of the Office was also improved through substantial investments in three other important aspects of the Office's operations, namely:

PREMISES

The premises housing the NSO are mostly complete. However, in the course of last year, offices on the ground floor were re-developed to house the office administration and the International Office. Moreover, various facilities within the Office were re-located in order to maximise the utilisation of the available spaces. Beyond this, tasks undertaken revolved mainly around maintenance.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

In the past few years, the National Statistics Office embarked on an extensive computerisation programme. This covered a number of business areas within the Office and aimed at providing a varied level of computerisation to support their data requirements. The work carried out included data capture, and data repository programmes, local and international reporting needs and Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) to Eurostat.

In the past year, the NSO continued to strengthen its IT infrastructure through various initiatives. These include the creation of its own in-house Information Technology Unit whose objective is to supplement and complement the work that has and is being carried out by MITTS Limited.

The NSO is committed to keeping abreast with latest developments in data capture, analysis and dissemination. During the year, the Office carried on with the implementation of its IT Hardware Strategy for 2003-2004.

The IT Unit has established automated procedures for hardware and software support within the NSO. This has increased efficiency while reducing the dependence on MITTS for routine support services. The IT staff benefited from a number of training activities directly concerned with their work.

In the course of the year, the IT Unit embarked on a number of projects aimed at developing data capturing and processing activities for the various thematic units within the NSO.

A substantial number of projects were completed as follows:

- Balance of Payments
- PRODCOM Survey
- Transport Statistics Survey - Transtat
- Research and Development In Enterprises Survey

- Human Resources in Science and Technology Survey
- Management module for the Labour Force Survey
- Census of bee-keeping activities
- Use of Information Communication Technology in Schools
- Creation of an Issues Database
- Stock Levels in Enterprises Survey
- Community Innovation Survey
- Short-term Business Statistics System
- Information Communication Technology in Enterprises Survey
- Active Women in the Labour Market Survey
- Cruise Passengers Survey
- Survey among Inactive Women
- Radio and TV Audiences Survey

In this context it is appropriate to remark that the biggest project undertaken by the in-house IT Unit was in support of the new system of direct reporting for balance-of-payments statistics. This system took over a year to develop and included the development of online electronic questionnaires that would allow enterprises to supply their data to the NSO electronically. Apart from the development this system, the IT team oversaw its adoption by a large number of enterprises and provided technical support where required. This project was implemented in collaboration with the Central Bank of Malta.

In addition to the above, the IT team supported an increasing amount of commercial work being undertaken by the NSO. The type and nature of this service requires timely and early software development in order to meet the delivery terms agreed with clients.

Other Projects

In the course of the year, the IT Unit also worked on:

- Tarex System for Crop Balance Sheets purposes;
- Survey on the use of the Internet by children.

New NSO Website

The IT Unit was also heavily involved in the development of the requirements brief for the new NSO website. A detailed description of this project can be found in the

“Statistical Dissemination” section. Additionally, the team continuously monitored the actual development work.

Creation of a Data Warehouse

The IT team carried out research and provided preliminary support for the drawing up of a development brief for a Data Warehouse for the NSO. Work on this area is expected to intensify in the coming year.

Computer Aided Telephone Interviewing Laboratory (CATI)

A Computer Aided Telephone Interviewing (CATI) laboratory was set up within the NSO. This facility provides the necessary means for carrying out surveys over the telephone. Appropriate software was devised in support of such surveys. The system enables the automatic dialling of survey respondents and the real time input of the respondents' answers to survey questions into an electronic database. In the process, print questionnaires are done away with while the lead-time between fieldwork considerably. Data processing and report generation phases are shortened.

The physical infrastructure for the CATI laboratory was prepared in the course of this year. On their part, the staff members of the IT Unit were initiated into the use of this new software and were soon in a position to provide the necessary support services for the creation of the electronic questionnaires and for the actual carrying-out of telephone surveys.

The adoption of CATI generated higher productivity and resulted in substantial savings in the taking of surveys.

IT Training to Persons with a Disability

The NSO committed itself to support the work being carried out by the Foundation for Information Technology Accessibility (FITA) and the National Commissioner for Persons with a Disability. This involves exposing persons with disabilities to different IT tools and training them in their use. As a result, in the year under review, the IT Unit organised a 12-hour course on the use of FrontPage 2000 whose aim was to provide participants with basic knowledge and techniques for the construction of web-based pages. The course was held at the NSO training room. Seven participants, 6 men and 1 woman, participated and completed this course successfully.

Other similar initiatives are planned.

IT Services by MITTS Ltd

A dedicated IT team from MITTS Limited also supported the IT Infrastructure at the NSO. The transition from a Windows 98 to a Windows XP operating system was accelerated.

A substantial part of the NSO software requirements continued to be provided and serviced by MITTS Limited. In the course of the year under review, MITTS worked on the following systems:

Intra-Community Trade System (INTRASTAT)

The most intensive statistical project undertaken concerned the introduction of a survey-based International Trade Statistics System that would cater for the statistical needs of the Office following Malta's accession to the EU in May 2004. Preparations were made for an IT set-up in support of this new system. In May 2004 the INTRASTAT system went live in two different versions, Web-based and Visual Basic front-ends. The web-based system is mostly used by enterprises and traders opting for the electronic transmission of merchandise trade data while the Visual Basic front-end is used by the NSO and the Customs Department for data entry relating to print declarations. All declarations are stored in a relational database at NSO.

Extra-Community Trade System (EXTRASTAT)

Following the adoption of the INTRASTAT system, the development of the required software that would handle the merchandise trade transactions between Malta and countries outside the European Union was taken in hand. This is known as the EXTRASTAT system and is intended to cover Non-EU imports and exports. Data are received from the Customs Electronic System (CES) and from the Asycuda System electronically. The raw data received from the Customs Department is uploaded into the database, validated and trans-codified prior to the processing and publication stages carried out by the International Trade Statistics Unit.

Labour Force 2004

As from the first quarter of 2004, the Labour Market Statistics Unit developed a new questionnaire for the continuous Labour Force Survey (LFS) that was introduced in January 2004. This development led to the development of a new LFS IT system written in Blaise with an SQL database as a back-end. Data are generated and analysed in SPSS by the Labour Market Statistics Unit staff.

Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC)

In the first quarter of 2004 a requirement-gathering exercise was carried out prior to the development of the necessary software for the SILC project. A pilot system was developed and three different technologies were used. Visual Basic was used to cater for the management side of the survey. Blaise was used for the data entry function, while the back-end was developed in MS SQL server 2000. The system has not been launched yet and is currently being tested for both functional and business requirements by the Research and Development Unit.

The dedicated team from MITTS Limited also provided ongoing application support in the following cases:

Business Register and Structural Business Statistics

Support is on an ongoing basis for these applications. Development consisted mainly in the creation of a Business Register for 2004 and a Structural Business Statistics program for the year 2003. All development is currently being performed using Blaise although plans are in hand for the total replacement of the Blaise system in respect of this statistical domain.

Hotel Accommodation Survey

The website dedicated to this survey was enhanced by a number of front-end and back-end changes. New reports, intended to facilitate the administration of this survey, were also added to the web site.

Inbound Tourism Survey

Support on the Tourism system is continuous. The system is hampered by connection failures between the Malta International Airport and the National Statistics Office. Support was provided when these failures occur. Plans for a modified questionnaire are currently in hand. Support is also provided in the use of SPSS in the generation of reports and publications.

Transport Survey 2004

The Transport Survey system was updated with minor enhancements in preparation for the Transport Survey 2004. Some pending issues with Eurostat were resolved and the system is currently at the entry stage of the 2004 data.

Retail Prices Index (RPI)

Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices (HICP)

Apart from ongoing support, the IT system supporting the Retail Prices Index and the Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices was updated with two important functional requirements. Development work concentrated mainly on a brand-substitution wizard and a chaining-and-linking functionality. The system was also optimised in areas such as the calculation of prices and substitution of outlets. The option, Costing Functionality, was also delivered and incorporated in this system.

Balance of Payments

Support was provided on pending issues regarding this software data entry functionality. Work was also carried out on the system reports. The Balance of Payments system is now complete.

Labour Force reports for Eurostat

Ongoing support in the last quarter of 2003 was provided in relation to the quarterly issues of the Labour Force Survey (LFS). Development was focused on the creation of a new system for every quarterly issue as well as for Eurostat reporting and validation procedures. The quarterly LFS system was replaced by a single system as reported earlier.

Education System

Support was provided on the grammar and private schools statistics system to incorporate students learning foreign languages.

Eurostat Applications

The first quarter of 2004 saw the old Stadium program phased over to the newly-developed Stadium Web Client. This change required both hardware and software re-configuration. The number of Stadium users is always on the increase with nearly all NSO units periodically sending data to Eurostat. An important feature of the Stadium programme is its use of the TESTA network as a transmission carrier to Eurostat.

Support was also provided on other programs such as GENEDI and EDIFLOW. Attendance in Eurostat working groups in this respect remains regular, thus enabling NSO staff members to be continuously updated with regard to novel features.

MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

In the year under review, the NSO continued with its efforts to:

- Improve its productivity and reduce costs;
- Increase its income-earning capabilities.

To begin with, a good number of activities came in for a critical review. Actions were subsequently taken in order to enhance their cost-effectiveness, thereby improving resource productivity. Simultaneously, attention was given to the type and level of service being provided to our customers. Thorough reviews continued to be carried out in respect of the:

- IT support services provided both in-house and by third parties;
- Data dissemination practices;
- Data collection practices;
- Use and utilisation of Office facilities and equipment;
- Utilisation of the available human resources base;
- Human resources practices.

These reviews resulted in various changes to a range of work practices and adjustments to the Office's contractual relationship with its suppliers, notably in the IT field. In particular, the NSO wound up a number of data collection programmes and rationalised others, changed the data collection methodologies in respect of various programmes and adopted new technologies including Computer Aided Telephone Interviewing (CATI), Computer Aided Personal Interviewing (CAPI) and electronic questionnaires for

data collection purposes. The data dissemination programme was reviewed and rationalised while increasing use was made of electronic dissemination technologies like CD-ROM, the Internet and e-mail for the dissemination of statistical products.

An initiative to minimise the use of sick leave was undertaken. Actions were taken to promote the best possible use of the Office's human resources. An all-round drive was made for the reduction of paper use, including printing materials, envelopes and other stationery. An awareness of the economical use of water and electricity started being instilled as well as a consciousness to maximise the utility of the existing physical infrastructure.

These initiatives resulted in savings amounting to around Lm40,000. This does not include savings made through the use of alternative survey-taking techniques like CATI, CAPI and the use of electronic questionnaires for new projects. For example the operation, through electronic questionnaires, of the trade statistics system, introduced in May saved the Office around Lm45,000. A paper-based trade statistics system would have required the recruitment of a group of data entry operators apart from the printing of about one million questionnaires a year. The same can be said for the new Balance of Payments system, which is being operated through electronic questionnaires in order to facilitate electronic data interchange between the data providers and the NSO.

While making savings and efficiency gains a marked priority in 2004, the NSO managed to maintain and expand its statistical programme and output.

Alongside the above-mentioned reviews, the NSO embarked on a programme aimed at generating income for the Office, thereby reducing its dependency on the subvention from Government. This programme is now well established and is reaping the desired fruits.

However, experience elsewhere has shown that commercial activities will only cover a small portion of the funding requirements of national statistical offices. The NSO has social obligations to honour. A considerable proportion of its statistical output is in the nature of a public good and must, therefore, be provided to users for free. Beyond this, the NSO is not obliged to provide whatever service is required of it for free. Such an approach is neither efficient nor desirable. Some years back, the Office introduced a cost-recovery programme in respect of various customised services. This programme has proved a success and will be amplified in the coming years.

In addition to the above, the NSO is providing various services to third parties on a competitive and commercial basis. These include specialised surveys commissioned by third parties, data analysis services and training. This commercial aspect is also yielding positive results.

Furthermore, the NSO is making serious efforts to avail itself of any external funding operations that would help finance some or all of its investments in the physical infrastructure, training and research programmes. In the course of the year, the Office filed a number of applications with Eurostat for grants in support of various aspects of the national statistics programme. Some of these have been favourably received while others are being evaluated.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

In 2003, the NSO commissioned a review of all its facilities in the light of current legislation and standards on Health and Safety at Work. This exhaustive review provided a checklist of corrective actions and recommendations that should help the Office ensure that its premises and operations are entirely in line with the relevant legislation and standards. The creation of a hazard-free environment for office employees is a foremost priority of the NSO. One aspect of this concerns the reduction of the Malta Statistics Authority's exposure to risks of this kind.

On the basis of this review, actions were undertaken to implement those priority recommendations that could be carried out within the constraints imposed by the available resources.

In this context, particular attention is now being given to loose and dangerous concrete and masonry on the exterior of the Office, which is deemed to be a health hazard. A civil engineer who was commissioned by the Office to look into the external elevations of the Office advised early remedial action to remove the existing danger.

The Office continued with its work on the creation of an institutional Health and Safety Policy.

HUMAN RESOURCES AND TRAINING

The human resource base available to the NSO is its most valued asset. In the reform process of the Office adequate attention and appreciation was shown to the considerable number of experienced staff members who have been working within the Office for a long time. Their experience and willingness to carry forward the change programme for the Office were complemented by an intensive training programme as well as by the recruitment of a number of appropriately qualified staff who could be trained to assist in bringing about the planned changes.

The more experienced staff members were charged with the implementation of this change programme. Under their guidance and with the assistance of new staff members, the NSO has managed to introduce an improved methodological base for national statistics, an expanded and more varied statistical programme, as well as to bring about considerable improvements in service delivery.

Human Resources Management

Following the appointment of unit managers in 2003, the management team was strengthened further by the appointment of two divisional directors, one in charge of the Corporate Services Division and the other, of the Economic Statistics Division.

Alongside the implementation of the first phase of the new organisation structure, new management practices were introduced. The Human Resources System, which includes an electronic time-recording system, was updated and consolidated in order to cater for emerging management needs. This system is fully integrated with the Office's payroll system. In addition to this, the newly introduced regime governing all authorised absences from the Office was strengthened further.

As from May 2003, the Office introduced a system whereby all sick leave would be validated by the Office's medical team. This system resulted in a substantial reduction of sick leave and thereby contributed to increased efficiency and higher productivity within the Office. Whereas in the year between October 2002 and September 2003, the number of working days lost to sick leave amounted to 1,727, in the following comparable period ending September 2004, the number of working days lost to sick leave was down to 1,130; a drop of nearly 600 working days or 34.7 per cent over the previous period. This also meant financial savings amounting to around Lm12,346.

STAFF COMPLEMENT

As at the end of September 2004, the NSO had 126 staff members on its books, 58 men and 68 women. The following table provides a breakdown of NSO staff by age group and sex.

Age structure of NSO staff

Age group	Males	Females	Total
18 - 30	24	42	66
31 - 40	8	13	21
41 - 50	12	8	20
51+	14	5	19
Total	58	68	126

In 2003, the NSO had a staff complement of 131 employees.

Except for one member, all the staff in place as at the end of September had decided to accept an offer of employment with the Malta Statistics Authority following the conclusion of the first Collective Agreement.

The following table provides a breakdown of the NSO staff complement at the time of writing.

NSO staff members by job title and sex: September 2004

Position	Males	Females	Total
Director-General	1	-	1
Director Corporate Services	1	-	1
Director Economic Statistics	1	-	1
IT Advisor	1	-	1
Manager	9	1	10
Financial Controller	-	1	1
Senior Statistician	5	2	7
Statistician	21	14	35
Systems Analyst/Programmer II	2	-	2
Librarian	-	1	1
Programmer 1	2	-	2
Assistant Statistician	2	3	5
Senior Statistics Executive	3	18	21
Senior Survey Interviewer	-	7	7
Library Assistant	1	-	1
Statistics Executive	-	2	2
Survey Interviewer	2	8	10
Clerk	-	10	10
Senior Messenger	2	1	3
Senior Office Attendant	1	-	1
Watchman	3	-	3
Total	58	68	126

The NSO also employs another 6 persons who are either on loan to other Government entities or who are away on long-term leave. Furthermore, the Office employs a number of Government employees as part-time interviewers in order to be in a position to carry out large-scale surveys such as the Labour Force Survey.

STAFF TRAINING

The NSO is a learning organisation. Its research activities and its varied statistical programme cannot be sustained unless efforts are made to provide staff members with the necessary methodological training and technical expertise in the statistical domains it deals with.

Staff members are encouraged and supported to undertake further studies and to attend a range of local and/or international training courses on a regular basis. In addition to this, staff members are required to participate in a number of international statistical meetings on a regular basis in order to facilitate the harmonisation and integration of the local statistical programme with its international counterpart. Participation in these courses and training is either financed from local resources or through funding that is available under the Euro-Mediterranean programme on statistical cooperation and the EU's pre-accession strategy. The latter source has now become the major source of funding for NSO participation in Eurostat-sponsored training courses and meetings.

The following tables provide a broad overview of the number of local and international courses and meetings in which NSO staff members participated during the past two years.

Local training: 2003/4

Type of course	Males	Females	Total
Masters Degree	7	6	13
Bachelors Degree	-	1	1
Diploma Course	1	4	5
IT Diploma Course	2	1	3
VB6 Programming	4	1	5
Basic Sampling Techniques	3	4	7
Mathematics for Statisticians	3	8	11
Office Productivity Tools	1	4	5
Public Service Act	2	1	3
Advance Course in EU Studies	1	3	4
How the EU Operates	1	-	1
Total	25	33	58

NSO participation in international courses: October 2003 - September 2004

Purpose of visit	Duration	Men	Women	Total	Total days
EUROTRACE Training Course	5	1	-	1	5
Medstat - Environment Training T1	4	1	1	2	8
Eurostat Training on PHARE Grants to PHARE Countries	2	1	1	2	4
Eurostat Meeting of the Material Flows Training Workshop	2	-	1	1	2
Eurostat Training Session "Providing user support for European Statistics in the context of a Free Dissemination Policy"	2	1	-	1	2
Total		4	3	7	21

PARTICIPATION IN INTERNATIONAL MEETINGS

In the course of the past year, NSO staff members participated in a considerable number of international meetings and working groups on different aspects of official statistics. Participation in these meetings was financed through the EU's pre-accession funding or by Eurostat. This participation is considered an important learning experience for staff members and contributes directly to our efforts to upgrade and harmonise the local statistical system to international standards.

Working groups and meetings: October 2003 - September 2004

Purpose of visit	Duration	Men	Women	Total	Total days
Working Party on Purchasing Power Parities + Joint Meeting on PPP and National Accounts	2	1	-	1	2
Joint Meeting of the Working Groups on National Accounts and Purchasing Power Parities + Meeting of the Working Group on National Accounts	2	1	-	1	2
4th Colloquium on Modern Tools for Business Cycle Analysis	3	1	-	1	3

Working groups and meetings: October 2003 - September 2004 (contd.)

Purpose of visit	Duration	Men	Women	Total	Total days
1st Meeting of the GNI Committee and 43rd Meeting of the GNP Committee (joint Meeting)	2	1	-	1	2
Eurostat Working Group on Financial Accounts	1	1	-	1	1
51 st SPC + 13th CEIES Plenary Meeting	2	1	-	1	2
Eurostat Working Group on "Statistical" Units and Enterprise Groups"	2	1	-	1	2
6th Meeting of the European Population Committee	2	1	-	1	2
Eurostat Working Group on Regional and Urban Statistics	3	1	-	1	3
Eurostat Working Group on Crop Products Statistics + CPSA and Eurostat Working Group on Land Use Statistics	3	1	-	1	3
Eurostat Working Group on Harmonization of Consumer Prices Indices	3	1	-	1	3
Meeting of the Economic and Financial Committee Sub-Committee on Statistics	1	1	-	1	1
10th Meeting of the Joint Eurostat - ECBTF on Quarterly Financial Accounts for the Government Sector and the Meeting of the Short-Term Public Finance Statistics Working Group	3	1	-	1	3
Pilot Project: "Crop Statistics" Workshop	1	1	-	1	1
Pilot Project: Seminar on Non-Financial Accounts for General Government	2	1	-	1	2
Pilot Project: Statistics on Foreign Affiliates (FATS)	2	1	-	1	2
Eurostat Working Group on Dissemination	1	1	-	1	1

Working groups and meetings: October 2003 - September 2004 (contd.)

Purpose of visit	Duration	Men	Women	Total	Total days
INSEE Seminar on the SILC Panel	5	2	-	2	1-
Eurostat Committee on Monetary, Financial and Balance of Payments Statistics (CMFB)	2	1	-	1	2
Eurostat Meeting of Directors of National Accounts	1	1	-	1	1
Eurostat Workshop "Labour Cost Index"	2	1	-	1	2
Eurostat 52nd meeting of the Statistical Programme Committee	1	1	-	1	1
Eurostat Working Group National Accounts	1	1	-	1	1
Eurostat Working Group Culture Statistics	2	-	1	1	2
Eurostat PPP Group Meeting for the practical Arrangement for the first Survey for year 2004	2	1	-	1	2
Eurostat Working Group on Employment Statistics	2	-	1	1	2
Eurostat Working Group on 'Animal Products Statistics of the Agricultural Statistics Committee'	2	1	-	1	2
Eurostat Working Group on Balance of Payments	2	1	-	1	2
Eurostat Meeting of the Working Party "Management Group on statistical Co-operation Candidate and Cards countries"	2	1	-	1	2
Eurostat 12th Meeting of the Local Co-ordinators Working Group	2	1	-	1	2
Eurostat Working Group on Information Society Statistics	2	1	-	1	2
Eurostat Working Group Harmonization of Consumer Price Indices (HICP)	3	1	-	1	3
Eurostat 2nd Meeting of the GNI Committee	2	1	-	1	2

Working groups and meetings: October 2003 - September 2004 (contd.)

Purpose of visit	Duration	Men	Women	Total	Total days
Eurostat 7th Meeting of the Helsinki Group on Women and Science Statistical Correspondents	1	-	1	1	1
Eurostat Meeting of the Working Group "EU-SILC: European Statistics on Income and Living Conditions"	2	2	-	2	4
Eurostat PHARE Stat 2001: Pilot Project on Income and Living Conditions	1	2	-	2	2
Eurostat Meeting of the Working Group "Statistics of the Environment" - Sub-Group "Waste"	2	1	-	1	2
Eurostat Working Group on "Income, Poverty and Social Exclusion and EU-SILC"	1	1	-	1	1
Eurostat Working Group "Crop Products Statistics"	1	1	-	1	1
Eurostat Meeting of the "SBS Steering Group"	2	1	-	1	2
Eurostat Seminar on the Combined Nomenclature and Common Customs Tariff	2	1	-	1	2
Eurostat PHARE Stat 2001: 2nd Workshop on 'Environment Statistics - Waste Water Treatment'	2	1	1	2	4
Eurostat PHARE Stat 2001: Workshop of the STS PHARE Project II	2	1	-	1	2
European Commission Seminar on the Satellite Accounts for the Social Economy	1	-	1	1	1
Eurostat Working Group on "Dissemination of Statistical Information"	2	-	1	1	2
Eurostat Meeting of the Working Party "Fishery Statistics"	2	1	-	1	2

Working groups and meetings: October 2003 - September 2004 (contd.)

Purpose of visit	Duration	Men	Women	Total	Total days
Eurostat Meeting of the "Standing Committee for Agriculture Statistics"	2	1	-	1	2
Eurostat Seminar "Undeclared Work in an Enlarged Union"	1	1	-	1	1
Eurostat Financial Accounts Working Group	2	1	-	1	2
Eurostat the 19th Meeting of the STNE Working Group and the Collection of Raw Data Task Force Meeting	3	1	-	1	3
Meeting of the Technical Group "Travel"	2	-	1	1	2
Eurostat PHARE Stat 2001: Workshop on Financial Indicators	3	2	-	2	6
Eurostat Meeting of the Working Group on National Accounts	2	1	-	1	2
Eurostat PHARE Stat 2001: Final Workshop Social Protection	2	1	-	1	2
Eurostat PHARE Stat 2001: "Foreign Affiliates Trade Statistics (FATS)"	2	2	-	2	4
Eurostat 53rd Meeting of the Statistical Programme Committee	1	1	-	1	1
OECD Seminar:- "Unemployment Trap"	1	1	-	1	1
Eurostat Meeting of the Working Group on Business Registers and Statistical Units	3	1	-	1	3
Eurostat Working Group on Article 83 of the Staff Regulations	1	1	-	1	1
Eurostat Meeting of the Committee on Monetary, Financial and Balance of Payments Statistics (CMFB)	2	1	-	1	2
Eurostat Meeting of the Working Party "Implementation of the Council Regulation No. 1165/98 on short term Statistics"	2	1	-	1	2

Working groups and meetings: October 2003 - September 2004 (contd.)

Purpose of visit	Duration	Men	Women	Total	Total days
Eurostat Workshop on FISIM	1	-	1	1	1
Eurostat Meeting of the Working Party "Milk Statistics"	2	1	-	1	2
Eurostat Working Group "Dissemination of Statistical Information"	2	1	-	1	2
Eurostat 3rd Meeting of the GNI Committee	1	1	-	1	1
Eurostat Meeting of the Working Group on Population Projections	2	1	-	1	2
Southern European Group Meeting - European Comparison Program (ECP) for the calculation of PPP	2	1	-	1	2
Eurostat Working Group on Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC)	1	1	-	1	1
INSEE DGINS 2004 Conference	2	2	-	2	4
Eurostat Meeting of the Working Group "Agriculture and Environment"	2	1	-	1	2
Eurostat Meeting of the Working Party "Employment Statistics"	3	-	1	1	3
Eurostat Meeting of the Task Force Revision of SNA 93 in the context of impact on Government Finance Statistics and Financial Accounts	2	1	-	1	2
Eurostat Meeting of the Joint Working Group on FATS	3	1	-	1	3
Eurostat Meeting of the Working Group "Euro indicators"	2	1	-	1	2
Total		72	9	81	160

STATISTICAL CLASSIFICATIONS

In the past few years, the NSO has taken significant steps towards the alignment of its statistical programme with international methodologies and standards. Such a move would facilitate the integration of the local system in the international statistical scenario, providing improved comparability between local and international statistics as a natural outcome.

A basic but important step in this direction was the adoption of international statistical classifications. In the course of the year, the NSO participated in and contributed actively to the revisions of the NACE. Apart from providing feedback on the international proposals for this revision, the Office carried out consultations with the Constituted Bodies and other interested parties.

In addition to the adoption of these classifications in its own statistical programme, the NSO is taking active steps for their adoption by other public sector organisations engaged in the collection and compilation of statistics. In the course of the year, the NSO supported the final adoption of NACE by the Employment and Training Corporation and took initiatives to have NACE adopted by the Inland Revenue Department. Help in this respect was also extended to the Central Bank of Malta.

The following international classifications are already well integrated or are in the process of being introduced in the NSO statistical programme:

- *Nomenclature des Activités Economiques dans les Communautés Européennes* (NACE) Rev 1 and 1.1 for the classification of all enterprises by economic activity.
- Classification of Products by Activity (CPA) for the classification of imported or locally produced products. This classification has been or is being adopted in Business Statistics, International Trade Statistics, the Household Budgetary Survey and the National Accounts.
- Classification of Individual Consumption by Purpose (COICOP) for the classification of consumer expenditure as reported in the Household Budgetary Survey. Modified versions of this classification are also used for Consumer Prices Index purposes and in National Accounting.
- Classification of Types of Construction (CC) for the classification of construction units. This classification is being adopted in the field of Business Statistics.
- Combined Nomenclature (CN) for international trade statistics purposes.
- Country Nomenclature (Geonom) for tourism and trade statistics purposes.
- Malta Geographical Code (MGC) for the classification of Maltese territorial units in accordance with the requirements of the *Nomenclature des Unités Territoriales et Statistiques* (NUTS) as used on the European mainland.

- Government Finance Statistics (GFS) and European System of Accounts (ESA 1995) classifications for all Government budgetary items and revenue and expenditure transactions.
- Classification of Functions of Government (COFOG) for the categorisation of related government activities.
- CORINE Land Use Classification, as adapted to local circumstances and needs, is being used for land use purposes in Environment and Agriculture statistics.

RESEARCH AND METHODOLOGY

The Research and Methodology Unit of the NSO carries out research and development work in connection with all aspects of the Office's surveying activities and provides related assistance and support to the other statistical units within the Office. The setting-up of this Unit was of strategic importance because it focused on and facilitated the development of new and alternative data collection systems and instruments in accordance with new and internationally harmonised methodologies.

In the course of the past year this Unit:

- Continued with the design of the survey methodology and the relevant questionnaire for the Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) and carried out a pilot survey of the SILC. In addition, the Unit oversaw the development of the necessary IT infrastructure for this survey;
- Finalised the survey methodology and the relevant questionnaire for a continuous Household Budgetary Survey;
- Finalised the analysis and publication relating to the Time-use Survey;
- Processed and analysed survey data on domestic violence in preparation for an eventual publication.

Throughout, the Unit provided methodological assistance to other NSO units on the carrying-out and analysis of various surveys.

Furthermore, in the course of the past year, this Unit continued to undertake consultancy and research work for third parties on a commercial basis. This work included:

- A survey among disabled persons;
- An omnibus survey that incorporates the data requirements of various organisations;
- A survey on the use of the Internet by children;
- Surveys on active and inactive women and the unemployed;
- A survey on the impact of advertising for health promotion purposes;

- A survey on the entertainment patterns of the population.

As an additional activity, the Unit analysed data and prepared a publication with regard to aspects of our cultural heritage and launched and coordinated an external training programme.

In line with the cost-recovery and commercialisation policy being implemented by the NSO, this Unit provides other proposals for third-party research work. Preparations for this work are underway and will be further developed in the coming months.

The Unit also worked on a number of sampling frames that are regularly used for the selection of samples. In a related vein, the Unit is coordinating an internal working group whose objectives are the harmonisation of questionnaire design and data collection practices, the elimination of overlap between statistical projects and the reduction of response burdens on data providers.

INFORMATION SERVICES

The role of the Library & Information Unit (LIU) within the NSO is strategically important as the horizontal coordination and cooperation with all units is now well established. This allows for the improvement of current services alongside the traditional library services in order to meet user needs.

The main objective of the LIU collection development is to provide a physical collection supplemented with access to resources that meets the information needs of users. This concept is being developed within the parameters of available resources, both financial and human. Issues such as that of access versus acquisition are a reality faced by most libraries and information services. In view of this, a Collection Development Policy has been prepared to ensure that resources are used effectively and for the benefit of users.

The agreement with Eurostat regarding the supply of statistical publications has been further strengthened. Further cooperation agreements are currently being investigated in view of the increasing interest in European statistics.

The development of an electronic library is another project under construction. Statistical methodologies in PDF format from Eurostat and other statistical institutions will eventually be made available to all NSO staff over the NSO Intranet. Outside users may also benefit from this electronic library but this is subject to copyright issues.

The library management system project is nearing completion. This system is expected to provide an even better library service for all NSO staff and external users. It is expected that all NSO staff will be able to access the library catalogue through the Local Area Network and therefore no Internet connection is required. This will also be extended to the Wide Area Network covering all the public service. External users will be able to access the Web OPAC through a normal Internet connection via the NSO website.

The NSO website continues to be an important reference tool for the LIU. The project to develop NSO website II is in progress and it is expected that the NSO will have a new

website in 2005. This will include increased functionality and improved services for the LIU staff and users in general.

The staff members of the LIU continue to deal with an increasing number of information requests from a wide spectrum of statistical users. In cases where the amount of work and time required for ad hoc reports is substantial, a cost recovery charge is applicable. In view of this, a pricing policy has been developed that spells out clearly what is considered as public good and what is subject to cost recovery charges.

The following table provides the number of information requests received by the LIU by e-mail, fax and by post for the years 1999-2004:

Requests for information

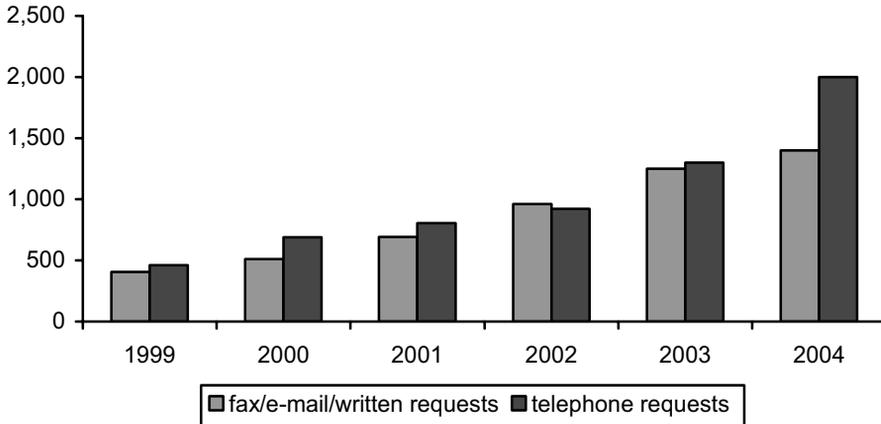
Year	Number of requests	Annual % change
1999	405	-
2000	510	25.9
2001	693	35.9
2002	1,060	53.0
2003	1,249	17.8
2004	1,400*	12.1

* projected

These user requests do not include those requests that are received and handled directly by the different statistical units with the NSO. These types of requests are minimal due to the increased cooperation by the units in pointing all user requests to the LIU. This increases consistency and efficiency in the request handling procedures.

Telephone requests continue to be frequent. It is estimated that the number of telephone requests for 2004 will add up to more than 2,000. When the amount of data required is extensive, users are requested to send their requests by e-mail or fax.

User requests 1999-2004



STATISTICAL DISSEMINATION

The increased availability of data on the NSO website and a heightened awareness by users has slowed down the rate of increase of information requests. Almost all of the NSO publications are now being published on the NSO website, thus improving accessibility to users.

The NSO is making increased use of CD-ROMs for the release of its statistical publications. The production of electronic publications is more cost effective and provides for increased flexibility in the storage and use of statistical information. This notwithstanding, the NSO is providing a Print-on-Demand service for those customers who do not have access to electronic publications.

In the course of the past year, the NSO prepared its News Releases in accordance with a pre-determined and year-long Advance Release Calendar. The experience gained from the first year has facilitated the consolidation of work practices and the establishment of procedures within the national statistical system. This has allowed the NSO to start publishing a one month Advance Release Calendar on its website for the benefit of statistical users.

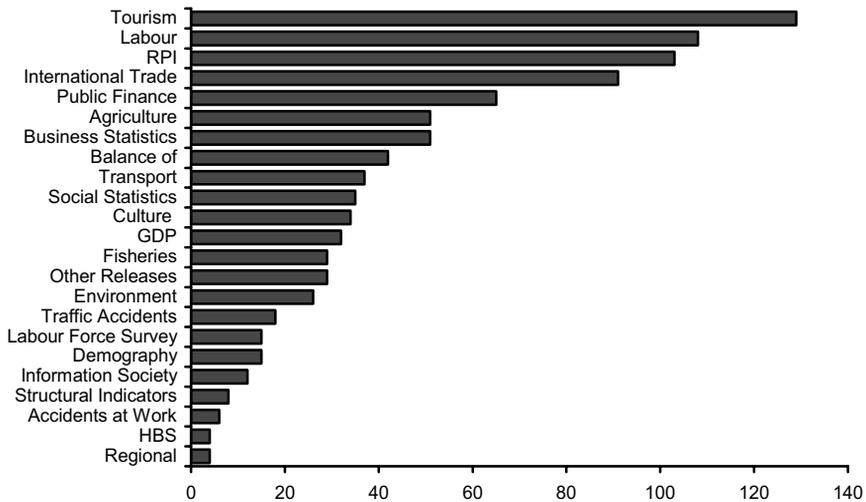
The desktop publishing branch within the LIU is responsible for the preparation, publication and dissemination of all NSO publications. Specific training delivered to this branch has resulted in reduction of printing costs related to publications. The number and themes of news releases published by the NSO continued to increase as follows:

News releases: 1996-2004

Year	Number
1996	48
1997	56
1998	60
1999	89
2000	100
2001	124
2002	147
2003	207
2004	242*

*projected

News releases by subject 1996-2004*



*2004 up to September

In 2004, the NSO released the following publications:

NSO publications by type of medium

Publication	Print	CD-ROM
Malta in Figures 2004	x	
Trade Statistics 2002		x
Shipping and Aviation Statistics 2002		x
Education Statistics 2002		x
Transport Statistics 2003		x
Social Protection in Malta	x	
Social Welfare Oriented Non-Governmental Organisations 2001	x	
Sports Organisations 2000-2002	x	
Benchmarking Malta in Europe	x	
Transport Statistics 2004		x
Time-use Survey 2002	x	
Agriculture and Fisheries 2002		x
CN & CC Database		x

The following publications are in an advanced state of preparation:

- Demographic Review 2003;
- Balance of Payments 2002;
- Education Statistics 2003;
- Business Statistics 2001;
- Regional Statistics.

New NSO Website as a Dissemination Tool

In the course of last year, the NSO carried out extensive preparatory work for the launch of a new website for the Office. This new website is being financed by the Ministry for Industry and Information Technology.

Apart from having an improved presentation the new website is expected to provide new value-added services to NSO clients in addition to those that are already being provided.

The NSO expects to launch its new website in early 2005.

Bilingual Glossary of Statistical Terms

Around two years ago the NSO started planning the publication of a bilingual glossary of statistical terms. This glossary is part of the Office's initiative to organise and compile:

- standards and guidelines for the collection, storage, presentation, description and retrieval of official statistics;
- a comprehensive metadata architecture.

The glossary is also meant to support the recognition and use Maltese as an official language of the European Union.

The objectives of this glossary are to:

- provide a structured subject vocabulary arranged in a logical order;
- provide Maltese translations which adequately and coherently describe the content of the displayed terms;
- enable and facilitate reporting, research, analysis and comparisons in the statistical, social and economic fields in both English and Maltese;
- suppress some natural ambiguities of language that might occur in the statistical, social and economic fields.

The glossary is expected to be coherent, accurate, reasonably comprehensive, user-oriented and effective in establishing semantic relationships between the displayed terms.

The glossary is structured into three main parts, namely an:

- alphabetical listing of English terms with Maltese equivalents;
- alphabetical listing of Maltese terms with English equivalents;
- comprehensive index of the English equivalents of the displayed terms. The index will refer the user to both the English and Maltese page locations;
- additional search aid will be the provision of contexts for each and every term, e.g., 'Demography'; 'Balance of Payments'; 'Retail Prices Index'. The various contexts will be reproduced in the Index.

This product is expected to be particularly useful to the NSO in strengthening its services by implementing its strategic plan of having select bilingual publications in place. It is envisaged to be of particular use to journalists, statistical reporters, parliamentarians, academics, researchers, students and writers.

All the researching, organising, editing, proof reading and layouts are being carried out by the NSO under the direct supervision of the Director-General with the assistance of a qualified and experienced translator.

In the course of last year a substantial body of statistical/economic terms has been translated into Maltese and prepared for eventual publication. A first compilation of terms is due for release in early 2005.

LEGAL OFFICE

The Legal Office continued with its support of the various statistical units within the NSO. Particular legal support aimed at improving response rates to surveys was provided to the following Units:

- Structural Business;
- Tourism;
- Transport;
- Enterprise Short-Term Statistics;
- Agriculture and Fisheries;
- National Accounts.

In fulfilling its obligations under the Malta Statistics Authority Act, the National Statistics Office must have the full support of data providers. However, although the NSO tries to exhaust all avenues in order to persuade its data providers to supply the required information, it must finally resort to legal assistance in order to achieve its ultimate objectives. The Legal Office does not accept cases referred to it without the necessary evidence that all the available means at the disposal of the statistical units have been exhausted. Moreover, before resorting to legal action, the Legal Office very often makes the necessary contacts with any recalcitrant individuals or enterprises in order to obtain the necessary information. These efforts normally prove successful.

In addition to the above, the Legal Office carried out extensive work in connection with the creation of the necessary legal infrastructure for the introduction of INTRASTAT - the survey-based trade statistics system that replaced the Customs-based system as from May 2004. The creation of this infrastructure has proved an essential element in the successful introduction and implementation of INTRASTAT.

NSO-USER RELATIONSHIP

In the past year, the NSO continued to strengthen its user orientation through various initiatives and activities. In 2002/03 the NSO had commissioned and published its first Users Perceptions Survey. This was carried out to identify user needs for statistics and statistical products and to seek and gauge users' perceptions of the NSO output and of its efficiency. Subsequently, the Office continued take active measures and act upon the findings of this survey.

Specifically:

- Actions were taken to improve the overall quality of the Office's statistical output;
- All statistical releases are now almost all being accompanied by an improved set of metadata as well as a revisions policy where appropriate;
- The timeliness of all data releases is being given paramount importance. Significant efforts have been made to improve the timeliness of most regular statistical releases;
- An Advance Release Calendar is being published on a monthly basis;
- In line with users' desire for increased availability of statistics in electronic format, most statistical publications are now available in CD-ROM. They are also available on the NSO website;
- All statistical news releases are now being disseminated to users in electronic format through e-mail apart from being made available on the NSO website;
- The NSO website is being overhauled in order to provide users with improved accessibility and value-added services;
- The Library and Information Unit was strengthened in order to provide an improved support service to users.

In the course of the past year, the NSO continued to improve its visibility through increased contact with its client groups, the media and the general public. The general accessibility to official statistics continued to improve through a continuous stream of statistical news releases that are then carried by the print and audio-visual media. In the one-year period covered by this report, the regular print media alone carried over 767 reports of these releases. These reports covered the following thematic areas:

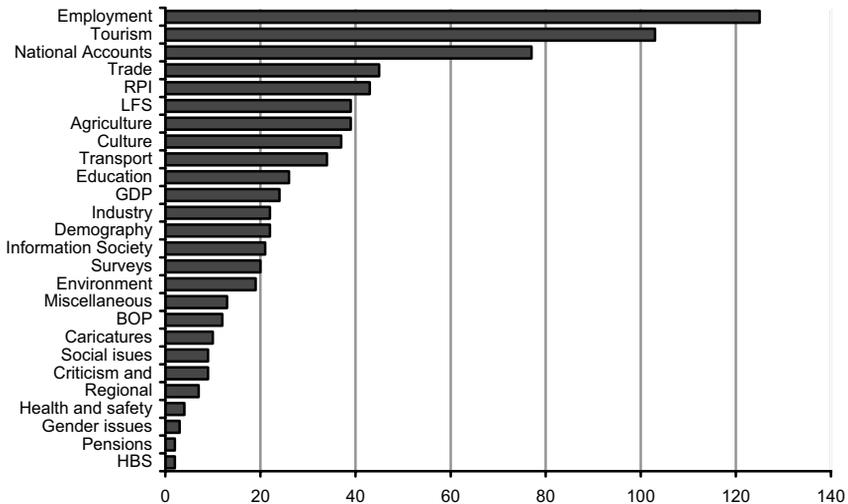
Press coverage of NSO news releases

Topic	Press reports
Employment	125
Tourism	103
National Accounts	77
Trade	45
Retail Prices Index	43
Agriculture	39
Labour Force Survey	39
Culture	37
Transport	34
Education	26
GDP	24

Press coverage of NSO news releases (contd.)

Topic	Press reports
Demography	22
Industry	22
Information Society	21
Surveys	20
Environment	19
Miscellaneous	13
Balance of Payments	12
Caricatures	10
Criticism and mentions	9
Social issues	9
Regional	7
Health and safety	4
Gender issues	3
Household Budgetary Survey	2
Pensions	2
Total	767

**Press reports of NSO releases by topic:
October 2003-September 2004**



Additional and as yet not quantified reports were also carried by the other print media and the Internet-based media as well as by all the local audio-visual media. Moreover,

these releases generated a substantial number of commentaries both in the print and in the audio-visual media.

The NSO follows all media output concerning its work on a regular basis. Particular attention is given to commentaries on and about NSO output. All comments, whether positive or negative, are acted upon and taken into consideration when evaluating the Office's performance and its relationship with both its clients and its data providers.

NSO staff members continued to participate regularly in television and radio programmes in order to elaborate on aspects of their statistical releases.

In addition to this, efforts continued to be made to present specialised surveys and statistical collections to the media and the general public through seminars or media events specially organised for the purpose. In the past year, the NSO organised these activities as follows:

- Seminar on the new system of Balance of Payments compilation;
- Media presentation on Municipal Waste Survey;
- Media presentation on Lifestyle Survey results;
- Media presentation and book launch of *Social Protection in Malta*;
- Seminar on Housing Price Index;
- Media presentation of Time-use Survey results;
- Seminar on the issue of Homelessness in Malta;
- Media presentation on the role of Advertising in Health Promotion;
- Media presentation and book launch of *Benchmarking Malta in Europe*;
- Seminar organised jointly between the NSO and Kummissjoni Nazzjonali Persuni b'Diżabilita (KNPD) on the issues surrounding persons with disabilities;
- Seminar on the situation of the Self-employed in Malta;
- Media presentation on the Farm Structure Survey results;
- Seminar on Economic Accounts for Agriculture (EAA);
- Consultation meeting with stakeholders on Packaging and Import/Export of Waste Statistics.

Apart from presentations on the statistical body of research being published, the seminars were addressed by a number of persons who were invited to inform the discussion on the material being released. Furthermore, the general public was invited to attend these events.

Increased contacts continued to be made with the Constituted Bodies and various user groups. Consultation meetings were held with stakeholders on sundry issues and thematic areas. In this regard, the consultation meetings on general economic statistics, the theatre, agricultural and waste statistics, and the introduction of INTRASTAT merit a particular mention.

It is worth noting that active and advanced plans are in hand for the establishment of a number of Users' Groups. These would facilitate and increase the type and amount of dialogue between the NSO and the persons and entities that habitually make use of its services.

NSO-DATA PROVIDER RELATIONSHIP

One of the most important links in the statistical production process is the relationship between the NSO and its data providers. A strong and trustworthy relationship contributes to the production of high-quality and timely statistics. Two years ago, the NSO published its document *Reducing the Burden on Data Providers: The Way Forward*. This was inspired by a growing realisation that the burdens that the Office was placing on its data providers were ever on the increase. In this document the Office committed itself to a critical evaluation of its operations, including consideration of alternative data sources and data collection methods in order to alleviate the costs and efforts of dealing with response sustained by data providers. In the course of last year, actions were taken to:

- Eliminate as far as possible overlaps and duplication in the collection of data;
- Critically review data collection practices in order to establish their continued relevance and to increase internal and external harmonisation in the way data are being collected. An internal working group is actively and critically looking at these issues;
- Avoid recourse to full censuses in areas where sample surveys would provide good and reliable results. Thereby, a significant number of respondents have been spared the receipt of new or old enquiries;
- Condense the number of data variables being collected in new enquiries;
- Identify new ways of using administrative data instead of resorting to new surveys;
- Make statistical questionnaires more attractive, simple and user-friendly.

Furthermore, a culture of working with data providers with a view to furthering a valuable mutual relationship is being nurtured among NSO staff. Indeed, concrete actions to disseminate increasing information among data providers on the type and nature of NSO statistical projects are being taken.

In the course of 2004, rationalisation and burden-reduction measures included:

- An Office working group was set up to critically evaluate all NSO questionnaires with a view to their rationalisation and the elimination of duplication, wherever possible;

- The Structural Business Statistics Census was converted into a survey thereby exempting 19,000 enterprises from the need to fill in the relative annual questionnaire;
- An annual questionnaire to 460 manufacturing enterprises was stopped altogether;
- A monthly questionnaire to 250 manufacturing enterprises was stopped in order to eliminate overlap with a similar questionnaire that was being sent in respect of the Short-term Business Statistics programme;
- Two quarterly stocks and capacity utilisation questionnaires that were being sent to 460 manufacturing enterprises were reviewed and integrated into one research tool, thereby reducing the number of questionnaires being received by these enterprises;
- Increasing provision started being made for the collection of data by means of electronic questionnaires. These are now in use with regard to Short-term Business Statistics, Tourism, the Balance of Payments and International Trade Statistics. These tools enable enterprises to transmit their data electronically to the NSO.

Although matters have improved, it is firmly believed that the burdens which the national statistics system is placing on the data providers are still substantially high and need to be reduced further. In this regard, the NSO considers the early adoption of the Office's coordination policy and its introduction across the public sector as a priority project.

In addition to the above, the NSO continued with its constructive dialogue with data providers and is in the process of setting up a proper structure for this communication through the formation of Consultation Groups. The terms of reference and structure of these Consultation Groups are being published with this report. It is felt that, with the Office's new role as an active member of the European Statistical System (ESS) and with the experience gained through the various dialogue meetings held regularly with data providers, the setting-up of these Consultation Groups is the next logical step in the development of the NSO-data provider relationship. Moreover, the demands being placed on the Office through its active participation in the ESS make the case for ongoing and structured dialogue even more significant.

In the course of the year under review, extensive discussions were carried out with the Constituted Bodies representing private enterprise on the introduction of the Supplementary Declaration for trade statistics purposes replacing the Customs Declaration on Malta's accession to the EU. These discussions proved fruitful and constructive and facilitated a smooth ushering-in process of the new trade statistics system.

Group meetings were convened with all local councils on the provision of council finance data for Government Finance and National Accounts purposes. Discussions were also held with enterprises in the financial and non-financial sectors whose statistical returns are required to support the direct reporting system for Balance of Payments purposes.

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

The NSO published its Environment Policy in its *Annual Report: 2003*. By means of this policy, the Office committed itself to:

- Promote sound environmental management policies and practices in its work;
- Increase awareness of environmental responsibilities amongst its staff;
- Work with other agencies, locally and internationally, to promote appropriate environmental policies;
- Reduce the consumption of fossil fuels;
- Reduce water consumption;
- Minimise waste and emissions;
- Encourage recycling;
- Promote a purchasing policy that will give preference, as far as is feasible, to those products and services which cause the least harm to the environment;
- Avoid the use, wherever possible, of environmentally damaging substances, materials and processes;
- Maintain office grounds and buildings in an environmentally sensitive manner;
- Encourage modes of transport that minimise negative environmental impacts.

The NSO fully recognises that, to implement such a policy, a culture change is required that will not come about instantaneously. The NSO also believes that individual actions, not least by emulation, do make a difference. As concrete measures the NSO has:

- Introduced double-sided printing and copying wherever possible;
- Converted many of its hard copy publications into electronic ones. These are being made available either on CD-ROM or through the NSO website;
- Channelled a large part of the dissemination of its news releases through the electronic media, in particular e-mail and Internet;
- Reduced the printing of paper questionnaires and initiated a pronounced shift towards the collection of data through electronic questionnaires.

A cursory analysis of the impact of these measures during the year under review highlighted savings as follows:

Environmental replacement measures

Description	Weight (Kgs)
Replacement of hard-copy publications with CD-ROM:	
Agriculture and Fisheries	275.5
Balance of Payments	115.5
Education	301.2
Shipping and Aviation	193.9
Transport	51.2
Trade (parts 1 and 2)	1,494.9
Reduction in questionnaire mailed and/or electronic collection of data:	1,430.9
Replacement of hard-copy news releases with electronic version	1,747.2
Total	5,610.3

The increasing resort to Computer Aided Telephone Interviewing technology for surveys is a further aspect of the environmental policy. Although reduction of paper use due to this development is estimated to be substantial, the savings here have not yet been quantified.

At a corporate level, the Office promotes a climate of recycling by encouraging units to collect used paper and questionnaires. This practice dates back to 2002. Since then, the following volumes of paper were recycled:

Recycled paper

Year	Weight (Kgs)
2002	6,120
2003	1,680
2004	5,220
Total	13,020

In addition to the above, the Office has taken the following actions:

- The toilet flushing system has been connected to a water cistern underlying the Office thereby saving a daily volume of 2,730 litres of fresh potable water. This translates into an estimated 709,800 litres of water per year;

- All flushing systems have been installed with the half-flush device;
- The recycling of used envelopes is being actively promoted. Indeed, all used envelopes are being collected for re-use wherever possible. A rubber stamp indicating this action as a component of the NSO environmental policy is being applied to recycled envelopes;
- All business-reply envelopes that revert back to the NSO due to failure of delivery are being collected for re-use. Likewise, paper clips and elastic bands are being reserved for re-usage;
- Hand-driers have been installed throughout the Office.

First steps have also been made towards the installation of energy-saving lighting lamps within the Office. Moreover, a cost-benefit analysis for the installation of solar water heating equipment is being carried out.

PROMOTION OF STATISTICAL LITERACY

In 2003, the NSO published its policy on the promotion of statistical literacy. Through this policy the Office has committed itself to take active measures for the promotion of statistical literacy in ways that would meet the needs of different sections of the community.

In furtherance of this policy the NSO:

- Organised a number of training courses on aspects of statistical theory and practice that were open to persons outside the Office. Courses covered basic statistical techniques, sampling and surveying techniques and the use of statistical software for data analysis. Other courses have been prepared for the near future;
- Organised a number of media presentations and seminars on a number of statistical products including the release of the Time Use Survey, the Health Promotion Survey, the Farm Structure Survey, the Economic Accounts for Agriculture and Waste Statistics;
- Prepared various contributions to the press on key thematic releases like the adoption and publication of the new national accounts aggregates based on the European System of Accounts '95 and the publication of the Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices (HICP);
- Organised information sessions for enterprises on the direct reporting system for Balance of Payments purposes;
- Organised information sessions for traders and enterprises on the new trade statistics system;
- Organised information sessions for National Accounts users in view of the adoption of the European System of Accounts methodology for the compilation of its National Accounts Aggregates;

- Continued to participate in a number of radio and television programmes in order to promote the proper understanding and use of official statistics;
- Introduced a European statistics user support service with the backing of Eurostat;
- Made presentations on the role and work of the Office to student groups who are encouraged to come on visits organised through their schools and the University;
- Prepared the necessary guidelines and other documentation for the launch of annual statistical competitions among Secondary and University students;
- Discussed aspects of its statistical programme with the Constituted Bodies. Special attention was given to the introduction of INTRASTAT, the new direct reporting system for the Balance of Payments, and the Structural Business Statistics Programme;
- Held discussions with the (1) Commissioner for Children and (2) the Commission for Equality between Men and Women on possible areas of cooperation;
- Worked with the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities for the identification of areas requiring statistical research.

It is felt that these activities and others similar to them are going a long way towards creating the necessary awareness and appreciation of the work of the NSO. In addition, these activities and actions are drawing the NSO closer to its data providers and users, thus generating increased understanding between the parties.

ORGANISATION OF INTERNATIONAL EVENTS

In the past year, the NSO organised the following international event in Malta:

24-26 May 2004: Fourth meeting for Candidate Countries on the Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices.

This event was financed by Eurostat.

SOCIAL STATISTICS

POPULATION

The Demography Unit is responsible for the ongoing collection of data on births, morbidity, deaths, marriages and migration.

Specific areas in the compilation of population statistics were given particular attention. Special emphasis was laid on the proper measurement of migratory flows to and from the country. This work was and is still being carried out in the context of an international cooperation programme in the field of migration statistics.

The Unit worked on the release of *Demographic Review 2003* and on the compilation of a considerable number of questionnaires for the provision of data to Eurostat, the Council of Europe and the Economic Commission for Europe. Apart from this, the Unit compiled statistical updates on adoptions, the demographic situation in 2003, migration, elderly people and on a range of other demographic indicators.

The Unit continued with its data collection programme on social welfare-oriented non-governmental organisations.

CENSUS OF POPULATION AND HOUSING

The last Census of Population and Housing was taken in 1995. Therefore, the next census is due in 2005. However, Malta needs to align its census-taking with the rest of Europe which means that the country must undertake another census in 2010.

In view of the above and in the full consciousness that censuses are expensive projects, the NSO sought advice from the Malta Statistics Authority Board. The latter recommended the taking of a census in a reduced format in 2005 in order to contain costs as much as is reasonably possible. Submissions to this effect were made to Government.

Preliminary preparations for and consultations on the proposed 2005 census were made in the course of the year.

EDUCATION AND CULTURE

Education, Culture and Gender statistics are collected and compiled by the Education and Culture Statistics Unit. This Unit also collects statistics on continuous vocational training and lifelong learning.

Education

Data for the production of Education Statistics are obtained through a postal census among all state and private educational institutions. These statistics are being produced according to international standards.

In the past year, the Unit continued with its data collection programme on the general educational system, adult education and vocational education. The following publications and news releases were compiled and released:

- Education Statistics 2002/3;
- Adult education;
- School absences;
- University of the Third Age;
- Foreign language learning;
- Teaching of English to Foreigners.

In addition to the above, the Unit worked on the Education Statistics publication in respect of 2003/4. This is now in an advanced stage of preparation.

In the course of the year, the Unit continued to improve upon the compilation of its Education Expenditure Accounts.

The Unit also carried out a survey on the use of ICT in schools. All teachers and head teachers in primary and secondary schools were interviewed. The data emanating from this exercise are being analysed for eventual release.

This year also saw preliminary work on the taking of a new Continuous Vocational Training Survey.

Culture

In the past year, the NSO continued to consolidate its data collection programmes on an ever-widening range of cultural activities. The range and quality of data on the various cultural aspects of the country is increasing in quantity and quality.

In the period being reviewed, data were collected and released with regard to:

- Band clubs;
- Local council cultural activities;
- Dance schools;
- Museums and historical sites;
- Parish feasts;
- Good Friday processions;
- Theatre;
- Youth organisations.

A report on the census among all local sport organisations carried out in 2003 was released. Moreover, the Unit continued with its data collection with respect to the sub-sectors of the economy dealing with cultural activities. This was achieved by inter-action with the relevant Structural Business Statistics sub-programme.

Following a consultation meeting with stakeholders on theatre patronage in Malta, it was decided to hold a survey in order to profile local theatre-goers. This survey was carried out in the course of this year and its results are due for publication in November 2004.

Gender Statistics

A first step towards the production of gender statistics was taken in 1998 with the organisation of a workshop facilitated by a gender-statistics expert from Statistics Sweden. This seminar was followed up by a first gender statistics publication, *Women and Men 1999*. In the course of 2004, the NSO took decisive steps towards an update by critically reviewing this publication and the gender concerns it treats of, as well as by holding several consultation meetings with interested parties. These culminated in a seminar with the objective of identifying issues worthy of research. It was planned that the outcome would eventually be embodied in a second publication on Women and Men. The body of research highlighted during this seminar was duly reviewed and studied by the Office. Thereafter, work was undertaken for a second edition of this publication. This publication is in an advanced stage of preparation and should be released in the coming months.

LABOUR MARKET

Within the NSO, the Labour Market Statistics Unit is responsible for the collection and compilation of statistics on the labour market, employment and unemployment, labour costs and earnings, conditions of work, accidents at work, employers' and workers' organisations and foreign workers.

The NSO has registered considerable progress in the provision of a broad range of data on the labour market.

As from January 2004, the NSO introduced the Labour Force Survey (LFS) as a continuous survey. The LFS has now become a salient and established feature of the local statistical landscape. Active measures were taken to improve both the quality and timeliness of this important survey.

The Unit carried out a joint Labour Costs and Structure of Earnings Survey through which data on this specialised statistical domain are collected. These statistics will eventually be collected in cycles of four years through appropriate surveys among a representative sample of enterprises. The survey on labour costs provides detailed comparable data on wages and related employer contributions. The purpose of statistics on the structure and distribution of earnings is to analyse the statistical relationship between the level of remuneration, individual characteristics of employees (sex, age, occupation, length of service, educational attainment levels, etc.) and their employer (economic activity of the local enterprise, existence of collective agreements, total number of persons employed, etc.).

In this connection, the Unit also compiled indicators on the unemployment trap, average gross annual earnings, and minimum wages. Work is underway on the compilation of statistics on the low-wage trap, hourly and monthly labour costs, net earnings and tax rates.

The questionnaires for the Labour Costs Survey and the Structure of Earnings Survey were developed under the direct supervision of a Eurostat-appointed expert. The Unit also supervised the production of the required software for these surveys.

In the course of the year, preliminary methodological work was undertaken for the compilation of job vacancy data. To this end, the NSO is participating in a Eurostat-sponsored project.

The Labour Market Statistics unit further consolidated its work on the adoption of the European System of Accidents at Work (ESAW) methodology in statistics on Accidents at Work. The adoption of the ESAW is being implemented with the full cooperation of the Department of Social Security, the entity responsible for the collection of all the relevant information in this area.

The Unit also continued with the monthly compilation and release of employment and unemployment data based on the administrative records held by the Employment and Training Corporation. An additional project concerned the regular compilation and release of membership of trade unions and employers' associations.

LIVING CONDITIONS

Household Budgetary Survey

In the course of the past year, the NSO made methodological preparations for the introduction of a continuous Household Budgetary Survey (HBS). The objective of this continuous survey is twofold:

1. To provide basic income and expenditure data on a quarterly basis for use in national accounting estimation processes.
2. To provide annual expenditure weights for the update of the weighting frame of the Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices (HICP). In addition, the continuous HBS would provide information on living conditions within private households.

In view of resource constraints, the introduction of this survey had to be postponed.

Time-Use Survey

The NSO had carried out a pilot Time-Use Survey (TUS) between 26 August and 27 September 2002. The reference week was 9-15 September 2002. For this study, a random sample of 500 private households was selected from the electoral database. Of these, 290 households, or 58 per cent, accepted to be interviewed.

The main questionnaire collected socio-demographic variables, mainly age, sex, employment status, occupation, and salary of household members. Each household member aged 10+ years was then asked to list all the activities s/he carried out on two particular days during the reference week, one being a weekday and the other, a weekend day. The main objectives of this survey were:

- To provide information on how people spend their time, e.g., paid work, unpaid household work, leisure activities, etc;
- To determine whether there is a significant difference in time use among the various socio-demographic groups making up Maltese society;
- To determine whether this survey can improve upon the estimates of the contribution to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) that mainly concerns unpaid work. This category includes caring for children and the elderly, house chores and voluntary community work;
- To provide information on time use that is comparable in an international context.

For the implementation of the TUS the NSO adhered to Eurostat's recommendations. Activities were coded according to the following major categories:

1. Personal care.
2. Employment.
3. Household and family care.
4. Voluntary work and meetings.
5. Social life and entertainment.
6. Sports and outdoor activities.
7. Hobbies and games.
8. Mass media.
9. Travel and unspecified time use.

Where a respondent indicated that s/he carried out two tasks simultaneously, then both activities were coded. Furthermore, respondents specified in whose company they carried out the activities they listed and, where applicable, the location and mode of transport.

The results from the Time-Use Survey were collated into a publication and presented to the media during a seminar organised for the purpose. The relevant data were also made available to Eurostat.

Income, Poverty and Social Exclusion Indicators

In the course of 2003, the NSO compiled its first-ever set of income, poverty and social exclusion indicators in accordance with Eurostat methodologies and the requirements of the Laeken indicators list. In 2004, the NSO undertook various elaborations on these indicators for Eurostat. The indicators spawned an interesting

debate among policy-makers and the media, and comprised an important resource for a large number of users including academics and politicians.

Survey on Income and Living Conditions

The NSO continued with its preparatory work for the eventual introduction of the Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC). This new enquiry will take the form of a panel and longitudinal enquiry. As from 2005, the Office plans to carry it out on an ongoing and Europe-wide basis.

The methodological basis for this survey has been analysed for eventual adaptation to the local context. In addition to this, a bilingual questionnaire incorporating all the stipulated data variables has been prepared. This will be piloted in the near future. Furthermore, the NSO made the necessary preparations for the creation of the necessary human resource and IT infrastructures for the taking of this large-scale survey.

Apart from the demographic characteristics of households, this survey aims to collect data on, amongst others, the work and educational background of household members, activity limitations, income, and household living conditions.

A pilot survey of SILC was undertaken in mid-2004. The results of this preliminary project are being processed and analysed.

BUSINESS STATISTICS

BUSINESS STATISTICS

STRUCTURAL BUSINESS STATISTICS

All structural business statistics are being collected and compiled by the Business Statistics Unit. In addition to the maintenance of the register of business enterprises, this Unit carries out the annual structural business statistics surveys covering a growing number of economic sectors.

Plans for the setting-up of a Business Register on the lines of the *Manual of Recommendations on Business Registers* were made as far back as 1996. Fieldwork was started in 1998 with the mailing of Business Register questionnaires to around 47,000 business units. This Register is being maintained on an ongoing basis.

The Business Register is used for the compilation of business demography statistics and for the extraction of the required representative samples for enterprise-based surveys.

The structural business statistics programme has undergone a radical review. Whereas, traditionally, the Office collected and compiled structural business statistics in respect of water, energy, construction and manufacturing, the data collection programme has been widened to include most of the other productive sectors of the economy. Moreover, the methodological base for this programme has been fully harmonised with international standards and practices. Therefore, as part of its structural business statistics programme, the NSO is now collecting data from business units engaged in the following economic sectors:

NACE classification

NACE	Economic sector
14.11/14.50	Mining and Quarrying
15.11/37.20	Manufacturing
45.11/45.00	Construction
50.10/52.74	Wholesale and Retail
55.11	Hotels
63.30	Activities of travel agents
60.21/60.24	Transport
61.10/62.20	Water transport
63.11/63.23	Auxiliary transport activities
63.40	Activities of transport agencies
64.11	Posts and Telecommunications
65.11/65.23	Financial intermediation

NACE classification (contd.)

NACE	Economic sector
70.11/70.32	Real estate
71.10/71.40	Renting of machinery
72.10/72.60	Computer and related activities
74.11	Legal activities
74.12	Accounting, Book-keeping, Auditing and Tax Consultancy
74.13	Market research
74.14	Business and Management consultancy activities
74.15	Management activities of holding companies
74.20	Architectural and Engineering activities
74.30	Technical and Testing analysis
74.40	Advertising
74.50	Labour recruitment
74.60	Investigation and Security activities
74.70	Industrial cleaning
74.81	Photographic activities
74.82	Packaging activities
74.83	Secretarial and Translation activities
74.84	Other Business activities
92.11/92.13	Recreational, Cultural and Sporting activities
92.20	Radio and Television activities
92.31/92.34	Artistic and Literary creation and Interpretation

The compilation of an Index of Production is now being carried out on an annual basis.

SHORT-TERM STATISTICS ON INDUSTRY

In the past two years, the NSO established an ongoing short-term business statistics programme that is meant to highlight the state and nature of the business cycle.

Various monthly or quarterly short-term business statistics surveys have been introduced in order to collect data on employment levels and compensation, turnover and investment in fixed assets. The economic sectors that are being covered by the programme are as follows:

NACE sectors covered in short-term statistics programme

NACE	Economic sector
14	Mining and Quarrying
15 to 37	Manufacturing
40	Water and Energy
45.11 – 45.23	Construction
45.31 – 45.50	Building completion and Installation
50 and 52	Wholesale and Retail
55	Hotels and Restaurants
60	Land transport
61	Water transport
62	Air transport
63	Supporting and Auxiliary transport
64	Post and Telecommunications
72	Computer and Related activities
74	Other Business activities

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATION STATISTICS

In the course of the past year, the NSO carried out a first innovation survey among a sample of enterprises. This survey was carried out alongside all the countries of the European Economic Area. Information was collected on the innovation activities of enterprises with particular emphasis on:

- Product innovation;
- Process innovation;
- Effects of innovation on the performance of enterprises;
- Research and development activities;
- Sources of funding for innovation activities;
- Factors that facilitated or hampered innovation activities.

The data collected from this survey were processed, analysed and transmitted to Eurostat. A publication incorporating the results has also been prepared for eventual release.

In addition to the above, the Business Statistics Unit pioneered two related surveys: one covers human resources in science and technology and the other focuses on research and development in enterprises.

In the course of the year, the Business Statistics Unit finalised its analysis of the Research and Development Survey carried out the previous year. Its results were published locally and also sent to Eurostat.

INFORMATION SOCIETY STATISTICS

In the year 2000, the NSO introduced an ongoing information society statistics programme. Quarterly data are being collected on cable TV subscriptions, the Internet, mobile telephones, pagers and voicemail, satellite dish antennas and transceivers. In addition to this, each of the surveyed enterprises was required to provide information on employment levels, wages paid and capital investment.

The scope of this survey has now been widened in order to include the collection of new data that would reflect developments in the ICT sector. Quarterly data based on this survey are also being released regularly.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Households Survey

Preparations were made for the taking of a second Information and Communication Technology Usage in Households Survey following the first like project in 2002.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Enterprises Survey

Early in 2003, an ICT Usage in Enterprises Survey was launched among a sample of enterprises. The objective of this survey was to collect indicators on ICT usage in local enterprises and to assess their orientation towards e-commerce. This survey was analysed and its results are ready for publication. These have also been made available to Eurostat.

AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES

In the course of the past year, the Agriculture and Fisheries Unit continued to widen its data collection processes. This Unit persevered in consolidating its position following its re-introduction as a discrete statistical domain within the NSO, and also in order to satisfy the ever-increasing demand for agriculture and fisheries statistics by both local and international users.

Regular updates of the farm and vineyard registers were carried out.

In November 2001, the first published Census of Agriculture in two decades was carried out. After the publication of the results, the Unit continued to process further data from this census in order to cater for third-party requests for information and in support of public policy-making.

In March 2003, a major NSO project in agricultural statistics came to fruition through the publication of the results of the nationwide land use survey that utilised remote sensing and aerial photography techniques. This project, styled AGRISTAT, was carried out with the assistance of the International Centre for Ocean Dynamics (ICOD) of the Foundation of International Studies, University of Malta. Aerial photographs of the Maltese Islands were taken and, following an extensive ground-truthing survey of the land, the collected data were interpreted as to the type of vegetation. These were classified in accordance with the CORINE Land Use Classification. This Classification was adapted and extended up to level 5 in order to cater for local circumstances and requirements. In the course of the past year, the Unit continued to support various users in making use of the results of this aerial photography exercise.

In the first months of 2004, the NSO undertook a first Apiculture Census in order to put together a comprehensive dataset on the sector. The results of this census have been compiled and analysed and will be released to users in the near future.

In the course of the year, the NSO regularly released quarterly data in respect of fruit and vegetables, agricultural input and output price indices, animal products, the pig and cattle sectors and the fishing industry. Moreover, the annual publication *Agriculture and Fisheries Statistics 2002* was compiled. This has now been published.

Following the first pilot Farm Accountancy Data collection by the Agriculture and Fisheries Unit, which provided a very useful insight into the income and cost structures within the local farming community, additional fieldwork to collect income and cost data was undertaken. The aim was to compute standard gross margins from the cultivation of specific crop types or from the breeding of specific animals. Such information has proved invaluable for the identification of proper farm structures and typologies in respect of the local agricultural sector. This first-even typology of the agricultural sector was used extensively for the compilation of the required sample in preparation for the first Farm Structure Survey in 2003. As a preliminary to the taking of the next Farm Structure Survey, the Agriculture and Fisheries Statistics Unit is carrying out fieldwork with a view to updating the available standard gross margins for a range of crops and livestock.

The results of the 2003 enquiry were analysed and compiled. They were launched during a media presentation organised for the purpose.

In the agricultural statistics domain, the NSO has expanded its activities beyond primary data collection. It has made appreciable inroads into secondary data compilation and analysis with a view to providing a clearer and more focused picture of the conditions under which our farming community operates and the significance of the agricultural contribution to the country's national economy.

In this connection, the Office refined and strengthened its Economic Accounts for Agriculture through the sourcing of new and better-quality basic data. Agricultural input and output price indices continued to be compiled on a regular basis. Moreover, estimates of the quantum of effort in terms of Agricultural Labour Input (ALI) have also been worked out.

In order to highlight the utility of these statistical datasets and indicators for public policy-makers and operators within the sector, the NSO organised a public seminar on the

contribution of the agricultural sector to the economy. Apart from presenting the results of its own statistical compilations, an economist and a representative of the farming community were invited to make contributions on the current state and future prospects of the agricultural sector.

Furthermore, the Agriculture and Fisheries Unit updated its Supply and Use balance sheet for crop year 2002/3, as well as balance sheets in respect of meat, fodder, wine, oils, fats and rice.

TOURISM

As from January 2003, tourism statistics started being compiled and released through a dual system based on:

- (1) the disembarkation cards.
- (2) the ongoing inbound tourism survey, styled TOURSTAT.

From April 2004, disembarkation cards were terminated. As from that month, the survey-based tourism statistics system is the sole source for local official tourism statistics.

In April 2004, the NSO extended its inbound tourism survey to the seaport.

The annual publication *Shipping and Aviation Statistics 2002* was compiled and released.

A foreign expert who had originally assisted the NSO with the introduction of TOURSTAT carried out an extensive audit of the inbound tourism survey prior to its release. The expert was asked to evaluate the methodological and practical underpinnings of this survey with a view to determining the quality, reliability and relevance of the results to users. The expert was also asked to recommend any changes to the survey with the aim of improving its quality and cost-effectiveness. Apart from recommending some minor improvements to the questionnaire and to a few aspects of the methodology, the expert commended the NSO on the quality and robustness of the survey results.

TOURSTAT provides statistics on the number of tourist arrivals and tourist nights spent in collective accommodation establishments. The survey also provides information on tourism by type of flight (chartered or scheduled), type of airline or shipping company used, purpose and frequency of visit, length of stay, localities stayed in, organisation of trips, modes of transport used inside Malta, type of accommodation, and expenditure broken down by package, non-package and other expenses.

TOURSTAT is being carried out by a group of interviewers who were recruited and trained for the purpose. These carry out personal interviews among departing passengers. After a validation process, the collected information is inputted on the spot at the Malta International Airport. The data are subsequently transferred electronically to the Tourism Statistics Unit at the NSO for further processing and report generation.

In January 2001, a census aimed at collecting data from collective accommodation establishments - styled ACCOMSTAT - was also launched. Collective accommodation establishments are being asked to supply monthly information on the number of persons staying at their establishments and nights spent, broken down into residents and non-residents. Additionally, they are required to supply the number of bedrooms and bed-places available.

Several accommodation establishments transfer their monthly data to the NSO via a web-based electronic questionnaire. The data from this accommodation survey started being released as from January 2004. Apart from the reference month, the data in respect of previous comparable months are being released as well.

The Tourism Statistics Unit also undertook a second 3-month pilot Cruise Passenger Survey. This survey was undertaken with the active support of the company running the Cruise Passenger Terminal. The results from this survey are being analysed for eventual release. Thereafter, a decision on the formal introduction of this enquiry on a regular basis will be taken.

In the year 2000, the Tourism Statistics Unit launched an annual structural business statistics survey among hotels, restaurants and travel agencies. Accordingly, in the year under review, the Unit's staff members engaged in this exercise. In the course of last year, this survey was carried out again.

A further activity concerned a working group which assessed the feasibility of compiling a Tourism Satellite Account for Malta. NSO staff participated actively in this workshop.

TRANSPORT

The NSO has been collecting and disseminating air and sea transport statistics for quite a long time. The production and release of road transport and related statistics on traffic accidents is a more recent addition to the Office's statistical output.

The collection of air and sea transport statistics is currently being carried out within a programme that integrates tourism and transport. However, with the eventual removal of the embarkation-card system and the phasing-out of other source documentation, the NSO has made the necessary arrangements with both the Malta International Airport (MIA) and the Malta Maritime Authority (MMA) for the eventual transfer of the responsibility for the collection of these statistics to these organisations.

The change and development of the necessary capacities within these organisations for the compilation of these statistics was accompanied by an effort to harmonise local air and sea transport statistics with international requirements. This programme was facilitated by the Office's participation in the Euro-Mediterranean MEDTRANS statistics project the objective of which is the harmonisation of transport statistics across the participating countries. In implementing this harmonisation project, the NSO sought the assistance of officials from the MIA and the MMA.

In the course of last year, the NSO worked closely with personnel from the two organisations in order to ensure their adoption of the relevant methodologies for the

collection of air and maritime statistics. The NSO also made it a priority to ascertain the continuous and timely flow of data from these organisations to the NSO. Although difficulties have arisen in the process, various actions to address them have and are still being taken by this Office.

Drawing on the assistance of the Police Department and of the Association of Local Councils, the NSO continued with the collection of traffic accident statistics. These are now being organised and released in accordance with international requirements. Other data collection covers the stock and flow of motor vehicles in the country.

In 2001, the NSO carried out a pilot survey on the transport of goods by road in line with the international methodologies in this area. This survey was processed, analysed and transmitted to Eurostat for their validation and feedback. Various actions were taken in order to address the problems identified by Eurostat. Although this survey yielded the desired results, the NSO was not in a position to carry it out on an ongoing basis as required by Eurostat methodologies. It was felt that, on a continuous basis, it would be too resource intensive. Hence, the NSO is looking at alternative arrangements that would satisfy local and international requirements with regard to road transport of goods.

The transport sector includes air, sea and land transport and a range of auxiliary activities as well as the activities of transport agencies. In 2004, the NSO continued to refine the statistical programme relating to this sector through an ongoing data collection project on sectoral structure and performance.

ECONOMIC STATISTICS

NATIONAL ACCOUNTS

Malta has been producing annual National Accounts estimates since the early 1950s. Quarterly estimates were introduced in 1972.

In 1998, the Office embarked on a project with the ultimate objective of effecting an important change from the current data collection and compilation of economic statistics to an institutional system that is consistent with the European System of Accounts (ESA) 1995.

The adoption of ESA 1995 is a substantial project that pre-supposes the availability of a strong system of basic statistics with classifications that are consistent with the system of National Accounts. In view of this, the adoption of ESA 1995 is normally implemented over a good number of years.

Apart from strengthening the human resource base of the National Accounts Unit, the NSO embarked on an extensive training programme for its staff members in order to familiarise them properly with all the methodological aspects of ESA 1995. This training programme is still underway. The Unit was also provided with technical assistance on a number of aspects of this project.

In addition to the above, action was taken to strengthen the statistical system at the basic level. New classifications that are in line with the requirements of ESA 1995 were introduced across the statistical programme. In this regard, the adoption of NACE for the classification of economic sectors and the CPA for the classification of products were landmarks in this direction. The same can be said for the adoption of COICOP for the classification of consumption expenditure. Over and above, the re-classification of all government finance transactions in accordance with the ESA codification requirements proved a basic chip in the statistical infrastructure. Failing this exercise, the adoption of ESA would have been extremely difficult.

The introduction of new data collection systems described elsewhere in this report, including the wider framework of business surveys, the Household Budgetary Survey and the Labour Force Survey, provided new data sources that satisfy some of the extensive data requirements of ESA 1995.

This concerted effort resulted in the publication of ESA-compatible Gross Domestic Product and Gross National Product in December 2003. Initially, accounts for the 4-year period between 1999 and 2002 were published. The adoption of ESA 1995 and the migration from the old System of National Accounts, the latter essentially grounded in 1950s methodology, resulted in an average increase of 7.4 per cent in the level of the GDP.

The recorded change is generally considered to be in line with international experience in this area. Most old EU Member States experienced such changes in their level of GDP when they migrated to ESA 1995 from an earlier version of the European System of Accounts, i.e., ESA 1979. As a case in point, Denmark increased its level of GDP by 6.4 per cent post-ESA 1995. Likewise, the Dutch and the Swedish GDP went up by 4.1 per cent and 3.4 per cent respectively. In view of this, given the more substantial

methodological changes necessitated by the introduction of ESA 1995 in the Maltese case, the change in the level of GDP is considered to be a modest rise indeed.

With the introduction of the new System of National Accounts, the NSO updated the base of its new real-GDP series from 1995 to 2000.

In August 2004, the NSO published quarterly National Accounts based on ESA 1995 for all the quarters in respect of the period 2000-2003 and for the first two quarters of 2004. In this manner, the changeover to the new System of National Accounts was completed.

In June 2004, the Supply and Use tables covering 60 industries and 90 products were published. This matrix was compiled with the assistance of Eurostat-appointed experts.

The changeover to the new System of National Accounts and the introduction of new statistical compilations were accompanied by various efforts to explain these changes to users. A number of presentations on these systems were made to interested users while a concerted media campaign was undertaken in stages in order to explain these changes to the general public.

In addition to the above, the National Accounts Unit also worked on the following:

- The Excessive Deficit Procedure;
- The compilation of weights for PPP purposes;
- Reports on VAT, rents and tipping in the service industries for PPP purposes;
- The GNI and its supporting quality report for EU Own Resources purposes;
- The report on VAT Own Resources for EU purposes;
- Regional accounts disaggregated for Malta and Gozo.

All the above-mentioned statistical compilations and reports were submitted to Eurostat.

GOVERNMENT FINANCE

In the year 2000, a working group comprising NSO staff members and representatives from the Ministry of Finance, the Treasury and the Central Bank of Malta finalised a new chart of accounts in respect of government finance transactions. All transactions were coded in accordance with the recommendations contained in *A Manual for Government Finance Statistics* (IMF) as well as in accordance with the requirements of ESA 1995.

In the course of 2004, and following the full implementation of the new system, the relevant generated reports were tested extensively in order to assess their quality and reliability.

NSO staff members actively contributed to the compilation of Malta's Excessive Debt and Deficit Notification to the EU Commission as well as to the work of a standing task force on Own Resources.

Work on the compilation of social protection accounts in accordance with the European System of Social Protection Statistics (ESSPROS) methodology is ongoing. The reporting requirements on social protection have been fully met while a topical publication was prepared and published during a media presentation towards the end of 2003.

BALANCE OF PAYMENTS

As from the year 2000, the Balance of Payments Statement started being compiled and presented in conformity with both the guidelines set in *Balance of Payments Manual fifth edition* (IMF) as well as with the guidelines similarly set in the *Balance of Payments Vade Mecum* (Eurostat). The data were revised retrospectively to 1995 and reconstructed so as to show quarterly and annual data on the international economic and financial transactions of Malta with the world, the European Union and (by deduction) the rest of the world.

As from 2001, the Balance of Payments Unit further undertook the important task of compiling, retrospectively reconstructing (to 1994) and presenting the International Investment Position Statement (or I.I.P.) of the country. This Statement, which is complementary to the Balance of Payments Statement, is compiled and published once a year; it is intended to show the end-of-year stocks of the external financial assets and liabilities of Malta vis-à-vis the world arising from transactions conducted by the banking sector, the non-financial enterprises, the central government and (partially) the household sector.

Additionally, the Unit is compiling two new statistical datasets; one featuring Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) statistics and another, Portfolio Investment statistics. As regards FDI statistics, the Unit has already presented aggregate information relating to stocks-and-flows data on direct investment in Malta and abroad. With regard to our participation in the Coordinated Portfolio Investment Survey (CPIS) conducted by the IMF, the Unit has compiled information by sector on portfolio assets held abroad for 2003.

Undoubtedly, the production of the above compilations requires both considerable effort as well as heavy investment in human resources and technology. As a result, the Balance of Payments Unit has, over the past two years, embarked on a project of creating a new detailed survey system (based on direct reporting) and the supporting software necessary for the capture, retrieval and presentation of the information in the timeliest manner possible. In the past year the Unit, in collaboration with the Central Bank of Malta, continued with its efforts to create the necessary infrastructure in order to introduce the direct reporting system by not later than January 2004. The relevant questionnaires were drawn up and reviewed. Extensive discussions were held with the data providers in order to familiarise the latter with the concepts and methodologies pertaining to this new system.

In addition to the above, the Unit liaised with the IT Unit for the creation of the support software. Preparations for the software were in hand in early 2003. The first phase was finalised in November 2003, when two familiarisation seminars were held for data providers from the financial and non-financial sectors. The second phase was undertaken in early 2004 and finalised in October of the same year.

A Survey on Foreign Affiliates Statistics (FATS) among 6,500 enterprises was taken for the first time. By means of a short questionnaire, the Office is seeking to identify the nationality of enterprises that have a foreign shareholding in Malta of over 50 per cent. Additionally, information is being collected on investments abroad in order to identify those enterprises that would qualify for outward FATS. Once the information from these questionnaires is captured, it will be used to extract information from the Structural Business Statistics.

A survey among some 3,000 Companies undertaking International Business Activities (CIBA's) was also launched in 2004. This survey is being carried out with the assistance and support of the Malta Financial Services Authority (MFSA). In collaboration with the latter, preparations were made for the taking of surveys that cover the Collective Investment Schemes (CIS) and the Investment Service Providers (ISP).

Timeliness and detailed information are essential pre-requisites for an efficient statistical system; this is becoming a salient requirement not only by the range of users, having recourse to statistical products, but also by the international statistical bodies to whom the Office is committed for the submission of statistical compilations.

In view of this, the Balance of Payments Unit is currently publishing the Balance of Payments Statement by the end of the third month following the reference quarter. It should be noted that the Unit is compliant with some of the standards for the dissemination of data generally known as GDDS/SDDS. Also, in order to satisfy international (namely Eurostat) requirements, it is transmitting the Statement to the IMF and Eurostat on the same day of publication. For transmission to Eurostat, GESMES/cb message and STADIUM are utilised.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

The NSO has generally adopted the recommendations of the United Nations in the compilation of international trade statistics. These statistics, based on Customs declarations, date back to the 1940s. Until 1989, the SITC Rev 1 was in use. In 1990, the Customs authorities adopted the Harmonised System (HS), adding on another 2 digits for national requirements. On 1 January 1995, the Maltese Customs Tariff based on the Integrated Tariff was created. It is the basic legal instrument underlying the classification of goods and shows all sales that are subject to indirect taxation, as well as other relevant information. Its structure is based on the EU's Combined Nomenclature with an additional 2 digits for national purposes.

As from January 2001, the Customs authorities introduced the Single Administrative Document (SAD).

Malta applies both the general and the specially devised trade system. The following are not included in international trade statistics: (i) personal and household effects, (ii) fresh fish caught in Maltese territorial waters, (iii) goods sent or received by Diplomatic missions, (iv) repairs and services, (v) monetary gold, (vi) goods entering the Freeport. Imports and exports are shown in CIF or CF and FOB values respectively. In the Maltese system, the country of origin (for imports) and the country of final destination (for exports) are indicated.

In the past few years, the International Trade Statistics Unit introduced the following classifications:

- NACE for the classification of imports and exports by economic sector;
- CPA for the classification of products by economic sector;
- GEONOM for the classification of countries of origin and destinations of trade flows.

In addition to this, the Unit linked up with the COMEXT international trade statistics database held by Eurostat. This database provides comparable international trade data for a large number of countries. Together with the adoption of new software for report generation, this facilitates the provision of international trade data to clients.

In the period under review, the Trade Statistics Unit intensified its preparatory work for the introduction of INTRASTAT: a survey-based international trade statistics system that replaced Customs documentation upon Malta's entry into the European Union.

The preparatory work for INTRASTAT involved an intensive consultative process with the Customs authorities, the VAT Department and MITTS Ltd. Extensive consultations were carried out with the Constituted Bodies representing private enterprise. These were supplemented by information sessions for those whom the new system directly affected. INTRASTAT was successfully introduced as from May 2004. Compliance with INTRASTAT regulations is considered to be extremely good, with a response rate well in excess of 90 per cent.

Apart from preparing the necessary office facilities to house INTRASTAT, the Office worked very closely with MITTS Ltd on the creation of the IT system in support of this new trade statistics system. An INTRASTAT website featuring the documents relating to the new system was launched. This included a detailed handbook. A web front enabling traders to submit their data online was launched in May 2004. To date, 700 traders are making use of this facility. Their returns account for more than 80 per cent of all INTRASTAT Supplementary Declarations.

Part of the groundwork for INTRASTAT involved the preparation of a supporting manual that was distributed among data providers. An extensive information campaign targeting all data providers and the general public was conducted by the Office. This included a helpdesk set up within the International Trade Statistics Unit.

The Unit also liaised with the Office's legal advisors on the drawing-up of the legal instruments and documentation in support of INTRASTAT.

CONSUMER PRICES AND PURCHASING POWER PARITIES

In the course of last year, the Consumer Prices Unit continued with the monthly compilation and release of the new Retail Prices Index (RPI) series.

The Consumer Prices Unit continued to produce its Pensioners Price Index (PPI).

Furthermore, the NSO continued to familiarise itself with the methodology of the Harmonised Index for Consumer Prices (HICP). This index is the main indicator recording price changes on a Europe-wide level. Although, from a methodological standpoint, the local RPI is at variance with the HICP, the sub-indices of the former can be utilised to compile an interim HICP for Malta. Simultaneously, the NSO intensified its work to fully adopt the harmonised HICP for Malta. This objective was duly achieved in the course of 2003. During 2004, the old HICP series, in conjunction with the new and harmonised series, was validated and accepted by Eurostat. As a result, the monthly HICP was published both on an international level by Eurostat and on a local level by NSO.

It is estimated that, with the new RPI and HICP series running concurrently, the Consumer Prices Unit has to manage the collection of thousands of prices per month. The Unit's workload comprises also surveys covering rent fees, doctors', dentists' and consultants' fees, private tuition, schools and school transport, child-minding services, Homes for the Elderly, and veterinary services.

Malta has been included in the ambit of the European Comparison Programme (ECP) for Purchasing Power Parities (PPP) from September 1999. The NSO forms part of the Programme's southern group which is coordinated by Italy. In the course of last year, the Unit continued to participate fully in Eurostat's regular PPP programme. On a local level, PPP-related surveys and validation processes were taken in respect of household goods, hotels and restaurants, and goods and services related with personal appearance.

With the adoption of the amendments to the Immovable Property (Acquisition by Foreigners) Act, the Consumer Prices Unit was charged with the production of an Immovable Property Index for Malta. In the course of 2004, the Units continued with experimental work on this index. Experimental indices based on alternative data sources were also computed and are currently being evaluated.

ENVIRONMENT STATISTICS

The environment as a statistical domain in its own right is a relative novelty in the National Statistics Office's programme.

In the course of the past year, the pace of the Environment Statistics programme was retarded by serious resource constraints. Notwithstanding, efforts were made to build upon the substantial work base that was established in previous years. Plans were also drawn up to strengthen the organisational and institutional framework of this programme within the NSO.

Efforts were also made to maintain all the current data collection and dissemination programmes in this domain in place and to branch out into some new initiatives. Regular data collection and dissemination continued in respect of the following areas:

- Water;
- Marine environment;

- Biodiversity;
- Air pollution;
- Energy.

Although the basic water data are in place, there are new requirements arising from the Water Framework Directive. Efforts need to be made to compile water-use data in accordance with NACE, while substantial investment is required in order to compile the required wastewater data.

Significant data gaps must still be filled in the case of air-pollution data.

Insofar as energy statistics are concerned, collection of data in respect of household and industrial energy consumption is a priority that must be addressed in the near future. In this regard, the NSO will look to Enemalta for its direct support.

In the past few years, significant advances were made in the compilation of local environment protection expenditure statistics. Various publications on this sub-topic were also compiled and released. However, pending the availability of human and other resources, the NSO needs to substantially engage in research on new data collection and compilation methods.

Also due to lack of staff and finance, the NSO was unable to participate in an Urban Audit project. The objective of this project is the collection of statistics on a number of localities in the Maltese Islands from an urban-statistics approach.

In the course of the year, the NSO acquired grants from Eurostat for the financing of pilot studies in support of the new Waste Statistics Regulation. The NSO conducted consultation meetings with a range of interested parties on this subject. In addition to this, the NSO carried out:

- Studies on the collection and dissemination of statistics on packaging waste and imports/exports waste;
- Preparatory work for the taking of a survey on industrial and hazardous waste.

Furthermore, the NSO participated in international meetings on waste statistics and convened a local workshop to open this topic to debate. In the administration of this project the NSO is working closely with WasteServ Malta Ltd.

NSO staff members participated in a good number of training sessions on environment statistics. These covered air pollution, biodiversity and water statistics, among others, and were organised by Eurostat under the Medstat programme.

REGIONAL STATISTICS

The Malta Statistics Authority Act 2000 placed the onus upon the NSO to collect and compile national statistics that would include, as far as is feasible, a regional perspective. Although Malta has a tradition in the collection of statistics on a regional

level, this dimension was amplified and formalised within the national statistical programme.

A new geographical classification for the Maltese Islands was drawn up in line with *Nomenclature des Unités Territoriales et Statistiques* (NUTS) in use on the European mainland. This classification was recognised and accepted by Eurostat for the collection and compilation of regional statistics in the Maltese Islands.

Where possible, the NSO is already releasing statistical information on the basis of the Maltese adaptation of NUTS. A regional statistics database is being maintained. In the course of the year, a specialised publication on regional statistics started being compiled. This is due to appear imminently.

ANNEXES: NSO POLICIES

- I. Policy for Revisions of Official Statistics
- II. Consultation Groups for Official Statistics
- III. Environment-friendly Purchasing Policy
- IV. Library and Information Unit (LIU) Collection Development Policy
- V. NSO Pricing Policy

POLICY FOR REVISIONS OF OFFICIAL STATISTICS

Definition

Revisions are broadly defined as a change or changes in the value of a statistic released to the public by the National Statistics Office (NSO).

Revisions may be effected for at least eight reasons:

1. Incorporation of source data that is more complete or superior in some other way.
2. Incorporation of source data that bears out concepts more closely.
3. Replacement by source data of judgement values or values derived largely by statistical techniques.
4. Incorporation of updated seasonal factors.
5. Updating of the base period.
6. Changes in statistical methods.
7. Changes in concepts, definitions, and classifications.
8. Correction of errors in source data and computations.

“Current revisions” are those that affect the current monthly or quarterly data. “Annual revisions” are made after the data for all the months or quarters of a year become available. Less frequent revisions, often of an interval of more than four years, are called “comprehensive”, “major”, or “benchmark” revisions. Typically, they are occasions for major changes in statistical methods and changes in concepts, definitions, and classifications. Often, these revisions are carried back for a good number of years. Revisions that correct error have no predictable time frame.

Guidelines in the Implementation of Revisions

In effecting revisions, the NSO endeavours to follow the following practices:

1. The main users of official statistics are consulted in order to identify their needs and priorities.
2. Users are provided with a revisions statement in respect of each statistical compilation or series.
3. All “current revisions” are maintained on a comparatively stable basis from year to year.
4. Any major conceptual or methodological revisions are introduced, in so far as is reasonably possible, every five years.

5. Wherever possible and reasonable, revisions are applied to several years of data in order to provide consistent and usable time series.
6. Information on revisions is made available to users regularly. For example,
 - (a) Preliminary (or provisional or estimated) data and revised data are identified as such.
 - (b) Advance notice is always given of major changes in concepts, definitions, classification and in statistical methods.
 - (c) The sources for revised data are profiled when the revised series are released.
 - (d) Where a consistent dataset cannot be provided, breaks in series are documented.
7. Periodically, the sources, direction and dispersion of revisions in respect of major statistical aggregates are analysed and made them available to users.

When an error in reporting or processing is detected, the revision is made in a transparent and timely manner.

CONSULTATION GROUPS FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

The development of an effective consultation process is an essential component in the production of relevant, accurate, comprehensive and timely official statistics. It will

- enable the NSO to monitor the main uses which data and publications are put to;
- ensure that the statistics produced meet user needs;
- ensure that appropriate data collection methodologies are being employed.

Furthermore, it will help the NSO to understand the perspectives of data providers, as well as to gauge the impact of statistical processes on individuals, households and enterprises. The departure point for the organisation of these groups is that increased consultation is likely to enhance confidence in official statistics.

An Effective Consultation Process: Benefits to Users and Data Providers

The development of an effective consultation process has benefits for the NSO and other relevant agencies. It also has real benefits for users and data providers. Some of these are:

- a. Filling of gaps in the current scope of consultation.
- b. Input of users/providers into prioritisation of work on existing and new sources of statistics.
- c. Establishing clear links to an overarching group in order to ensure that subject groups are not working in isolation.
- d. Enabling wider consultation.
- e. Providing easier access to other colleagues, within and without government.
- f. Providing a high level of openness (availability, access to methods, collection and methodologies).
- g. Providing greater scope for electronic consultation.
- h. Involving colleagues engaged in high-level research and policy-making.

Stakeholders in the National Statistical System

The stakeholders in the national statistical system are:

- a. Users of national statistics.
- b. Producers of national statistics.
- c. Providers of raw data.
- d. Society as a whole.

Statistical Users

The NSO has a wide range of users. Three main user groups may be identified as follows:

- a. Users within government.
- b. Specialised users outside government.
- c. General users: members of the public as citizens and as users of public services.

Statistical user groups normally aim to:

- a. Understand user perspectives, at the same time checking whether existing consultation arrangements are working properly.
- b. Command the trust and confidence of society at large.
- c. Identify problems in the collection, provision, use and understanding of statistics and discuss solutions with the responsible authorities.
- d. Provide a forum for the exchange of views and information between users and providers of statistics.
- e. Encourage the proper use of statistics through publicity and education.

Cooperation with Data Providers

- a. The full cooperation of data providers is necessary if the NSO output is to meet the highest standards.
- b. Proper weight must be given both to the burden on providers of raw data and to ensuring that the design of instruments for the collection of information accommodates the management and information needs of providers.

Nature of Proposal

This proposal aims to bring together the producers and users of official statistics as well as the data providers in a meaningful forum where the issues arising from ongoing and statistical work and practice are discussed regularly.

As a start, it is proposed to establish Consultation Groups in respect of the following statistical domains:

- Macro-economic;
- Labour market;
- Tourism;
- Education and training;
- Gender statistics;
- Trade and industry;
- Agriculture and Fisheries.

The Consultation Process

- a. The Consultation Groups will be composed of those statistical users or data providers having an interest in the subject area under consultation. The Director-General of the NSO, the divisional director and the theme manager will be members of each or any relevant Consultation Group as the case may be.
- b. A lead unit within the NSO will manage and coordinate the related Consultation Groups.
- c. The lead unit will set the agenda of each Consultation Group. Each member of the Consultation Group may propose items for the agenda.
- d. Consultation Groups will be convened either quarterly or bi-annually.
- e. Information about the Consultation Groups and their proceedings, as well as a list of the members of the Consultation Groups, will be posted on the NSO website.

Consultation Groups should ensure that there is a balance between the needs of users and these of data providers.

ENVIRONMENT-FRIENDLY PURCHASING POLICY

Purpose/Objectives

The objective of this policy is to encourage and increase the use of environment-friendly products and services by the National Statistics Office. By including an environmental perspective in purchasing decisions, the National Statistics Office can promote practices that improve public and worker health, conserve natural resources, and reward environmentally-conscious manufacturers, while remaining fiscally responsible.

The policy objectives are to:

- a. Expand the purchase of environment-friendly products;
- b. Identify environment-friendly alternatives;
- c. Recommend as goals institutional goals, the adoption of alternative processes, where practicable, that will reduce the use/disposal of hazardous substances and that will contribute to resource conservation;
- d. Collect and maintain up-to-date information regarding the availability of environment-friendly products.

Need

Many of the everyday products currently bought by the Office may contribute to problems in the environment, including air and water contamination and the depletion of natural resources. In some instances, products require special waste disposal procedures which can be cumbersome and expensive. Furthermore, employees using these products may be exposed to substances that are potentially harmful to their health. The National Statistics Office has an opportunity to serve as a potential community model for environmental leadership by incorporating a conversation plan of action for precious resources such as water, raw materials and energy, by reducing the use of hazardous substances. By incorporating environmental considerations in public purchasing, the National Statistics Office can reduce its burden on the local and global environment and, in the process, remove unnecessary hazards from its operations, protect public health, reduce costs and liabilities, and help develop markets for environmentally-responsible products.

Research, Evaluation and Implementation

An Environmental Purchasing Committee, made up of the Director, Corporate Services, the Manager, Human Resources and Administration, and a representative of the Environment Statistics Unit will research, evaluate, and implement environmental purchasing objectives. The Committee will focus its research, evaluation and implementation on the following areas:

- Recycled content products (e.g., paper and other office stationery and equipment);

- Less harmful and non-toxic materials and processes (e.g., janitorial products, pest management chemicals, phosphates, paint);
- Energy and water efficient products and processes (e.g., energy-efficient lighting, appliances and equipment);
- Natural resource and landscaping management (e.g., integrated pest and vegetation management, drought tolerant plants);
- Renewable products (e.g., certified forests, renewable energy resources);
- Disposal and pollution reduction (e.g., integrated waste management, milk/soda machines, double-sided copies, longer lasting tires, re-usable holiday trees);
- Packaging (e.g., bulk packaging, re-usable boxes, etc.);
- Green building program (e.g., using recycled products in construction and renovation, disposal of building materials in an environmentally sensitive manner, designing and renovating for energy and resource conservation).

The evaluation and implementation phases of this project will require a change in culture, behaviour, practices and procedures. To the greatest extent possible a participative process in the research, evaluation and implementation of policy recommendations will be followed. The Committee will also be required to monitor and evaluate progress in this area.

Specifications:

Recycled content products

As far as possible, all printing and photo copy paper products will meet EU directive guidelines for post-consumer recycled fibre content. In a parallel vein, all janitorial paper products will meet EU directive guidelines for post-consumer content.

Any other product with recycled content in use by the National Statistics Office not identified in this policy will meet the relevant EU directive recommendations and specification guidelines for recycled content.

Less harmful and non-toxic materials and processes

- As far as possible, no cleaning or disinfecting products (i.e., for janitorial or automotive use) will contain ingredients that are identified by the European Environmental Protection Agency or the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health as carcinogens, mutagens, or teratogens;
- The use of chlorofluorocarbon containing refrigerants, solvents and other products will be phased out to accommodate the Montreal Protocol on

Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. Each new purchase will comply with the Protocol;

- All surfactants will meet EU environmental standards as “readily biodegradable”. Where practicable, detergents will be phosphate-free;
- The National Statistics Office will reduce or eliminate the use of products that contribute to the formation of dioxin and furan compounds. As far as is practicable, processed chlorine-free or less bleached paper will be purchased for photo copy-grade and janitorial paper products. Additionally, the National Statistics Office will drastically reduce and even eliminate the use of Polyvinyl Chloride (PVC) plastics.

Energy and water efficient products and processes

Where practicable, purchased or leased electronic equipment including photocopiers, computers, printers, lighting systems, HVAC, kitchen and laundering appliances, and energy management systems must meet EU Environmental Protection Agency and energy efficiency standards. Where applicable, the energy efficiency function must remain enabled on all energy-efficient equipment.

Renewable products

The National Statistics Office will not procure products that originate from rainforest hardwood or tropical wood. As far as possible, the National Statistics Office will use products from certified forests.

Disposal and pollution reduction

- The National Statistics Office will first implement an integrated waste management program consistent with the waste management strategy i.e., waste prevention and re-use (source reduction). This will be followed by recycling and composting, with only the residual being disposed of as trash or garbage. Recycling programs are currently available at the National Statistics Office for paper, telephone books, laser-jet cartridges, wood pallets, scrap metal, batteries, glass and plastic bottles, and aluminium cans. The National Statistics Office will evaluate and implement expansions of the current programs in order to increase waste diversion;
- The NSO will ensure that staff members and any contractors/consultants use double-sided copying. Where practicable, all photocopiers and printers acquired by the National Statistics Office post-adoption of this policy are required to be capable of double-sided copying;
- Preference will be given to products that are re-usable or re-fillable and which are capable of being recycled or composted at the end of their life. They will be selected over disposable, long-lasting, durable. A pre-purchase review will be done before purchasing disposable or single-use items to determine their necessity and to assess their benefits over long-lasting, re-usable or re-fillable alternatives;

- Occasional-use items will be shared to the greatest extent possible;
- Preference will be given to the lightest, smallest, most durable product that will complete the task (e.g., photocopiers etc.);
- For large purchases, life-cycle cost analysis will be taken into consideration. Life-cycle cost analysis includes assessment of a product's maintenance, energy and water use, and disposal costs.

Packaging

- As far as possible, the Office will require packaging to be re-usable, recyclable or compostable. Items purchased will preferably be bulk-packed and carded items will be avoided;
- Vendors will be encouraged to take back and re-use pallets and packaging materials;
- The purchasing department will work with vendors to ensure the most effective packaging of products.

Performance, price and availability

No component of this policy will be construed as requiring the NSO or a contractor to procure products that do not perform adequately for their intended use, exclude adequate competition, or are not available at a reasonable price in a reasonable period of time. The National Statistics Office is aware that there might be an increased cost to the purchasing of environment-friendly products.

LIBRARY AND INFORMATION UNIT (LIU) COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT POLICY

Purpose and Audience

This collection development policy has been developed to provide a set of guidelines to help in the management and definition of the collection of resources for the betterment of the service that the LIU offers to its users. These guidelines should be flexible enough to allow for initiatives for the benefit of the LIU, keeping in mind the objectives of the NSO. This document should be used by senior management, as the basis for future planning, decision making and priority settings in collection management. It should provide consistency and continuity to the process of collection development.

This document is also intended to increase staff/public awareness of the contents and resources of the library collection. It is also intended to raise awareness of the increase in use of electronic resources and the possible advantages and alternatives they should provide us with in the future.

Institution and Clientele

The NSO is the official statistical agency of the Maltese Islands. Its overall objective is to collect, process and publish statistical information on social and economic conditions. These figures are the basis on which every, economical, political and business decision is made. The client base encompasses a wide spectrum of people and organisations. The Public Service, trade associations, social partners, industry sectors, academics, researchers, the media, students and the public in general are all prospective clients of the NSO.

Mission Statement / Collection Management Objectives

The mission statement of the NSO is "to serve the statistical information needs of parliament, government and the community by striving for excellence through vigorous protection of confidential data, quality information respondents and a timely, objective and responsive statistical service". The objectives of the collection management are to support the mission statement of the organisation by:

- provision of access to local and international statistical information;
- providing the specific resources required by the staff to sustain the collection;
- provision of necessary equipment for the use of electronic resources.

Intellectual Freedom/Censorship

Due to the particular nature of the organisation certain confidential data available within the NSO cannot be made available in the LIU. This is in accordance with the Malta Statistics Authority Act, 2000 that protects the confidentiality of the data suppliers. The access to online resources (Internet) is also subject to filtering operated by the Malta Government Network (MAGNET).

Collection Overview

The collection of the LIU is made up of over 10,000 items. These include local and foreign publications, documents, papers, serials, journals and CD-ROMs. The local collection of statistical publications goes back to the 1950's and a very rare collection of Blue Books, today's equivalent of the Annual of Statistics, date back to the 1870's. National statistical publications emanating from more than 20 countries are available. Europe is the most represented area although some statistical publications from North African countries are also available. The LIU has extensive coverage of recent Eurostat statistical publications thanks to an agreement with the same organisation. Statistical publications from the main international organisations such as UN, IMF, ILO, OECD and others also form part of the collection.

The LIU also holds an index of local newspaper articles that report the data published by the NSO. Newspapers cuttings are presently filed according to subject and the relevant units within the NSO are also supplied with copies of the articles for their reference. Plans to digitize the process are at an advanced stage.

The LIU presently receives around 20 journals mostly dealing with statistics. A reasonable number of pamphlets and news releases of statistical organisations also form part of the collection. Most of the journals are received as complimentary copies and the LIU can only afford a limited number of subscriptions. The provision of a Table of Contents (TOC) service to main statistical journals is currently being proposed.

The statistical publications are arranged on the shelves according to country and originating agency. The library classification systems used are the Dewey (DDC) and the ISIC, which is a specialised statistical classification system. The collection of statistical publications cover most of the themes, e.g.: population, labour force, living conditions, education, environment, foreign trade, economic development, prices and wages, business and other economic activities.

An increasing number of CD-ROMs concerning various statistical subjects are available within the collection. Access to the collection is through an Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) that is available on the Local Area Network to all staff within the Public Service. All other users can access the OPAC through the NSO website. The ability of the system to facilitate access to electronic resources is one of the major issues currently being discussed by the management. Another major issue is the capability of the system to convert the present bibliographic records into MARC 21 format.

The LIU is aware that the inclusion of electronic resources in its collection is necessary to compliment the present collection. Increasingly, important statistical data and publications are being published exclusively in electronic format. The access to electronic journals, monographs and websites dealing with statistics will surely enhance the collection of the LIU. The selection criteria for such electronic resources shall be included in the *Selection Policy*.

Cooperative Agreements

The LIU has a standing exchange agreement with a number of international statistical organisations. Until recently, only print publications have been exchanged but the

production of NSO publications in CD-ROM format means that we are now in a position to exchange electronic publications.

Cooperation agreements with other organisations in the area of resource sharing are being considered. The prohibitive costs of on-line databases and electronic journals and the restricted financial resources of libraries have increased the importance of resource sharing. The specific nature of the LIU makes it difficult to find partners with the same interests.

Organisation of Collection Management

The Manager Information Services is responsible for the organisation of the collection. The Manager Information Services may consult the Librarian and a representative from the IT Unit where necessary.

Electronic resources are becoming increasingly important and the IT representative should provide the Manager Information Services with the necessary information and expertise on possible software and hardware requirements for certain electronic resources.

The CDP is revised every year due to the rapid changes being imposed by technological developments.

Relationship with Other Policies

The CDP should respect the other policies of the organisation. It is inextricably linked with the funding policy and depends on the budget allocated to reach its objectives. The CDP is also related with the Training Policy of the organisation. Continuing education and specialization have become indispensable to re-equip collection development librarians with the skills essential to perform efficiently.

General Policies

Language

The LIU is generally inclined towards providing material in the English language.

Materials in Maltese, though minimal, *are* also available in the collection. A number of partner organisations in the exchange programme supply the LIU with materials in their vernacular language since they do not publish an English version. A possible advantage of electronic exchange of publications could be the ability to acquire bi-lingual publications. The CPD, at the moment, does not impose any restrictions with regards to language of materials for the LIU.

The following is a list of formats already in the collection and other formats that are being considered for inclusion in the collection:

Monographs/ Serials:

These make up a reasonable part of the collection. Methodologies, textbooks,

economics, yearbooks, annual compilations, reports, collections of papers and other subjects dealing with statistics in general are the basis of this part of the collection. Emphasis is made on material of lasting and statistical value. The currency of the materials is also a very important factor. The use of electronic monographs should be seriously considered in the near future. Some of these are free and will therefore contribute to reduce the high costs of most printed materials. The main issues to be considered when acquiring electronic monographs are ease-of-use, presentation, added value and costs-rights issues. The *Selection Policy* should include detailed selection criteria re electronic monographs/serials.

Journals:

The LIU presently receives about 20 journals all in print format. The majority are statistical-related journals. The cost factor has restricted the extension of this collection and the cost effectiveness of subscribing to e-journals is being considered. An increasing number of journals are being published in electronic format and references to papers within electronic journals are proliferating. The LIU cannot afford to miss out on information that is of relevance and great importance to the collection development. If a journal exists in both print and electronic format some considerations are important. Evaluation and selection criteria must be clearly set out in the *Selection Policy*. The archiving issue of e-journals must also be taken into consideration. Some publishers are giving free access to the electronic version if a subscription to the print version is made. The issue of resource-sharing mentioned earlier might be considered for e-journals.

Pamphlets/ News releases:

A number of statistical organisations send various pamphlets and news releases to the LIU. These are also shelved according to the origin of the material. Some of the news releases are being received electronically and then printed out

The LIU should consider storing the resources electronically and making them available through the LAN (Intranet). In this way shelving space could be saved and also reduce the printing costs.

CD-ROMs/Diskettes:

At the moment these formats are still a relatively small part of the collection. An increasing number of CD-ROMs, however, is available but are still not widely used. Some of the CD-ROM's may need guidance to use especially with inexperienced users. This again raises the issue of librarian/staff/ user training. As greater experience is gained more definite criteria for selection will be developed.

Internet:

Access to resources on the Internet is offered to the staff/users of the LIU. The LIU staff also act as intermediaries to the requests of the staff. The present situation demands from librarians that:

- be well informed about research developments and the demand and supply of information;

- be familiar with computer applications and programmes, the use of CD-ROM's, online databases and Internet resources and with document delivery services.

The introduction of the Automated Library System will enable the LIU to provide a much more efficient and user-orientated approach. The electronic resources will all be catalogued and eventually made accessible directly through the OPAC. The supply of a number of gateways to quality Internet resources and databases will save the users of the LIU time and money. The LIU binds itself to provide the necessary training and assistance to the staff and the users. The resources will be selected following the selection criteria set out in the Selection Policy. These will include:

- reference sources;
- electronic monographs;
- electronic journals;
- discussion groups;
- review sources.

Not all these resources are free. Indeed some of them are very expensive. The LIU should make use of the free resources where possible. Other important resources will require subscription and licensing agreements. The CM Committee is responsible for such agreements and should try to find partners for resource sharing agreements that will reduce the costs significantly.

Digitised Collections:

As stated earlier, the LIU will start digitising newspaper articles dealing with statistics in the near future. The physical filing system could be stopped and the articles will be indexed and searchable via the Intranet. Historical collections and particular materials needed for preservation will also be digitised.

Multiple copies

As a general rule for print copies, the LIU acquires only one copy of each title for its collection. The NSO publications are considered separately and 6 copies are held in the collection. The electronic resources issue represents particular considerations. Licensing agreements generally specify the allowed access at a particular time of a particular resource. Special attention will be given to this issue when considering agreements with suppliers.

Weeding

Statistical publications (excluding local) that simply provide data will be removed from the collection within 15 years of publication. As materials become worn, dated, damaged or lost, replacement will be determined by the librarian depending on the particular item. The weeding exercise is carried out every 2 years and falls within the responsibility of the librarian. The material removed from the collection will not be discarded but stored in a separate building for 10 years after which it will be

evaluated and passed on either for preservation or disposal. All users of the LIU will be issued an ID card for circulation purposes. Only a small part of the collection is for reference only. The majority of the collection is available for circulation. The LIU has a number of circulation options depending on the particular item.

Standard loan	3 weeks
Short loan	3 days
Extended loan	3 months (available only to staff members)

All extended loan items must be handed-in for a renewal every 3 months. Users may not remove items from the LIU without the authorisation of the LIU staff.

Detailed Analysis of the Subject Collections

Analysis of the collection is according to the origin of the work. This is determined by the particularity of the collection and from the fact that two different classification systems are used. A conspectus-like approach has been applied to determine the strength of the resources. For our collection, the broader three-point, whole number scale has been applied. The basic levels are:

Minimal Level	collection that supports minimal inquiries about this subject/organisation
Intermediate Level	collection supports this subject/organisation well through a reasonably wide coverage
Comprehensive Level	collection strives to be as exhaustive as possible for this particular subject/ organisation

Normally this scale would include a 0 - Out of scope level but since the collection is relatively small and very specialised this scale was not included for the moment. This does not exclude the inclusion of such category after future evaluations.

The following is a basic list of the collection materials classified by origin, the present strength of the collection together with a projection for 2005.

Origin	2003	2005
National collections (foreign)	2	2
Statistical methodologies	2	3
Statistical textbooks	1	2
Classifications	2	3
Dictionaries'	1	2
Special Topics	2	3
Academic Journals (Economics & Statistics)	1	1
Conference Proceedings	1	3
Foreign Periodicals (Economics)	1	1
Eurostat Publications	2	3
Eurostat Serials	2	3
Eurostat CD-ROMs	1	2
UN Statistical Yearbooks	3	3
UN Serials	2	2
UNESCO Statistical Publications	1	2
UNDP	1	2
UNEP	1	2
UNICEF	1	2
FAO	1	2
ECE	2	3
WTO	2	2
WHO	1	2
EMI	1	2
Council of Europe	2	2
European Commission	1	1
OECD	1	2
ISI	1	2
IMF	1	2
IMF Serials	2	3
IMF Yearbooks	2	2
The World Bank	1	2

Origin	2003	2005
ILO	1	2
ILO Yearbooks	1	1
ECB	1	2
Malta - Reference Works	1	1
Malta Annual Reports	2	2
Malta Government Finance	2	3
Central Bank of Malta	2	3
NSO Publications	3	3
IT Periodicals	1	1
NSO Operations	3	3
Statistical Papers	2	3
Historical Blue Books	3	3
Malta Government Gazette	3	3
Library Science	1	2
CDROM databases	1	3

For this methodology to succeed a continuous evaluation of the collection and possible mediations are necessary. The collection will be evaluated and analysed every year and the Librarian is responsible for the assessment process. The assessment process provides better knowledge of the collection, an action plan for collection management, justification for budget increase/decrease and support for grant applications. With the introduction of electronic resources the evaluation process will assume even more significance and may indicate possible shifts for the allocation of funds towards access or vice-versa. This use of this system for collection analysis might be considered innovative in the Maltese Islands but has been used for a number of years in organisations all over the world. It helps us to grasp how or whether in real terms, we are improving the level of accessible information resources needed to support the needs of staff and users. It presents a convincing rationale in lobbying for funds.

This collection development policy is not a static document but it is a way of effectively communicating with senior management, the staff, the users and other libraries.

NSO PRICING POLICY

This document outlining the NSO pricing policy has been prepared with the intention of providing our clients with an overview of the principles applied by the NSO when setting prices for services that are not available free of charge.

The document describes the underlying principles for charging a fee for publications, customised services and handling enquiries. The Office's practice with regard to contracts for customised services is also outlined.

A list of NSO publications and the most important standard systems with descriptions and price lists are available on our website at www.nso.gov.mt. The NSO has adopted a centralised approach towards dealing with clients. The staff members at the Library and Information Unit and Data Shop are the main interface between the NSO and our clients. This allows for a professional service that is provided by trained staff in handling requests whilst allowing statisticians to concentrate on their work - producing statistics.

Objectives

The NSO pricing policy is intended to meet the following objectives:

- to better identify and rationalise clients' use of NSO products and services;
- to encourage users to analyse and address their real needs for NSO products, both regarding statistics and services;
- to establish a clear demarcation line between public good and customised statistical products and services.

The balancing of public good obligations and user pays principle underpins the pricing policy of the NSO.

Public Good Obligations

A considerable amount of the data collected by the NSO is made available to our users in the form of statistical news releases and publications in print and electronic format. Most statistics published by the NSO are accessible from the NSO website or the Library and Information Unit which is open during office hours. This Unit also incorporates a circulation library that is accessible to the general public.

Publications

The production of NSO publications entails costs such as editing, printing and distribution. Only a minimal part of these costs is covered by the retail price of the publication as we believe it is important that statistical products should be available at accessible prices. Some publications are also available free of charge on our website at www.nso.gov.mt, where a complete list of NSO publications, including prices, can be accessed. It is also possible to download an order form from our website. A short description and selected tables are often available for publications that are not available online in full-text.

As from 2003, various NSO publications are being published in CD-ROM format only. This is in line with the practices being adopted by most foreign national statistical institutes. Again, only part of the costs is recovered by the price of the CD-ROMs in line with our obligation to make national statistics accessible to everyone.

POD Service

The NSO feels that although, as explained above, the international trend is towards making statistical products available in electronic format, clients who do not have access to the Internet and PCs should not be disadvantaged. We are therefore offering a Print on Demand Service that allows our clients to order a print version of any electronic product published by the NSO. The pricing in these cases remains the same for all formats.

Customised Services

Customised services are available to meet the clients' individual requirements. These include compilation of datasets for further analysis, specific geographical distributions, highly detailed statistics, and unpublished combinations of variables. Cost recovery charges are applicable for the provision of these services.

The cost recovery policy is intended to shift some of the costs from the general taxpayer to the user of customised statistics. The prices for customised services are based on two elements. The price is first and foremost based on the number of hours taken to process and disseminate the service to the client. Secondly, the cost recovery charges are not intended to cover the substantial costs associated with data collection, processing and production but to help users focus more properly on actual needs and to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the statistical service.

Rates for Customised Requests

The general principle determining the NSO Pricing Policy is that clients should be charged an hourly rate that applies to all statisticians across the board. The standard rates applicable for 2004 are as follows:

Minimum Rate	Lm3.50 +VAT (10 euros)
Hourly Rate	Lm7 +VAT (21 euros) [calculated to the nearest half hour]

In all cases where cost recovery charges are applicable, client will be informed about the charges applicable and work on the request will not commence before confirmation of acceptance of costs has been received.

Special Rates

Special rates may be applicable depending on the type of customers. In the case of full-time students, for example, the NSO will offer a 50% discount on the charges applicable (reference by tutor required). The NSO reserves the right to apply special rates as may be necessary depending on the individual cases.

Handling of Client Requests

Clients are encouraged to submit their requests through the online request form available at <http://www.nso.gov.mt/REQUEST.HTM>. Before submitting their request, clients should check whether the data required are available on the NSO website by browsing through the NSO web pages or using the search facility. Clients can also request data by fax (+356 21249841) or e-mail (library.nso@gov.mt). The Library and Information staff are also available to answer very basic requests on the phone (+ 356 25997209).

Normal requests requiring statistical data from published figures or basic extractions will be replied within 3-4 working days. In the case of complex requests, these should normally take from 5 to 10 working days depending on the complexity. Clients may be contacted to discuss time-frames for complex requests.

The URGENT Service

The NSO offers a service for very urgent requests that are required within 24 hours. If the client opts for this service the following rates apply:

Hourly Rate Lm20 +VAT (57 euros) [calculated to the nearest half hour]

For this service it is advisable that the client submits his request through the online request form available through the NSO website and follows it up with an immediate phone call to the Library and Information Unit staff to confirm receipt and costs involved.

Photocopying Service

A Photocopying Service is available at the Library and Information Unit. Photocopies can also be requested by telephone, fax, letter or e-mail, and will be sent to a postal address or fax number supplied by the client.

Photocopies are charged at 4c each for A4 pages and 6c each for A3 pages. A 10c postage and administration cost (minimum rate) is applicable.

Copyright

The NSO reserves the copyright of all the statistical data disseminated. The NSO should be quoted as the source whenever data acquired from the NSO is published by our clients.

Our Commitment

The NSO is bound to offer a quality service to its clients. If, for whatever reason, the NSO is not able to supply the data within the agreed time-frames, the cost recovery charges will be dropped and the data will be supplied free of charge.