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Mission Statement

"To produce efficiently and with minimum burden on respondents high-quality statistics that are relevant, reliable and comparable, and to disseminate them in an impartial, independent and timely manner, making them available simultaneously to all users."

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Foreword

For the first time, this report records the activities and projects of the National Statistics Office (NSO) for a longer period than has been the practice to date, namely for 15 months ending 31 December 2008. It also sets out some of our plans and objectives for 2009.

The period under review held a number of challenges and was marked with its own problems and difficulties.

Towards the end of 2007, a team of Eurostat-appointed experts carried out a Peer Review wherein they examined and reported on practices within NSO. The purpose of the Peer Review was to assess the extent of conformity of NSO with the European Statistics Code of Practice.

Well before 1 January 2008, work was already underway for our units' systems and databases to cater for Malta's adoption of the euro. As members of the euro area, statistical demands not only increased, but became more intense. I am pleased to report that NSO rose to the historic euro challenge. Releases prior to and post e-day were reported in dual currency to make them user-friendly.

In March, NSO launched a long-overdue Household Budgetary Survey spread over twelve months. This will enable us to update consumption weights in the calculation of the harmonised index of consumer prices and the retail price index. This was carried out in addition to other existing surveys.

June saw the launching of important manuals describing our sources and methods. The GNI inventory of sources and methods, including process tables, the Quarterly National Accounts inventory, the Excessive Deficit Procedure inventory and the RPI and HICP manual are important contributions to the NSO body of methodological literature. 2008 also saw the introduction of a monthly release on Industrial Producer Price Indices.

Throughout the period under review, NSO continued to tap European sources for funding its projects. In all, €0.44 million was granted to NSO in connection with the carrying out of specific statistical projects. This covered 75 per cent of the total project costs and assisted us in a significant way towards attaining our goals.

NSO is also becoming more environment conscious. The introduction of the first born-digital publication in 2009, together with the print-on-demand service, will effectively mean that the use of print, paper and CD-ROMs for the release of statistical publications will steadily diminish. Our focus on electronic publications is not only more cost-effective, but provides increased flexibility in the storage and use of statistical data.

In the last quarter of 2008, the organisation's units were restructured under four directorates: Economic Statistics; Business Statistics; Social Statistics and Information Society; and Resources and Support Services. One unit – the Methodology, Research and Training Unit – falls under my direct responsibility. Training will be singled out for particular importance.

I was appointed to head the Office on 5 November 2008 and therefore I would like to give credit where it is due. As a matter of fact, most of the activities and projects

described in this report were supported and promoted by my predecessor, Mr Reno Camilleri. In particular, during his tenure NSO committed itself to hosting a high-level conference for European Directors General of National Statistics Institutes in Malta in September/October 2009 (DGINS). In addition to this demanding project, which has a distinct European dimension, plans for 2009 include, among others, better regulation, including the tapping of administrative sources to minimise response burden, and the adherence of NSO to IMF's Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS).

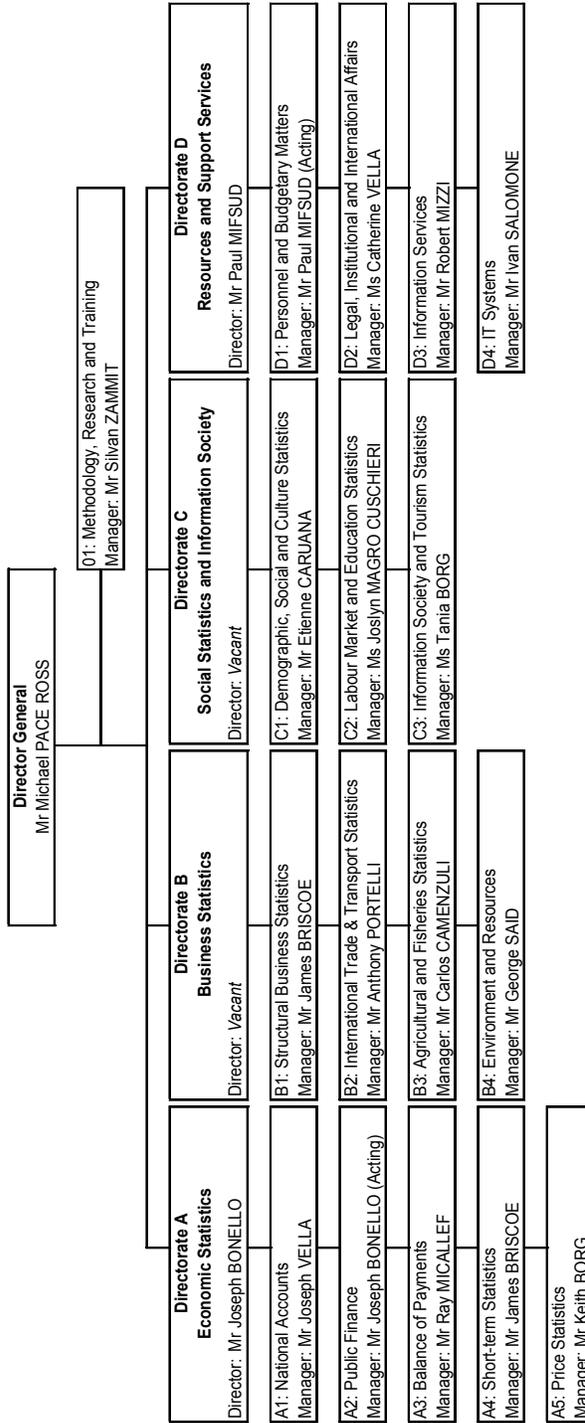
All the activities and projects referred to in the Report were made possible and achieved while carrying on with NSO day-to-day operations. These include maintaining good contact with our data suppliers and users, to whom I am especially grateful. I also wish to take this opportunity to thank the NSO management and staff for their dedication and hard work and for rising to the occasion of sustaining NSO's work during the challenging times the period under review presented.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael Pace Ross', written in a cursive style.

Michael Pace Ross
Director General

20 April 2009

Organisation Chart for the National Statistics Office (Malta)



As at March 2009

European Statistics Code of Practice

With the adoption of the European Statistics Code of Practice, Eurostat and the statistical institutes of the EU Member States, including NSO, have committed themselves to an encompassing approach towards high-quality statistics. The Code builds upon a common European Statistical System definition of quality in statistics and targets all relevant areas from the institutional environment, the statistical production processes to our output: official statistics.

The European Statistics Code of Practice sets out 15 key principles for the production and dissemination of European official statistics and the institutional environment under which national and Community statistical authorities operate. A set of indicators of good practice for each of the 15 principles provides a reference for reviewing the implementation of the Code.

The European Statistics Code of Practice was adopted by the Statistical Programme Committee on 24 February 2005 and has been promulgated in the Commission Recommendation of 25 May 2005 on the independence, integrity and accountability of the national and Community statistical authorities.

The key principles are the following:

- i. Professional independence
- ii. Mandate for data collection
- iii. Adequacy of resources
- iv. Quality commitment
- v. Statistical confidentiality
- vi. Impartiality and objectivity
- vii. Sound methodology
- viii. Appropriate statistical procedures
- ix. Non-excessive burden on respondents
- x. Cost effectiveness
- xi. Relevance
- xii. Accuracy and reliability
- xiii. Timeliness and punctuality
- xiv. Coherence and comparability
- xv. Accessibility and clarity

UNIT 01: METHODOLOGY, RESEARCH AND TRAINING

In addition to providing support to functional units within NSO, including survey and sample design, the Unit has, since September 2005, been involved in the organisation and methodological preparations for the 2008 Household Budgetary Survey. Results are expected to be published in 2009.

The Unit also undertook a number of customised socio-economic surveys and business research on behalf of public and private organisations, including:

- two audience surveys on behalf of the Broadcasting Authority, one of which is carried out on an ongoing basis;
- a survey on behalf of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment (MEYE);
- surveys on behalf of the National Euro Changeover Committee (NECC);
- a survey on behalf of the National Audit Office (NAO);
- a survey on behalf of the Ministry for Infrastructure, Transport and Communication (MITC);
- a survey on behalf of Go;
- a survey on behalf of Stella Maris College.

Throughout 2008, the Unit was engaged in a 2005 Transition Facility project on the methodological and technological preparations for the 2011 Census.

Staff training

As from November 2008, the Unit was given the responsibility for staff training within the Office. Indeed, the Unit is currently engaged in the organisation of various customised training courses for both NSO and other organisations, related to statistical methodologies and other more generic themes on statistics.

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. Tables 1 and 2 provide information on local and foreign courses attended by NSO staff members.

Table 1. Local courses: 2007/08 ...

Type of course	Men	Women	Total
Induction Course	-	3	3
Classifications (NACE Rev. 2 CPA 2008)	3	2	5
MS Excel 2003 Advanced	1	-	1
Leadership Skills Programme for Principals	1	-	1
Pre-Retirement Programme	1	1	2
Microsoft Access – Introduction	-	1	1

... Table 1. Local courses: 2007/08

Type of course	Men	Women	Total
Introduction to SPSS	-	1	1
External Statistics	1	-	1
Training Programme for Teleworkers	1	1	2
Diploma in Diplomatic Studies	1	-	1
Diversity Management Seminar	-	1	1
Total	9	10	19

Table 2. Foreign courses: 2007/08 ...

Type of course	Men	Women	Total
European Statistical Training Programme (ESTP) Course on Structural Business Statistics	-	2	2
European Statistical Training Programme (ESTP) Course on Data Dissemination and Publication of Statistics	-	1	1
European Statistical Training Programme (ESTP) Basic Course on National Accounts	1	1	2
European Statistical Training Programme (ESTP) Course on Survey Methodology and Sampling Techniques	-	1	1
New SDMX Training Session for developers on Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange	1	-	1
European Statistical Training Programme (ESTP) Introductory Course on the European Statistical System (ESS)	-	1	1
European Statistical Training Programme (ESTP) Introductory Course on Seasonal Adjustment	1	-	1
European Statistical Training Programme (ESTP) Course on Government Finance Statistics (Part I)	-	1	1
European Statistical Training Programme (ESTP) Course on Advanced National Accounts	-	1	1
European Statistical Training Programme (ESTP) Course on the European Statistical System (ESS)	1	-	1
European Statistical Training Programme (ESTP) Course on Nomenclatures Classification and their Harmonisation	1	-	1
European Statistical Training Programme (ESTP) Advanced Course on Seasonal Adjustment	-	1	1

... Table 2. Foreign courses: 2007/08

Type of course	Men	Women	Total
European Statistical Training Programme (ESTP) Course on National Accounts in Practice (hands on Course)	-	1	1
European Statistical Training Programme (ESTP) Course on Government Finance Statistics (Part II)	-	1	1
Study Visit on Job Vacancies Survey at the Institute for Employment Research (AB)	1	1	2
Study Visit on the Occupational Diseases Statistics	3	-	3
Total	9	12	21

Directorate A: Economic Statistics

UNIT A1: NATIONAL ACCOUNTS

In the period under review, the National Accounts Unit continued its process of revising annual and quarterly estimates in the light of data emerging from new surveys. The continuous process of improving methods and estimates played a key role in the improvement of the structure of the Unit. Thus, it has been ensured that National Accounts estimates are based on the European System of National and Regional Accounts (ESA95) as recommended by Eurostat. Revisions were mainly due to the inclusion of new statistical data as well as methodological improvements.

The Unit maintained its quarterly news release in line with the NSO Advance Release Calendar. The Unit also supported the Information Services Unit with the provision of national accounts data to its various users.

Other activities

Apart from its normal activities, the Unit was engaged in the following tasks:

- the compilation of weights for the annual purchasing power parities (PPP) exercise;
- reports on VAT, rents and tips in the service industries;
- the GNI and its supporting quality report for EU Own Resources purposes;
- the calculation of the weighted average rate for the VAT own resources exercise;
- coordination with other units to ensure optimal use of data from surveys;
- seasonally-adjusted data.

In addition, National Accounts staff attended a number of meetings concerning the System of Health Accounts and Health Labour Accounts. Meetings were also held with various other major data providers and users.

Publication of inventories

The period under review saw the publication of the Gross National Income (GNI) Inventory. This was the result of extensive work carried out by staff members with the assistance of colleagues from the Public Finance and Balance of Payments Units over a number of years. The inventory uses the structure recommended by Eurostat and is available online.

The National Accounts Unit also published the Quarterly National Accounts (QNA) Inventory for Malta. The inventory refers to quarterly National Accounts for the benchmark year 2004 and uses the structure recommended by Eurostat.

Courses and meetings abroad

Training courses have always contributed towards strengthening the career development of National Accounts staff. During the period covered by this report, four National Accounts staff members attended courses organised by Eurostat. In addition, the Unit was represented at the GNI Committee Meetings and the National Accounts working parties held in Luxembourg. Staff members also participated in local seminars and conferences.

The Unit succeeded in meeting all its international commitments and obligations with regard to the transmission of quarterly GDP data to Eurostat within the 70-day time frame.

UNIT A2: PUBLIC FINANCE

Since October 2007, the Public Finance Unit worked on the compilation of non-financial as well as financial statistics covering the General Government sector. In this way, the Unit provided the necessary input to the National Accounts Unit through the provision of sectoral data for the General Government sector.

Financial accounts

One of the main priorities for the Unit during this 15-month period was to compile and maintain a full set of quarterly financial accounts for the General Government sector. This was especially necessary because of Malta's obligations arising from the adoption of the euro on 1 January 2008. Working in close collaboration with the Treasury Department as well as with the Statistics Division of the Central Bank of Malta, the Public Finance Unit is now compiling these quarterly and annual financial accounts within established time frames.

European System of Integrated Social Protection Statistics (ESSPROS)

Building on the groundwork of earlier years, the Unit maintained the compilation of a full set of data on the Government's expenditures and receipts in respect of social protection. In the course of 2008, the Unit started work on an exercise aimed at measuring the 'accrued-to-date pension liabilities'. This exercise is being piloted by the European Central Bank (ECB) and facilitated by the German University of Freiburg, the appointed sub-contractors. The work is expected to be finalised during the second quarter of 2009, when the University will be presenting its findings in respect of all participating Member States.

Government Expenditure according to the Classification of the Functions of Government (COFOG)

The Unit is regularly disaggregating Government expenditure based on the COFOG second level. Following a pilot exercise carried out during the last quarter of 2007, data at this detailed level (for 2003 to 2007) were transmitted to Eurostat by end 2008 and subsequently published locally. In the course of 2009, retrospective data will be compiled. Future enhancements include the disaggregation of health data (which will be possible when the Health Accounts are forthcoming from the Health Department), as well as improved data on Environment Protection (with the cooperation of MEPA).

Research and Development in the General Government

During the first quarter of 2008, the Unit carried out its annual survey within General Government in order to measure the sector's output in Research and Development (R&D). All the relevant reporting obligations to the Commission were respected and the results were published locally.

Other activities

The Unit is responsible for compiling biannual tables on Government's debt and deficit positions as established by the Maastricht Criteria. This work is governed by specific guidelines as established by Council Regulation (EC) No 3605/93 as amended. During the period under review the Unit completed, and is presently maintaining, the national tax database which is available on the site of DG TAXUD. Within this context the Unit continued to support the Ministry of Finance, the Economy and Investment by compiling and transmitting specific tax data to DG TAXUD.

UNIT A3: BALANCE OF PAYMENTS

Main output

The main tasks of the Balance of Payments Unit during the past 15 months were the compilation of:

- the monthly balance of payments (BOP) statement;
- the international investment position (IIP) statement;
- the foreign direct investment flows and position report;
- the Coordinated Portfolio Investment Survey (CPIS) report for 2007;
- the Foreign Affiliates Statistics report for 2005.

Since January 2008, when Malta adopted the euro as its currency, the monthly BOP statement became obligatory: by Regulation it is to be submitted to the ECB within six weeks from the end of the period. This was done for the past three years on a gentleman's agreement to enable the ECB to assess Malta's potential adoption of the euro. The monthly surveys of the non-financial sector carried out by the Unit are complemented by surveys of the financial sector undertaken by the Central Bank of Malta. The IIP is also sent regularly to the ECB for the compilation of the euro area statement.

The quarterly and annual BOP and FDI reports, compiled in accordance with the BOP Regulation, were submitted on time to Eurostat as well as to the ECB. The reports are disaggregated by country, and the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) reports are also disaggregated by economic sector. These relate to:

- quarterly euro indicators;
- quarterly and annual Balance of Payments statements;
- annual international trade in services;
- FDI flows in Malta and abroad;
- FDI position in Malta and abroad;
- Foreign Affiliates Statistics.

The quarterly Balance of Payments news release was compiled and released approximately eighty days after the lapse of the quarter. The releases include world summary tables as well as a geographical breakdown of the Current Account. Simultaneously, the full detailed statement (Current and Capital & Financial Accounts),

as well as the complete summary statement (as from 1995 to the latest quarter), were submitted for upload on NSO's website.

Other work and compilations which were also disseminated in news releases by the Unit include:

- direct investment – in Malta and abroad – covering both flows and stock positions, broken down by main countries as well as by economic sectors;
- the Co-ordinated Portfolio Investment Survey (CPIS) for 2007. This is a breakdown of Malta's portfolio investment assets abroad by country;
- the IIP statement for 2006.

Foreign Affiliates Statistics (FATS)

The compilation of inward FATS is directly linked to short-term business statistics from where the relevant variables are extracted, which are in turn compared and grossed up to the SBS population. For this reason, only the 2005 FATS could be compiled and submitted to Eurostat. In 2008, a Eurostat grant was utilised to compile additional variables concerning intra-group exports and imports of goods and services.

Statistics relating to International Trading Companies

The issue of International Trading Companies (also known as Special Purpose Entities – SPEs) has been stepped up. A task force was set up in the last quarter of 2008 comprising the units of National Accounts, Balance of Payments, Structural Business Statistics and the Central Bank of Malta, so that these entities would be treated similarly across the board. The main issue is to distinguish between a resident and a non-resident, as this would have a direct effect on reporting. Several large SPEs have since been validated prior to incorporation in official statistics.

Non-response

The Unit embarked on an aggressive exercise to retrieve responses from defaulters. Following several reminders, legal action (as stipulated by Act XXIV of 2000) was taken against defaulters of quarterly (2008) and annual (2007) surveys.

UNIT A4: SHORT-TERM STATISTICS

Monthly questionnaires were sent to enterprises operating in the quarrying, manufacturing and energy sectors while quarterly questionnaires were sent to operators in construction, retail trade and other services. A major change which was implemented in 2008 was the updating of the representative sample. The Unit still compiled and transmitted indices for Industry (NACE divisions 14 to 41), and used the same sample to compile the manufacturing quarterly news release as well as the manufacturing performance release.

This change, along with a major overhaul of the software, a simple estimating procedure for non-respondents and a clean-up of the data, was implemented following inconsistencies detected between the indices and the absolute values in 2006-2007.

Indices going back to 2000 were revised and transmitted for every month/quarter, thus providing better quality data for time series purposes.

Production index

Work on compiling a Production Index is still ongoing, although little progress has been registered with regard to sample size, products and units of measure. The Unit held talks with Mr Brian Newson from Eurostat on this index, during a visit to NSO in 2008, and both sides agreed on a list of priorities. Unit staff members require training relative to their work, especially index compilation techniques. During 2008, the Unit was dependent on foreign consultants.

Producer price index

Since January 2008, following the valid assistance of Mr David Collins, an expert from the International Monetary Fund, the compilation and publishing of an Industrial Producer Price Index became part of the NSO's monthly release calendar. Monthly Indices for Main Industrial Groups (MIGs) by market were published early in 2008 with a time series going back to 2005, this being the base year. The monthly release is published with a time lag of two months at the beginning of each month.

UNIT A5: PRICE STATISTICS

Consumer prices and purchasing power parities

The Price Statistics Unit monitors over 8,700 prices of goods and services every month for the compilation of the Retail Price Index and the Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices. A number of periodic surveys in specific areas are conducted every year. These include professionals' fees, school and tuition fees, rents, accommodation services and social protection, among others.

In addition to these indices, the Unit conducts most of the work related to the Purchasing Power Parities exercise. These include the carrying out of two different consumer goods and services surveys, the salaries survey and the CPI-PPP surveys every year, apart from the equipment goods survey and the construction survey, conducted biennially. The latter two surveys are sourced out to two experts in the field of construction although the validation process is carried out by the Unit's staff.

Quality adjustment

In 2008 NSO extended the use of the hedonic method of quality adjustment on personal computers. This facilitated taking into account the continuous developments taking place in such a dynamic market. The motor cars index was compiled using the hedonic method too.

HICP-CT

Preparations were undertaken to start compiling the Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices – Constant Taxes (HICP-CT) on a monthly basis. The HICP-CT enables policy makers to estimate the impact of changes in direct taxation on inflation. In December

2008 NSO hired the services of an expert in this field to help us in the compilation of the index.

Immovable property index

The Unit also published an Immovable Property Price Index in accordance with the Immovable Property (Acquisition by Non-Residents) Act, Chapter 246 of the Laws of Malta.

Directorate B: Business Statistics

UNIT B1: STRUCTURAL BUSINESS STATISTICS

In the course of 2008 the grossing-up exercise for the SBS 2004 was finalised, following on the 2003 survey concluded earlier in the year. In the meantime, grossing up of the SBS for 2005 commenced. SBS 2006 was also concluded following an intensive follow-up exercise, including legal procedures, in order to increase the response rate for this survey. When possible, non-respondent companies were estimated on the basis of Malta Financial Services Authority (MFSA) administrative records. With regard to SBS 2005, all respondents were once again double-coded in both NACE Rev 1.1 and Rev 2. All addresses for units replying to SBS 2006 were also used for recording in the standard Common Data Repository address format which includes the new postcode. SBS 2006 will also undergo the grossing-up procedures with the tentative completion date being end 2009.

In December 2008 the Unit launched SBS 2007. In all, a stratified sample of approximately 12,000 units will be surveyed. This survey will incorporate variables required by Balance of Payments for the purpose of Foreign Affiliate Trade Statistics (FATS). Variables relating to business services in NACE classes 72-74 will still be collected, since these form part of Annex 8 of the new SBS Regulation and are scheduled to become an integral part of the SBS survey.

Business Register (BR)

Owing to unforeseen circumstances with SBS 2005 as well as with the migration of SBS and BR data to new software, the revision of NACE scheduled to be completed by end 2008 was delayed. Meanwhile, the Unit continued with its normal practice of updating the Business Register with new enterprise births and deaths - approximately 300 per month. All these continued to be double coded in both NACE Rev 1.1 and Rev 2.

The BR is also in the process of migrating to a new software package, enabling the recovery of historical data. In addition to the standard business demography reports, the plans for new software were enhanced to include generation of the BR annual inquiry, including the business demography reports for employer enterprises and high-growth enterprises. The latter two were carried out as part of Eurostat's standard grant application. In all, nine different series are now transmitted.

Since 2008 the Unit is also committed to record and submit data as part of the Euro Groups Register project, by means of which countries are asked to submit information regarding ownership and control for a European pre-specified list of enterprise groups. New variables in connection with this business statistics topic collected from the SBS will continue to be uploaded onto the BR, complementing similar BR data that already exist.

Research and Development survey and Innovation survey

The Unit successfully concluded and transmitted the Community Innovation Survey 2006 in June 2008, financed primarily by a transition facility grant. Results were satisfactory with the response rate standing at an acceptable 70 per cent.

In 2008 preparations were underway for the design of the questionnaire relating to the launch of the Community Innovation Survey 2008 in the first half of 2009. These

included meetings with IT personnel, as new software is needed given the ongoing development of the Innovation questionnaire.

In 2008 the Unit concluded the R&D Survey 2006. R&D expenditure and/or personnel data for 2005 and 2006 were requested from all enterprises. These totalled some 100 enterprises. These data were subsequently transmitted to Eurostat and were also made available to users of R&D data.

The R&D 2007 survey was launched late in 2008. In addition to enterprises reporting R&D activities in the Innovation Survey, a list of known R&D active enterprises was obtained from Malta Enterprise. Other administrative sources were also tapped to complement this list. Altogether, these form the 2007 R&D survey sample.

UNIT B2: INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND TRANSPORT STATISTICS

International Trade

In the last quarter of 2007, the Unit initiated preparatory work on two separate projects formally accepted and funded by Eurostat grants. These projects include a study on the Simplification of Intrastat which started in November with a stipulated duration of one year and an XT-Net project which was scheduled for 2008. This project is now due to commence in 2009 and NSO will be assisted technically by MITA to implement its objectives. The principal aim of this project deals with the improvement of the existing Intrastat web form to include an online upload facility of bulk data that is also capable of making validations at source. The XT-Net project is undertaken with Eurostat financial assistance and includes MITA technical assistance through a subcontracting agreement.

In 2008, the following enhancements to the Intrastat System were successfully finalised:

- updates of the Combined Nomenclature (CN) for 2008 on the Intrastat website;
- updating and testing of all the trade statistical reports and outputs of the Intrastat system in both the Maltese lira and the euro;
- final testing and successful implementation of the euro conversion of the Intrastat/Extrastat databases.

Main activities

Intrastat/Extrastat system

In the course of 2008, the Unit carried on with its programme to further develop the Intrastat/Extrastat system, which was originally introduced in May 2004. Enhancements to the Intrastat System include:

- updates of the Combined Nomenclature (CN) for 2009 on the Intrastat website;
- ongoing creation and further development of the existing report-generating capacity of the System;
- development and provision of an XML data upload function to cater for the offline uploading of bulk data;

- further promotion of the Intrastat online service among traders; by the end of 2007 this facility had a utilisation rate of more than 97 per cent and 87 per cent of dispatch and arrival declarations respectively.

Main output

During 2008, the Unit was engaged in its main task to compile, check and disseminate External Trade data which are collected from two main sources: the Supplementary Declaration System covering trade between EU Member States (Intrastat) and the Customs Electronic System covering extra-EU trade (Extrastat). Although Customs data are fully computerised, the Unit endeavoured to ensure comprehensiveness in its data collection by manually capturing a number of records which were being left out of the Intrastat/Extrastat system due to circumstances beyond NSO's control. This problem was solved in the last quarter of 2008. In addition, the Unit encountered another problem in the omission of the supplementary quantity of a number of commodities. This was caused by a flaw which developed in the CES system after a routine update. Eventually this was solved with the help of the Customs IT team within MITA.

Other activities

One unit member represented NSO on three occasions at committee meetings in Luxembourg on statistics relating to the trading of goods. These committee meetings are an important source of information, enabling the Unit to keep abreast of developments in this statistical domain. In April, two staff members participated in a second workshop in Hungary under the Multi-Beneficiary Transition Facility Cooperation Programme 2005 on External Trade and Intrastat. This was a follow-up to the first workshop under this facility, with the participation of two unit members in a workshop held in Cyprus in September 2007. Unit staff members took an active part in these workshops by means of presentations and various reports.

During the period under review, the Unit sustained its monthly news release in line with the NSO Advance Release Calendar. All news releases were issued on time and transmissions of Extrastat and Intrastat data to Eurostat were made within the deadlines specified in the relevant regulations. The Unit actively supported a number of functional units, primarily the Information Services Unit, with the provision of trade data to satisfy various requests from users. It is an acknowledged fact that trade data requests constitute a large share of information requests received by the Information Services Unit. Revisions of data for years up to 2007 were submitted to Eurostat and updated on the Comext database.

Transport

Transport Statistics are based on administrative data supplied by Gozo Channel Company Limited, the Malta Maritime Authority, the Malta Transport Authority, the Police Department and Guard and Warden Services Limited.

In 2008, the Unit carried on a process of upgrading the systems of storing and processing data efficiently in the transport database. This is making possible a more timely use of the data. As at end 2008, the transport statistics programme comprised

three different news releases: road traffic accidents; the stock of motor vehicles; and sea transport between Malta and Gozo.

Main activities

In December 2007, the statistician responsible for transport statistics attended the CCST meeting in Luxembourg, when participants were informed that EU countries could apply for a grant to perform a specified data collection of Vehicle Kilometres (VKm). The statistician subsequently participated in the CCST meeting held a year later.

In 2008, NSO applied for and was eventually awarded the VKm grant. The Transport Statistics publications covering 2005 and 2006 were published by the third quarter of 2008. These publications underwent a change in format with value-added data being included that took into account various client requests made during the year. Furthermore, the edition for 2007 will include a new sub-domain: Transport Accounts.

In the third quarter of 2008, work on the grant started with the Unit having bilateral talks with ADT, as the main data supplier. Also, help from the Methodology, Research and Training Unit was sought in order to formulate the methodology to be used to conduct the survey covered by the grant. All the necessary preparations for the launch of the survey in January 2009 were effected before the end of 2008. In November 2008, NSO was invited by Eurostat to attend a workgroup in Luxembourg, where NSO delivered a presentation showing the procedure to be adopted by Malta in order to fulfil the VKm grant. This presentation was highly commended by Eurostat.

In December 2008, a statistician attended a one-day course on the CARE database, held in Brussels. This was done following a recommendation made by ADT to NSO to be one of the Maltese representatives on such a system.

During 2008, the Transport news releases were issued as scheduled. Numerous requests, including Parliamentary Questions, were seen to in a timely manner. All the databases regarding transport were continually updated and verified. New transport data from other sectors were requested in order to substantiate and broaden the scope of data issued by the Unit.

UNIT B3: AGRICULTURAL AND FISHERIES STATISTICS

Survey on irrigation

In the period under review, the Agricultural and Fisheries Statistics Unit was involved in a major project concerning the volume of water used for irrigation in agriculture. For this scope, a grant was obtained under the TAPAS action plans for 2007. For this grant a total of 800 agricultural holdings, spanning a 52-week period, will be interviewed to ascertain the total volume of water used for irrigation purposes. The administrative procedures of the survey started in April 2008 with consultation meetings with all the relevant parties concerned to find the best methods on how to obtain volumes of water used for irrigation. The sample design, briefing, printing of questionnaires and leaflets were undertaken in the second quarter of 2008. The interviewing of farmers commenced in September.

The 800 holdings were split into 26 batches, each batch being mailed every fortnight. Each holding was requested to keep a record of the volume of water used over a four-week period. The aim of the project is to obtain coefficients that will eventually be used in the 2010 Census of Agriculture. The project will continue in 2009 and all interviewing is expected to be finalised in September. The results and the final report of the project will be submitted to Eurostat in the first quarter of 2010.

Farm Accountancy Data Network (FADN)

In the third quarter of 2007, the Unit undertook all data input procedures of the Farm Accountancy Data Network (FADN) for the financial year 2006. The data were corrected and verified in December 2007. This useful tool in policy making is being co-ordinated by NSO. During the first quarter of 2008, the Commission accepted the 2006 results of the FADN survey. During this period, the Unit undertook the necessary preparations for the FADN for 2007. The briefing of interviewers took place in February 2008, while the interviewing of 400 farmers started in April and carried on until September.

As soon as the questionnaires were received these were validated in two stages: the first entailed simple consistency checks by officials at the Department of Veterinary Services, where totals were verified, while the second stage covered technical validations to assess if the data received from the holdings make sense. These validations were carried out by the Unit's staff. Once certified correct, the data were inputted into the FADN web-based program RICA-1 that is managed in Brussels. The complete dataset was finalised and transmitted to DG AGRI before the December deadline.

Plant Protection Products survey

In the final quarter of 2007, all the data in respect of the PPP survey under the Transitional Facility 2005 Multi-beneficiary Country Programme were inputted. During this period, all the necessary validations and corrections were undertaken in preparation for the final workshop, which was held in Malta in January 2008. During this workshop, organised by the Agricultural and Fisheries Statistics Unit in collaboration with ASA-Institut, the final results of the pilot surveys on PPP's by Member States were presented. While all the countries presented the results of their pilot studies, Malta was the only country to present results of a complete survey. These results were then transmitted to Eurostat, together with the final report in March 2008, and were subsequently approved by the Commission.

Nutrient Balance survey

In the first months of 2008, all the data concerning the Nutrient Balance Survey were inputted. This survey was undertaken simultaneously with the PPP survey to reduce the workload and burden on farmers. The aim of this survey was to ascertain the level of nutrients within the agricultural system. The survey was undertaken in collaboration with the technical staff from the Ministry of Resources and Rural Affairs. After April, a thorough analysis of the data was undertaken. During this period, the Unit compiled a report on the Nutrient Balance project. The final report and the results of the survey were transmitted to Eurostat and the project was approved in August 2008.

Survey on the Structure of Agricultural Holdings (FSS) 2007

In September 2007, the Unit undertook its biennial survey on the structure of agricultural holdings. The survey was undertaken in September 2007 with the data being inputted in the fourth quarter of that year. The validation procedures and data analysis were undertaken in the second quarter of 2008. The micro data and the final report of the survey were submitted to Eurostat and were validated in June 2008. The next data transmission on the structure of agricultural holdings will be the Census of Agriculture scheduled for 2010.

Other activities

In December 2007, the Unit undertook its annual surveys on cattle, pig, sheep and goat stocks. While the survey on pigs is undertaken by interviewing all pig breeders through a postal questionnaire, the cattle, sheep and goat stocks are sourced directly from the Department of Veterinary Services. The results of these surveys were released in April 2008. In December 2008, the Unit once again undertook these surveys.

During 2008, the Unit issued 23 news releases on the various activities in the agriculture and fisheries sectors. Four quarterly releases were on fruit and vegetable production, producer/input prices, meat production and fish landings. Other news releases included the results of the cattle, pig, sheep and goat censuses, the farm structure survey 2007, the Economic Accounts for Agriculture 2007, an abstract from the Census of Fisheries 2006, and an abstract from the Census of Greenhouses 2007.

In addition to established work, the Unit was responsible for organising two international meetings in Malta. The first meeting concerned the Medstat II Program on agriculture and fisheries statistics. The second meeting was the third and final workshop on pesticide indicators. Malta participated actively in the latter meeting by presenting the final results of the Plant Protection Products survey.

Annual publication

The annual Agriculture and Fisheries publication, with 2006 as the reference year, was published in CD format while the 2007 edition will be issued early in 2009.

UNIT B4: ENVIRONMENT AND RESOURCES

In general, environment data are in line with EU requirements, following an upgrade and update of annual datasets on water, land, energy, air pollution and waste. In the period under review, the Environment and Resources Unit made efforts to expand the current data collection programmes in respect of biodiversity, environmental accounting and sustainable indicators.

Waste

The Unit is involved in research in order to adopt new methodologies towards improving specific datasets regarding particular waste streams. All the work is being done in close collaboration with MEPA and WasteServ. Specific working groups have been set up and a thorough update of Maltese waste data has also been undertaken for Eurostat. During

the period under review the Unit also compiled data to be used for particular waste indicators.

Water

The Unit consolidated its work regarding the reclassification of the Water Services Corporation database of consumers, aligning it with the NACE classification of specific enterprises. Updating the data for the water consumption for 2007 was done with the support of MITA.

Financial grants were approved by Eurostat in order to continue the compilation of water statistics in view of the Water Framework Directive. This work deals mainly with the compilation of waste water statistics.

Energy

Statistics on the prices of fossil fuel, electricity and energy consumption by sector are being compiled on a monthly, quarterly and annual basis as stipulated in the Energy Statistics legislation. Owing to the liberalisation of fuels in Malta, a number of meetings were held between NSO and the Malta Resources Authority in order to construct a framework for the collection of the data on fuels and fuel stocks. In the meantime, data on fuel and electricity consumption by households and the industrial sector are being improved upon with the cooperation of Enemalta, the Malta Maritime Authority, the Customs Department and the Malta Resources Authority. The Unit is also engaged in the updating of electricity consumption data based on the NACE classification. A web-based database will be created in order to share the relevant data sets with the competent authorities.

During the period under review the Unit also organised meetings in order to plan future surveys since there are data gaps which have to be addressed. This work is also being done in collaboration with Eurostat. In the first half of 2009 Eurostat's technical team on energy statistics will visit NSO in order to supervise the work currently underway.

Sustainable development indicators

In 2007 and subsequently in 2008, NSO collaborated with MEPA on a joint project regarding sustainable development indicators for inclusion in the annual 'State of the Environment Report'. The indicator set will be adapted for the purposes of the Sustainable Development Strategy for Malta and the Mediterranean Sustainable Development Strategy.

In the period under review, NSO succeeded in securing another grant from Eurostat in order to compile more data for the already established indicator sets outlined in the National Sustainable Development Strategy.

Environmental accounting

The Unit is currently involved in the initial collection of statistics with a view to compiling a set of environmental accounts. During 2008 unit staff attended a workshop as part of the initial learning session on the subject. In fact a grant was awarded to the Unit in

order to kick-start a data collection exercise related to government environmental expenditure.

In the period under review the Unit was also involved in the compilation of data relating to Material Flow Accounting. This exercise was done jointly with MEPA and the data results were also submitted to Eurostat. The Unit is also examining the possibility of carrying out a survey on environmental goods and services for various industries in 2009.

Consultations

Staff members were involved in consultations with stakeholders regarding various environmental data sets. The Unit was represented in local and international fora where staff members also delivered presentations on some occasions.

Directorate C: Social Statistics and Information Society

UNIT C1: DEMOGRAPHIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURE STATISTICS

Population

In addition to updating Maltese population figures on the basis of the Census of Population and Housing 2005, the Unit compiled statistics on health, adoptions and crime, together with regular and irregular migration. These data have been collected using harmonised methodologies as recommended by Eurostat, in order to ensure comparability with other EU Member States. The Unit has collaborated with several government departments in the production of these data.

Further research has been conducted in order to improve on existing methodologies in the collection and compilation of demographic statistics. In particular, the Unit has revised the methodology by which population projections were calculated. This exercise has been conducted in parallel with another similar project by Eurostat for all EU Member States. Comparable results have been produced.

Efforts have also been made with a view to improving the quantity and quality of migration statistics currently being produced for Malta. New methodologies for the collection and estimation of annual migration trends have been studied and positive results have been obtained. This work has mainly been carried out on the basis of a European Commission Regulation on Asylum and Migration Statistics (862/2007) that came into force in 2007. During the period covered by this report, the Unit has also provided technical assistance to organisations and government departments involved in the compilation of migration statistics.

During the past 15 months, the Unit continued to respond to an ever increasing number of requests on demographic statistics from both national and international users and policy makers. The Unit also collaborated with Eurostat in all its projects and has sent data covering various demographic topics. Most of these data are available on Eurostat's and NSO's websites.

Culture

The Unit continued to consolidate its data collection programmes on a considerable range of cultural activities, with a focus on improving the quality of the data currently being collected on an annual basis.

Cultural organisations that were surveyed during the period include band clubs, museums, theatres and dance schools. Revisions in the questionnaires have been conducted in order to cater for new demands for data within this field of statistics. Special attention has been given to their employment, income and expenditure, these being important variables for national accounting and other policy-making purposes.

The information that was collected has been used in order to revise past estimates that were imputed in cases of missing responses. This enabled the improvement of the existent data on culture. The Unit also worked on a new register of sport organisations, to enable the carrying out of this survey in 2009.

Living conditions

Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC)

SILC 2008 was the fourth of a series of annual surveys addressing monetary poverty and deprivation in Malta. This survey, which is regulated by a European Framework Regulation, has been conducted by all EU Member States since 2005.

This edition of SILC, which was launched in July 2008, had a gross sample size of 4,500 households, of which 25 per cent were contacted for the fourth time, 25 per cent for the third time and 25 per cent for the second time. By re-contacting households repetitively over the years, it is possible to produce more reliable indicators that may well measure the changes in the poverty level and other social indicators over time.

Respondent households were asked questions in connection with employment, regular income, household characteristics and issues related to quality of life. A net response rate of nearly 70 per cent was achieved for the survey. Data collection was effected by means of Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing.

Results from this survey are expected to be made available by end 2009.

Meanwhile, data analysis for SILC 2007 was finalised by September 2007. All indicators were produced and sent to Eurostat in November 2008. The results for Malta are now available on Eurostat's website.

Household Budgetary Survey (HBS) 2008

During 2007, NSO was actively planning to conduct the household budgetary survey. This survey, which has the derivation of aggregate statistics related to household expenditure as its main objective, will span a year. The preparatory work for this survey was finalised in January 2008, and its data collection initiated in February 2008.

Data collection is expected to end by March 2009. Publication of results is foreseen in early 2010. During this year, the NSO also expects to use these data in order to extract information to shed light on food consumption patterns of Maltese households.

This work is done in close collaboration with the Methodology, Research and Training Unit, and also requires substantial input from the Price Statistics Unit, the National Accounts Units as well as Eurostat, which is assisting NSO with estimating the food consumption patterns.

Survey on non-governmental organisations 2008

The Unit has conducted another survey amongst all non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Malta and Gozo. The main scope of this survey was to shed light on the work currently done by these organisations. In fact, this survey provided information on the extent of voluntary work conducted by members within NGOs and on their beneficiaries. The variables collected included employment, income and expenditure of these organisations, which are also used for national accounting purposes.

UNIT C2: LABOUR MARKET AND EDUCATION STATISTICS

Labour Market

Labour Force Survey (LFS)

The Labour Force Survey was carried out in the period under review with interviewing on a continuous basis. Results were produced on a quarterly basis and disseminated at national and European level. In 2008, the sampling methodology was revamped with the objective of having more reliable statistics over time. In this regard, the sample was increased to 3,200 households per quarter and split into four categories: new households, households from the previous quarter, households from the previous year, and households from the previous year and quarter. The first set of households is being approached by the external pool of interviewers, whereas the remaining sample is being approached by an internal pool of interviewers. The latter pool contacts the households by telephone and updates information which was forthcoming in the first interview.

By means of the new methodology the same household is interviewed four times and hence, NSO expects greater consistency in the results which will be generated. This methodology has also contributed towards a reduction in interviewing costs since the external pool of interviewers is now only being utilised to cover new households and households with no access to a fixed or mobile telephone line.

In 2008, the LFS included a reduced version of the 2008 *ad hoc* module on migrants and their descendants (Malta was granted a derogation to conduct a reduced version of this module due to the small size of its migrant population). In addition, the Unit also transmitted the results of the 2007 *ad hoc* module featuring the transition from work to retirement.

Other work associated with the Labour Force Survey in the period under review included the conclusion of a grant on the coherence of data on migrants between the 2005 Census and the LFS.

Registered employment and unemployment data

The publication of registered employment and unemployment data as forwarded by the Employment and Training Corporation (ETC) has been effected in a series of monthly news releases. Annual averages are being included in each release together with regular updates to figures, in line with ETC's revision policy.

Accidents at work and occupational diseases

Throughout the period under review, the Unit continued to publish quarterly statistics on accidents at work. In addition, access to a number of claim forms is enabling NSO to collect more information on the working environment, deviation, material agent of deviation and contact mode.

New claim forms on injuries and occupational diseases are being gradually introduced by the Department of Social Security. The use of such forms will enable NSO to collect additional variables which are required at a European level.

Throughout 2008, NSO has been granted financial assistance with regard to data on occupational diseases. The objective of the grant is to conduct a study visit in an EU country where data collection on occupational diseases is well established, so as to be in a position to devise a system for this type of data collection at a national level. In December 2008, a representative from the Unit, together with officers from the Occupational Health and Safety Authority (OHSA) and the Department of Social Security, attended a one-day study visit in Italy where they were provided with an overview of occupational diseases data collection practices. Work in connection with this grant is expected to be concluded in 2009.

Structure of Earnings Survey (SES) 2006

The Unit concluded its work associated with the Structure of Earnings Survey 2006. Data were disseminated to Eurostat in October 2008 and by the end of the year the quality report for this enquiry was also concluded.

For the first time, Eurostat used information generated from the SES enquiries of the different EU countries to compile the gender pay gap for 2006. This was an important step since previous statistics on gender pay gap were compiled using different methodologies. The availability of a harmonised methodology through the use of the SES enabled the production of an internationally comparable indicator at EU level.

Labour Cost Index (LCI)

Throughout 2007 and 2008, the Unit managed to regularise commitments related to the Labour Cost Index. In this regard, the Unit finalised the methodology to be applied when working out the three types of indices. National Accounts and LFS data are the main sources for this index.

In 2007 the Unit worked out and transmitted quarterly labour cost indices in unadjusted, seasonally adjusted and working day adjusted format. The index has been transmitted to Eurostat. The Unit also transmitted the related quality report in August 2008.

LCI data are being revised in line with National Accounts figures; however, the decision has been taken to undertake all revisions once a year. In 2007, NSO succeeded in obtaining a temporary derogation concerning the implementation of NACE Rev 2. This has enabled NSO to transmit LCI indices using NACE Rev 2 in 2009. It is envisaged that this transmission will include quarterly data from 2008 onwards.

Other developments which are taking place at EU level on LCI relate to the inclusion of NACE sections L, M, N and O. The inclusion of these economic activities in LCI is foreseen to take place in 2009.

A major issue which is expected to influence LCI is the conversion on NACE Rev 1.1 to NACE Rev 2 in 2009. This is mainly due to the fact that one of the LCI sources, namely National Accounts, is expected to convert to NACE Rev 2 in 2011 whereas the implementation of NACE Rev 2 for LCI is expected for 2009.

Job vacancy statistics

Data collection on job vacancies has been carried out in the second and third quarters of 2008. During the period under review, the Unit was granted financial assistance for carrying out feasibility studies on extending the Job Vacancy Survey among micro enterprises (1 to 9 employees) and amongst entities engaged in NACE sections L to O. In addition, assistance was also given for the conduction of study visits in an institution which is responsible for the collection of job vacancy data in Germany. The objective of the study visit is to enable officials from the Unit to get an overview of the sampling and grossing up methodologies which are being applied for producing job vacancy statistics in Germany.

Labour Market Policy (LMP)

A mission by a technical expert on LMP was carried out in October 2007. Following technical assistance provided, NSO worked in close collaboration with ETC in order to determine the list of LMP measures which were to be included in the LMP database for reference year 2006. For all the identified interventions, NSO had to compile descriptive information on the implementation of each measure, including eligibility criteria of persons participating in the different measures. In addition, quantitative information was also compiled and included in the database. The Unit provided its first LMP database to Eurostat during the first quarter of 2008. In 2008, the compilation of LMP measures for reference year 2007 started and is expected to be finalised early in 2009.

Education

During the period under review the data collection on formal education was carried out among state, independent and church schools. Information collected relates to student enrolment and staff employed within schools. Additional information was also collected on higher educational institutions such as MCAST, ITS and the University of Malta. Information on English language schools and the University of the Third Age was also collected throughout the year.

Data for academic year 2005/2006 have been finalised and disseminated to Eurostat on the basis of a gentleman's agreement.

The Unit also concluded the Continuous Vocational Training Survey (CVTS) among enterprises employing 10 or more. The main scope of this survey was to measure the amount of training provided to employees in Malta during 2005. Results have been processed and forwarded to Eurostat for further dissemination.

Careers of Doctorate Holders (CDH) Survey

Towards the end of 2007 and throughout 2008, the Unit worked on a Transition Facility Project on the Careers of Doctorate Holders (CDH). In this regard, the target population was defined as doctorate holders who were residing in the country during 2007. In order to be in a position to identify the target group for this survey, use of Census of Population and Housing 2005 data was made, along with information from the Labour Force Survey and details from the University of Malta website.

Data collection for the CDH was carried out between July and September 2008 and results were concluded by November. Dissemination of results at a national level is intended to take place in 2009.

Adult Education Survey (AES)

Following approval of funds, NSO plans to carry out an Adult Education Survey (AES) in 2009. Preparatory work for this survey started in 2008, specifically concerning the review of the methodology to be applied for this survey and the finalisation of the AES questionnaire. The objective of this enquiry is to estimate the extent of non-compulsory training for persons aged 25-64.

UNIT C3: INFORMATION SOCIETY AND TOURISM STATISTICS

Information Society

Post and courier services

In 2008, co-operation with the Malta Communications Authority (MCA) commenced regarding the collection of data relating to the information society quarterly release. Throughout 2008, this co-operation was enforced by more operators in the field of post and telecommunication participating in the exercise. Data relating to post and telecommunications information are released on a quarterly basis and transmitted to Eurostat annually.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) among households and enterprises

The ICT surveys (Council Regulation (EC) No 808/2004 of 21 April 2004) are annual surveys which compile data from both households and enterprises on the usage of communication technologies and e-commerce. The two surveys on ICT usage among households and individuals and enterprises were carried out for the fourth consecutive year.

The information gathered from the ICT usage by enterprises survey is used to analyse the local situation from the aspect of use of communication technology within the business environment. Among the variables included are the use of computers and computer network; access and use of the internet; automated data exchange; e-commerce; and other enterprise background information.

The ICT usage by households and individuals survey aims to analyse the local situation with regard to use of communication technology among individuals and within their households. The variables collected for this survey are grouped into: access to information and communication technologies; the use of computer and mobile phone; use of the internet; e-commerce; and socio-demographic background.

Feedback on the benchmarking programme post i2010 regulation is currently being studied by the Unit.

In 2009 surveys for ICT among households and enterprises will once more be carried out. Preparations for the ICT investment and expenditure survey scheduled for 2009 will also commence.

Tourism

The Unit is currently participating in the drafting process of the proposal for a Regulation on Community Statistics on tourism. The aim of this proposal is to update and optimise the existing legal framework for Community statistics on tourism, namely Council Directive 95/57/EC.

Since the Directive came into force, both the tourism industry and tourism demand have undergone significant changes. In line with the requirement that official statistics should be relevant, the Directive takes into account emerging phenomena such as the increasing preference for short trips of less than four overnight stays or the use of the internet for booking trips.

Ongoing frontier survey for inbound and outbound passengers (Tourstat)

In 2008, ongoing frontier surveys remained the key source of data for tourism statistics. The survey is carried out at the airport and seaport. The variables include: country of residence, sex, age, purpose of visit, duration of stay and information related to accommodation and expenditure. Tourstat provides monthly estimates approximately one month after the end of the reporting period (T+30). The results are calibrated and grossed up against monthly administrative records of passenger departures at the airport and seaport, from Malta International Airport (MIA) and Valletta International Seaport Terminal (VISET) sources respectively.

The Unit is evaluating potential improvements that can be incorporated in the existing sampling techniques. The techniques analysed are examined and evaluated in order to ensure high quality statistics, while reducing the response burden. The collection of raw data remains of utmost importance. The interviewing processes and practices at MIA and VISET are continuously scrutinised in order to ensure quality results.

Outbound tourism survey

In order to comply with the Tourism Statistics Directive 95/57/EC, a computer- assisted telephone interview-based survey (CATI) is carried out to collect a list of variables for Maltese residents travelling abroad. The variables include: country of destination; sex; age; purpose of visit; duration of visit; and information related to accommodation and expenditure. To increase the response rate, a different sampling approach is being evaluated for 2009, with a view to obtaining a better picture of outbound tourism.

Cruise passengers

Administrative records on cruise passengers are used for the publication of a monthly news release. Cruise passenger traffic is broken down into landings, embarkations and transit passengers.

Ongoing survey for cruise passengers in transit (Cruistat) – inbound same-day visitors

The main objective of this pilot project was to establish the number of transit passengers who actually disembark from the vessel and spend some time in Malta, referred to as same-day visitors. It was envisaged that the Unit will publish a quarterly news release as from 2008. However, due to unforeseen circumstances, this did not materialise. As a result, the data could not be weighted according to surveying procedures and results were not published. In view of the above, a different sampling approach is being analysed for 2009 and a re-launch of the survey is being discussed with VISET.

Domestic tourism pilot study

The main aim of this pilot study was to quantify the flows of resident travellers between the two NUTS III regions of Malta and to characterise the trips made by resident travellers for tourism. Variables included the reason for the trip; its duration; type of accommodation; transport used; overnight stays; and expenses incurred.

The domestic tourism pilot study was carried out so as to gauge the impact and extent of Council Directive 95/57/EC on Malta. The findings are the result of fieldwork carried out in November 2008 on board Gozo Channel vessels operating inter-island sea transport services. In view of the study conducted, the Unit is currently working on the identification of a suitable tool for the measurement of domestic tourism in Malta.

Monthly census for collective accommodation establishments (Accomstat)

In the period under review, a series of improvements was effected with regard to the monthly census of collective accommodation establishments. These improvements mainly revolve around timeliness and response rate. Apart from targeting full response, the Unit is intensifying quality checks and the validation of source data.

As from 2007, the Unit collected two additional variables related to room-nights for resident and non-resident arrivals. Hence, in 2008, the Unit was able to compute both the net/gross use of bed-places and rooms. This computation is very useful towards generating a better understanding of the market forces prevailing in collective accommodation.

Data relating to accommodation statistics are released every month and are transmitted to Eurostat on an annual basis.

Directorate D: Resources and Support Services

UNIT D1: PERSONNEL AND BUDGETARY MATTERS

Personnel

On 5 November 2008, Mr Michael Pace Ross was appointed Director General of the National Statistics Office. As at end December 2008, the Office had 143 staff members on its books, 53 men and 90 women. More than half the NSO staff complement had completed a first or second degree or a tertiary diploma, with the graduate/total employment ratio of the Office standing at 0.51:1. Forty per cent of graduates held Masters degrees. Table 3 provides a breakdown of NSO staff by age group and sex, while Table 4 provides a broad classification by function.

Table 3. Age structure of NSO staff: December 2008

Age group	Men	Women	Total
18-30	19	54	73
31-40	15	21	36
41-50	8	8	16
51+	11	7	18
Total	53	90	143

Table 4. NSO staff members by function: December 2008

Function	Men	Women	Total
Management team	15	5	20
Statisticians	17	34	51
Executive staff	10	36	46
Clerical staff	9	13	22
Support staff	2	2	4
Total	53	90	143

Eurostat projects

NSO is making use of external funding opportunities that not only help finance its investments in the physical infrastructure, training and research programmes, but also serve to establish NSO as a major player in the national and international information and research market. These projects are being steadily integrated in the office workload. In the period under review, NSO applied for a number of Eurostat grants to support various projects of the national statistical programme. Several of these have been favourably received while others are being evaluated.

Table 5 provides a detailed description of the grants received from Eurostat for the carrying out of statistical projects in the period under review.

Table 5. Grant projects awarded by Eurostat: October 2007-December 2008 ...

Description of project	Total cost on project in euro	NSO contribution in euro	EU contribution in euro
2007			
PPP production of data by Member States	29,673	8,902	20,771
Data collection on ICT usage and e-commerce in enterprises 2008	42,095	4,210	37,885
Simplification of Intrastat	9,553	2,866	6,687
EHS (European System of Social Statistical Survey Modules) Pilot data collection	15,043	1,504	13,539
Implementation of the NACE Rev. 2 in Labour Market Statistics in the Labour Cost Index	18,204	5,461	12,743
Data collection on ICT usage in households and by individuals 2008	32,921	3,292	29,629
Implementation of XT-NET in Member States	20,655	6,197	14,458
Temporal coverage of price collection for the Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices (HICP)	33,449	11,149	22,300
2008			
Pilot studies on estimating the volume of water used for irrigation	38,184	11,456	26,729
Production of PPP data by Member States	17,062	5,119	11,943
Support for Road Traffic Statistics	10,695	3,208	7,487
Implementation of a Data collection on Business Demography based on employer enterprises	16,456	4,937	11,519

... Table 5. Grant projects awarded by Eurostat: October 2007-December 2008

Description of project	Total cost on project in euro	NSO contribution in euro	EU contribution in euro
EU KLEMS and related activities	6,261	1,878	4,383
Consolidated of methodologies - collection of the data on Accidents at Work and Occupational Diseases	10,624	5,270	5,354
Action B – Adjustment and regular compilation of a HICP-CT	16,006	4,802	11,204
Improvement of Quality of National Accounts	9,006	2,702	6,304
Environmental Accounts and Environment Expenditure Statistics – Data Centres: “National Resources and Products” – Environmental Protection Expenditure	30,705	9,211	21,494
Support for the development of Indicator Sets to monitor Sustainable Development Strategies	17,610	5,283	12,327
Water Statistics – Data Flows for Waste Water Statistics	9,680	2,904	6,776
Job Vacancies Statistics – Feasibility Studies	14,775	4,432	10,343
Labour Force Survey – Assessing non-response and mode effects	18,827	5,648	13,179
Improving the use of the Household Budgetary Survey for Food Consumption Indicators	20,060	4,012	16,048
2009 Labour Force Survey ad hoc module on entry of young people into the Labour Market	27,708	8,312	19,396
Data processing and transmission: Adjustments to national systems to implement new regulation requirements in both Intrastat and Extrastat	25,912	7,774	18,138
Data collection on ICT usage in households and by individuals 2009	28,550	2,855	25,695

... Table 5. Grant projects awarded by Eurostat: October 2007-December 2008

Description of project	Total cost on project in euro	NSO contribution in euro	EU contribution in euro
Data collection on ICT usage in and e-commerce in enterprises 2009	43,153	4,315	38,838
Support of methods for the implementation of the EuroGroups Register (EGR) on the National Level and improvement of data collection Methods on Enterprise Group Action 1: Development and testing of matching the EuroGroups Register (EGR) data with the national Business Register	4,478	1,344	3,134
Implementation of Commission Regulation (EC) No 1334/2007 of 14 November 2007 amending Regulation (EC) No 1749/96 on quality and sampling in accordance with Article 13 of Council Regulation 2494/95	12,141	4,060	8,095
Total	579,486	143,025	436,398

Staff members are required to participate in a number of international statistical meetings in order to facilitate the harmonisation and integration of the local work plan within the European Statistical Programme, as well as to keep updated with the most recent developments in the international statistical field. Table 6 gives a detailed overview of working groups and meetings attended by staff members in the period covered by this report.

Table 6. Working groups and meetings: October 2007-December 2008 ...

Purpose of visit	Duration (days)	Persons
Working Group on Land Use and Crop Statistics	1	1
Working Group on Information Society Statistics (ISS)	3	1
Working Group Statistics of the Environment sub-group "Water Statistics"	3	1
Eurostat ITDG Meeting	2	1
63 rd Meeting of ACOR – VAT	1	1
Eurostat BOP Working Group	2	1

... Table 6. Working groups and meetings: October 2007-December 2008

Purpose of visit	Duration (days)	Persons
Meeting of the Health and Safety at Work Statistics Working Group	2	1
12 th Meeting of the GNI Committee	1	1
Working Group Collection and Validation of Agricultural Statistics	1	1
Working Group of Local Co-ordinators for Data Transmission	3	1
Working Group Meeting on Statistics on Science, Technology and Innovation	2	1
53 rd Meeting of the Committee on Statistics relating to the Trade of goods between Member States	1	1
38 th Meeting of the Committee on Statistics relating to the Trading of Goods with Non-Member States	1	1
64 th Meeting of the SPC	1	1
Dissemination Working Group	2	1
Workshop on the treatment of Quality in the Price and Volume measurement on non-market services	2	1
Working Party on Statistics	1	1
Working Group on Short-Term Public Finance	1	1
Joint Meeting of the Working Group on Short-Term Public Finance Statistics (WGSTPFS)	1	2
Meeting of the Steering Group "Structural Business Statistics"	2	1
Task Force on Quarterly Financial Accounts for General Government (TFQFAGG)	1	1
National Accounts Working Group	2	1
Working Group on Business Registers and Statistical Units	2	1
Southern Group PPP Meeting "Purchasing Power Parities"	2	1
Working Group on Population Projections	2	1
Working Group on Euro-indicators Force on the recordings of certain activities of Multinationals in National Accounts	2	1
Meeting of the Working Group "Services"	1	1
Coordinating Committee for Statistics on Transport (CCST)	2	1
Conference "Modern Statistics for Modern Society"	2	1
Working Party on Statistics	1	1

... Table 6. Working groups and meetings: October 2007-December 2008

Purpose of visit	Duration (days)	Persons
Working Group on the Implementation of the Council Regulation No. 11656/98 Short-Term Statistics	2	1
Working Group "Financial Accounts"	3	1
Working Party on Statistics	1	1
Working Group "Statistics on Crime and Criminal Justice"	2	1
65 th Meeting of the Statistical Programme Committee	1	1
Medstat II – Directors' Committee Meeting	2	1
Southern European Group Meeting – European Comparison Programme (ECP) for the Calculating of Purchasing Power Parities (PPP)	1	1
Working Group "Structure of Agricultural Holdings"	2	1
Working Party on Statistics	1	1
Working Group "Pilot Survey on the use of Fertilisers"	1	1
Informal Meeting of the High Level Working Party on Taxation	2	1
Meeting of the working group "Statistics of the Environment Sub-Group Waste"	2	1
Preparatory Meeting of the DIMESA Director's Meeting on 'Environmental Statistics and Accounts	1	1
54 th Meeting of the Committee on Statistics relating to the trading of Goods between Member States	1	1
39 th Meeting of the Committee on Statistics relating to the trading of goods with non-member countries	1	1
Working Group on Demography & Census	2	1
20 th Meeting of the Working Group of Local Co-ordinators for Data Transmission	2	1
Meeting of the Task Force "Recording of certain activities of Multinationals in National Accounts"	2	1
Working Group on Information Society Statistics	3	1
Working Party on Animal Products Statistics	2	1
Workshop on Quality in non-market Output Measures	2	1
Working Group on Article 65 of the Staff Regulations	1	1
Meeting of the Task Force research and development	2	1
Meeting of the Working Group "Harmonisation of Consumer Price Indices"	2	1
Working Group on Balance of Payments	2	1

... Table 6. Working groups and meetings: October 2007-December 2008

Purpose of visit	Duration (days)	Persons
Working Group on Labour Market Statistics	2	1
Meeting of the Working Group "Structure of the Taxation Systems"	1	1
Meeting of the ESAW Technical Group "European Statistics on Accidents at work"	1	1
Meeting of the EODS Technical Group "European Occupational Diseases Statistics"	1	1
Working Party on Statistics	1	1
Working Group on the Collection of Statistical Information in the field of Tourism	3	1
Transition Facility Multi Beneficiary Statistical Cooperation Programme 2005 "Second Workshop on External Trade Statistics"	3	2
Meeting of the Steering Group "Structural Business Statistics"	2	1
Task Force on SPPI Services Producer Price Index	2	1
Meeting of the GNI Committee	1	1
Working Party on Statistics	1	1
10 th Meeting of the Management Group on Statistical Cooperation with Candidate and Potential Candidate	2	1
Working Party on Fishery Statistics	2	1
Working Group on Dissemination of Statistical Information	2	1
Working Party on Statistics	2	1
Working Group "Environmental Expenditure Statistics"	2	1
Workshop on enhancing internal consistency of the Euro Area	3	1
Meeting of the National Accounts Working Group	2	1
Meeting of the Standing Committee for Agriculture Statistics	1	1
Task Force on COFOG	1	1
66 th SPC Meeting	1	1
17 th CEIES Plenary Meeting	1	1
Task Force on the Reconciliation between Balance of Payments and Foreign Trade Statistics	2	1
Broadband Performance Index	1	1
Working Group on Migration Statistics	2	1

... Table 6. Working groups and meetings: October 2007-December 2008

Purpose of visit	Duration (days)	Persons
Working Group Meeting EPROS (European Plan for Research in Official Statistics)	1	1
CENEX Workshop on HICP Quality Adjustment	1	2
Task Force on Quarterly Financial Accounts for the General Government	1	1
Information Society Statistics (ISS) Working Group	1	1
Working Party on Living Conditions	3	1
Eurostat: Participation to GNI Information Visit in Madrid	4	1
Working Group on "Implementation of the Council Regulation No. 1165/98 on Short-Term Statistics"	2	1
Working Group on Short-Term Public Finance Statistics	1	1
Business Statistics Directors Group (BSDG)	2	1
Working Group on Financial Accounts	3	1
Working Group "Statistics Telematic Network and EDI"	1	1
Meeting on Environment Statistics and Accounts	1	1
Metadata Working Group	2	1
Working Party on Statistics	1	1
Working Party "Energy Statistics"	2	1
Task Force Meeting Research and Development (R&D) and Career Development of Doctorate Holders (CDM)	2	1
Working Group "ESS Programming and Coordination"	2	1
55 th Meeting of the Committee on Statistics relating to the trading of goods between Member States	1	1
40 th Meeting of the Committee on Statistics relating to the trading of goods with non-Member States	1	1
Working Group on External Statistics	1	1
Directors of National Accounts Meeting	1	1
5 th Meeting of Balance of Payment Committee	1	1
Meeting of the Committee on Monetary, Financial and Balance of Payments Statistics (CMFB)	1	1
Meeting of the GNI Committee	1	1
Ad hoc Meeting on Statistical Methodologies	1	1
Working Party on Statistics	1	1
Working Group on Harmonisation of Consumer Price Indices (HICP)	2	1

... Table 6. Working groups and meetings: October 2007-December 2008

Purpose of visit	Duration (days)	Persons
Working Group on Census and Demography	2	1
HICP – Meeting of Directors of Price Statistics	2	1
Labour Market Statistics Working Group	2	1
Task Force on Methodology of Regional Accounts 3 rd Meeting	2	1
Meeting of European Directors of Social Statistics	2	1
Meeting of CPSA Partnership Group	1	1
Working Group Structure of Agricultural Holdings	2	2
Meeting of the Statistical Programme Committee (SPC)	4	1
Working Group on Foreign Affiliates Statistics	1	1
Task Force Financial Partnership between Eurostat and the National Statistics Institutes of the EU Member States and EEA Countries	2	1
Workshop in the Frame of the Eurostat Project on Tourism Satellite Accounts	2	1
Seminar ESSPROS Net Benefits	1	1
Working Group on Business Registers and Statistical Units	2	1
Working Party on Statistics	1	1
Meeting of the Working Party on Purchasing Power Parities for Capital Goods Equipment	2	1
Working Group “European Statistical Training Programme (ESTP)”	2	1
Working Group on Information Society Statistics	2	1
Working Group Education and Training Statistics	3	1
Working Group “Statistics of the Environment Sub-Group, Water Statistics”	2	1
STS Workshop on Backcasting Short-Term Business Statistics	2	1
Information Technology Directors Group Meeting	2	1
Information visit relating to Cyprus GNI data and Inventory of Sources and Methods	4	1
6 th Working Group on Sustainable Development Indicators	2	1
GNI Committee Meeting	1	1
Balance of Payment Working Group	2	1
Working Party on “Land Use and Crop Statistics of the Agricultural Statistics Committee”	2	1

... Table 6. Working groups and meetings: October 2007-December 2008

Purpose of visit	Duration (days)	Persons
Workshop on LFS Quality Assurance	2	1
Working Party on Statistics	1	1
Meeting of the Working Group "Harmonisation of Consumer Prices Indices"	2	1
Workshop on Road Traffic Statistics	2	1
Working Group Meeting EPROS (European Plan for Research in official Statistics)	1	1
Labour Cost Index Workshop on NACE II	2	1
56 th Meeting of the Committee on Statistics relating to the Trading of Goods	1	1
41 st Meeting of the Committee on Statistics relating to the Trading of Goods with non-Member States	1	1
68 th SPC Meeting	1	1
59 th EEA Conference	1	1
Dissemination Working Group	2	1
Working Group of Local Coordinators for Data Transmission	2	1
Meeting of the Structural Business Statistics Steering Group	2	1
Meeting of the National Accounts Working Group	2	1
Meeting of the Standing Committee for Agricultural Statistics (CPSA)	2	1
Workshop on NACE Rev. 2	1	1
Meeting of the PPP Working Party	1	1
Meeting of the Structural Business Statistics Steering Group	2	1
Participation in the European Statistical System Quality Coaching	1	1
HICP – Meeting of Directors of Price Statistics	1	1
Working Party on Statistics	1	1
Task Force on the Accounting Consequences of the Recent Financial Crisis	2	1
Working Group on STI Statistics	2	1
Workshop on the Data Collection of Occupational Data	1	1
Invitation to the International Workshop and the Technical Meeting on the Careers and Mobility of Doctorate Holders	1	1

... Table 6. Working groups and meetings: October 2007-December 2008

Purpose of visit	Duration (days)	Persons
Meeting of the Working Group "SBS Financial Annexes"	2	1
Meeting of the Working Group Structures of the Taxation Systems	1	1
EU Transport Statistics Coordinating Committee for Statistics on Transport (CCST)	2	1
Workshop on Micro Data Access	1	1
Working Party on "Agricultural Accounts and Prices (AAP)"	2	1
Working Group on Euro-Indicators	1	1
Committee Meeting on Statistical Confidentiality	1	1
Working Party "Final Energy Consumption in Households"	1	1
Invitation of the 4 th Meeting Task Force on Multi-Nationals	2	1
Interrogation of the CARE Database	1	1
Short-Term Statistics Working Party	1	1
1 st International Workshop on Methodologies for Job Vacancy Statistics	1	1
Meeting of the ESA 95 Review Group	2	1
Working Party on Statistics	1	1
Total	284	176

These working groups and meetings involved 176 visits by NSO staff members, translating into a total of 284 person-days. This implies an increase of 63 per cent in the number of visits and of 42 per cent in the number of person-days worked abroad, in comparison with the period October 2006-September 2007 covered in *Annual Report 2007*.

UNIT D2: LEGAL, INSTITUTIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

This unit operates on three levels that are integrated in the institutional dimension of the Unit's function.

Legal matters

The Malta Statistics Authority Act XXIV of 2000 gives a clear mandate to NSO to collect, compile, extract and release official statistics relating to the demographic, social, environmental, economic and general activities and conditions of Malta. In order to fulfil its mission, both in terms of the carrying out of surveys and of obtaining access to administrative records, NSO requires a good response from its data providers. In dealing with non-response, especially of business enterprises, NSO's corporate policy is tiered into a number of steps, including telephonic and email contact and personal

communication, before resorting to legal action. Having said that, in the period under review, the NSO legal adviser provided legal support in a number of statistical domains including:

- Structural business;
- Short-term business;
- National accounts;
- Balance of payments;
- International trade;
- Environment and resources;
- Information services.

In addition to this, the Unit is in close contact with the Authority's legal adviser and acts as a reference point between her and the various NSO functional units.

Institutional affairs

This level has two aspects:

1. structural communications, in which the Unit coordinates communications between NSO and media outlets, monitors media coverage on NSO and NSO-related matters, and organises press and corporate events;
2. institutional affairs, which include administration and routing of the organisation's corporate and operational documentation in a centralised location known as the Registry; a monitoring role, on a corporate level, in the composition and overall presentation of news releases, publications and other reports; a supportive role in the drawing-up of corporate documents such as business plans, annual reports and organisation profiles.

Under the first aspect, NSO issued a number of Press Information Notices (PINs) between October 2007 and December 2008, as detailed in Table 7.

Table 7. Press Information Notices: October 2007-December 2008 ...

PIN by domain	Description
Demographic, Social and Culture	19.10.2007 – publication of Census of Population and Housing - Volume 2 – Dwellings
Cross-unit	04.01.2008 – More or less? Inflation, the labour market and real GDP in the media.

... Table 7. Press Information Notices: October 2007-December 2008

PIN by domain	Description
National Accounts	31.01.2008 – publication of NSO's response to the paper commissioned by the GRTU entitled: The real GDP growth in third quarter 2007: a reconsideration
Cross-unit	02.06.2008 – launch of methodologies: national accounts; public finance and price statistics
Institutional	28.10.2008 – notification of appointment of Mr M. Pace Ross as NSO Director General
Public Finance	05.12.2008 – launch of 2008 edition of Social protection: Malta and the EU

In the course of the period under review, NSO was given more coverage in newspapers, the internet, television and radio. Table 8 presents an overview of coverage of NSO output in the print, audio-visual and internet-based media.

Table 8. News coverage by statistical theme

Theme	No. of mentions
Economy and Finance	672
Population and Social Conditions	653
Industry and Services	548
Agriculture and Fisheries	47
International Trade and Transport	182
Environment and Energy	21
NSO Institution	159
Total	2,282

Eurostat Peer Review – 21-23 November 2007

The Peer Review which was carried out at NSO in November 2007 by a team of Eurostat-appointed experts was part of a Eurostat initiative which involved reviewing and reporting on practices within the NSIs of the EU Member States. The purpose of the Peer Review in Malta was to assess the extent of conformity of NSO with the European Statistics Code of Practice. The activities of the Unit, in its capacity at the time of the Peer Review, consisted of:

1. coordinating the part played in the Peer Review by the external stakeholders. The latter included: the Economic Policy Division; the Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity; the Central Bank of Malta; the Malta Tourism Authority; the Malta Chamber of Commerce and Enterprise; the Malta Employers Association; the Malta Hotels and Restaurants Association; the Employment and Training Corporation; the trade unions; and the media;
2. drawing up an updated corporate profile for the purposes of the country report compiled by the Eurostat team of experts; this report was the main deliverable of the Peer Review and is available on the Eurostat website alongside the country reports of the other EU Member States;
3. coordinating and compiling the response of NSO to the list of improvement actions specified by the Peer Review team.

Structural quality

From the perspective of the organisation's institutional environment, the Unit plays a part in maintaining and continuously improving the quality of the statistical products published by NSO. The Unit's role in structural quality is associated with:

- professional independence;
- statistical confidentiality;
- impartiality and objectivity;
- clarity and coherence;
- adequate documentation.

International affairs

This branch of the Unit's function concerns the building and maintenance of relations with international organisations such as the European Commission including Eurostat, the EU Presidency, the European Central Bank, the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund, other international bodies and NSIs both within and outside the European Union. An important task in this regard is to monitor developments in EU statistical legislation, maintain updates of the relevant documentation and coordinate among the functional units within NSO and with external parties for the purpose of compiling and submitting NSO's position on new or updated legislation. Regulations that were worked on in the period under review include:

- Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on European Statistics;
- Recommendation for a Council Regulation amending Council Regulation (EC) No. 2533/98 of 23 November 1998 concerning the collection of statistical information by the European Central Bank;
- Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the European Statistical Governance Advisory Board;
- Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on Community Statistics on Public Health and Health and Safety at Work;
- Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council setting up a European Advisory Committee on Community Statistical Information Policy;

- Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning statistics on Plant Protection Products.

Staff members who participate in training courses, working groups and parties, task forces and other types of meetings abroad are required to write a report on their visit. The reasons for this requirement are two: (1) in the first place, the report is a valuable record which is retained on file for documentation purposes; (2) in the second place, it is an effective means of the transfer of knowledge on the relevant statistical topic to other staff members within NSO and, where appropriate, to parties outside NSO. The Unit retains a copy of participants' travel reports.

UNIT D3: INFORMATION SERVICES

The Information Services Unit liaises with all units at NSO on dissemination issues and coordinates the publication of all news releases and publications in print, CD and electronic format. The Unit is also responsible for all printing of questionnaires required by the units, and for the management of the NSO website.

Statistical information services

The Unit offers a range of information services. These include the library, which is open to the public, the NSO website, with all publications available in full text and in real time, and the handling of *ad hoc* requests for statistical data.

Library

The main objective of the library collection development programme is to provide a physical collection supplemented with access to resources in other formats. The availability and combination of these resources is intended to satisfy the information needs of statistical users. This concept is being developed within the parameters of available resources, both financial and human.

NSO website

The NSO website continues to offer the first access point for national statistical data and has become the main dissemination tool of NSO. Following the adoption of the free dissemination policy in 2004, all NSO publications are available in full text and all news releases are uploaded in real time for the benefit of local and international statistical users.

The Unit has embarked on a major project concerning the digitisation of all the Blue Books (Historical Statistical Reviews) with the objective of making them available on the NSO website. This project was benefited from EU funds (Transition Facility 2005) and was carried out with the cooperation of the National Archives of Malta.

The NSO website continued to provide access to Eurostat news releases through RSS feeds. This technology is also being used to make NSO news releases available on the Eurostat website. Further developments are planned in the sharing of European statistical data on the NSO website.

Requests

All requests for statistical data are now handled centrally by the Unit. The objective is to have a single entry point (SEP) for all requests for statistical data and avoid duplication of work that can occasionally occur due to requests being sent to multiple recipients at NSO.

The assistance of the functional units is only sought when the data are not directly accessible by the Unit staff or the requests require technical or methodological input from specialised staff within the various units. In cases where *ad hoc* requests include the compilation of specific statistical reports for the client, a cost recovery charge is applicable. A pricing policy is available and this defines clearly what is considered a public good and what requests are subject to cost recovery charges.

Table 9. Statistical requests

Year	Number of requests
2000	510
2001	693
2002	1,060
2003	1,249
2004	1,350
2005	1,240
2006	1,370
2007	1,400
2008	1,520

Table 9 shows the number of information requests received by e-mail, telephone and post for the past nine years.

E-stats service

The Unit is responsible for disseminating all NSO News releases in real time to all statistical users. All NSO news releases are sent by e-mail (normally at 1100hrs) to all media, Members of Parliament, members of the public sector and subscribers to the service. Statistical users can also choose to receive only news releases on a particular theme.

European statistical data support

The Unit offers local users support services for access and availability of European Statistics. This service includes guiding the users and also assisting them in technical problems they may encounter when trying to extract data from the Eurostat website.

Dissemination of official statistics

News releases

During 2008, news releases continued to be prepared in accordance with the Advance Release Calendar. This three-month calendar is available on the NSO website for the benefit of statistical users.

The desktop publishing function of the Unit is responsible for the layout, publication and dissemination of all NSO publications. Table 10 shows an eight-year span of the number of published news releases, and a forecast for 2009.

Table 10. News releases

Year	Number
2001	124
2002	147
2003	207
2004	249
2005	281
2006	292
2007	207
2008	232
2009	240*

* forecast

Publications

The NSO is currently preparing a new dissemination policy that will define the NSO website as the main dissemination tool for NSO publications. This will mean the introduction of 'born digital' publications that will be complemented by the print-on-demand service. The use of print and CD-ROMs for the release of statistical publications will subsequently diminish. The production of electronic publications is more cost-effective and provides for increased flexibility in the storage and use of statistical information. It is the intention of NSO to keep a few flagship publications in print format and work is in progress to establish an internal publications calendar that will eventually be made public. NSO output as regards full publications is described in Table 11.

Table 11. NSO Publications: October 2007-December 2008

Title	Medium
Social Protection: Malta and the EU 2008	Printed commercially
Labour Force Survey 2007	Printed in-house
EDP Consolidated Inventory of Sources and Methods: April 2008	Printed commercially
Malta in Figures 2008	Printed commercially
Demographic Review 2007	Printed commercially
Gross Nitrogen Balance For Malta 2007	Printed in-house
Transport Statistics 2006	On-line
Transport Statistics 2007	On-line
EDP Consolidated Inventory of Sources and Methods: October 2008	Printed commercially
GNI Inventory of Sources and Methods (ESA 1995)	Printed commercially
Quarterly National Accounts Inventory	Printed commercially
The RPI and HICP Manual	Printed commercially
The Retail Price Index in Plain Language	Printed commercially
Agriculture and Fisheries 2006	CD-ROM
Plant Protection Products: 2007	Printed in-house
Census of Population and Housing 2005: Volume 2 – Dwellings	Printed commercially
Labour Force Survey 2006	Printed in-house
Annual Report 2007	Printed commercially
Demographic Review 2006	Printed commercially

Other services

The Unit will embark on three projects for 2009 and preliminary work on these projects commenced in the period under review. These projects are outlined below.

Metadata and SDDS

The Unit will be coordinating work in these two important areas. These projects need the cooperation of the various units and it is expected that both will be launched in the course of 2009.

Statistical literacy

The Unit has started working on two projects aimed at children and young adults. The promotion of statistical literacy and the work of NSO is the main objective of these projects.

Knowledge management

The Unit will be working on the provision of a Knowledge Management system for all NSO employees. This will have the primary objective of making a knowledge repository available for employees and will facilitate the sharing of knowledge and better management of information.

UNIT D4: IT SYSTEMS

Throughout the period under review, the main focus of the Unit remained software development and IT support.

Software development

The last quarter of 2007 saw the final implementations of the euro changeover project, in which all the software previously developed by the Unit had to be modified to accommodate the introduction of the euro. Some aspects of this project were implemented in the early months of 2008, mostly upon requests made by the respective units.

A total of 17 software applications were developed by IT staff during 2008. These include three CATI projects and one web application. The remaining projects consisted of windows-based applications for data capturing and/or data analysis.

The Unit also contributed to the maintenance of the online statistical database available through the NSO website.

IT support

Staff members in the Unit responded to over 220 support calls. These were mostly software-related and therefore were settled internally within a short time. Although most hardware-related problems were also settled internally, on some occasions the defective hardware had to be sent to the supplier for repairs.

The Unit was also engaged in the maintenance and administration of three servers.

IT services by external service providers

A team from MITA (formerly MITTS Ltd.) contributed software development services to NSO. During the last quarter of 2007 and the first quarter of 2008, this team was involved in a major project to change all software applications to the euro currency. The applications that were part of this project are the following:

- Business Register;
- Intrastat and Web Intrastat;
- Labour Cost and Earnings Survey;
- Labour Force Survey;
- Tourstat;
- Retail Price Index;
- Survey on Income and Living Conditions;
- Structural Business Statistics.

The effort of the MITA team during 2008 was also exerted on the development of new projects and enhancement of existing software. The software projects worked upon during this period were:

- Structural Business Statistics;
- Business Register;
- Farm Register;
- Household Budgetary Survey;
- Education Statistics;
- Labour Force Survey;
- Intrastat.

Eurostat-related tasks

The Unit was also responsible for maintaining the eDAMIS data transmission portal. This portal is hosted on one of the servers administered by the Unit and is used by the various units to transmit data to Eurostat. In March 2008 Eurostat announced that as from 1 July 2008, the Single Entry Point (SEP) system shall be enforced. This policy states that all data transmitted to Eurostat must be channelled via eDAMIS. Following this notification the Unit made sure that all users responsible for data transmission were trained in using this transmission tool. By July 2008, NSO was compliant with the SEP policy.

Throughout the period covered in this report, the Unit was represented in seven international meetings and workshops.

Human resources

In October 2007 the complement of the Unit consisted of a manager and three programmers while by the end of 2008, it comprised a manager, one programmer and one clerk.

To build up the human resource base of the Unit, the decision was taken to recruit four IT apprentices from MCAST in July 2008. Two of these apprentices are focused on software development while the other two deal with hardware support. The support team received training in the first month of employment and could then be entrusted with most of the support issues without being supervised. The software development apprentices were trained for the first three months after recruitment, at the end of which they were able to contribute to the Unit's development by producing a data capture application and by aiding in the creation of other applications.

