

Annual Report 2015

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

Adult Education Survey	AES
Automated Revenue Management Services Ltd	ARMS
Building Industry Consultative Council	BICC
Balance of Payments	BOP
Balance of Payments Manual	BPM
Business Register	BR
Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing	CATI
Central Bank of Malta	CBM
Common Communication Network	CCN
Coordinated Direct Investment Survey	CDIS
Centre for Development Research and Training	CDRT
Customs Electronic System	CES
Classification of Products by Activity	CPA
Coordinated Portfolio Investment Survey	CPIS
Commercial Property Price Index	CPPI
Continuing Vocational Training Survey	CVTS
Director General	DG
Directorate-General for Budget	DG BUDG
Data Structure Definition	DSD
European Commission	EC
European Central Bank	ECB
Electronic Dataflow Administration and Management Information System	e-DAMIS
Electronic Form	eForm
EuroGroups Register	EGR
Environmental Goods and Services Sector	EGSS
Economic Policy Department	EPD
Environmental Protection Expenditure Accounts	EPEA

European System of Accounts	ESA
European Statistical System	ESS
European Statistical Training Programme	ESTP
Employment and Training Corporation	ETC
European Union	EU
Foreign Affiliates Statistics	FATS
Foreign Direct Investment	FDI
Framework Regulation Integrating Business Statistics	FRIBS
Farm Structure Survey	FSS
Gross Domestic Product	GDP
Geographic Information Systems	GIS
Geographical Information System of the European Commission	GISCO
Gross National Income	GNI
Generic Statistical Business Process Model	GSBPM
Household Budgetary Survey	HBS
Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices	HICP
Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices – Constant Taxes	HICP-CT
House Price Index	HPI
Information and Communication Technology	ICT
Integrated European Social Statistics	IESS
Index of Industrial Production	IIP
International Investment Position	IIP
International Monetary Fund	IMF
Infrastructure for Spatial Information in the European Community	INSPIRE
Index of Services Production	ISP
Information Technology	IT
International Trade in Goods Statistics	ITGS
Local Administrative Units	LAU
Labour Cost Survey	LCS

Labour Force Survey	LFS
Ministry for Employment and Education	MEDE
Ministry for Energy and Health – Sustainable Energy and Water Conservation Unit	MEH-SEWCU
Malta Environment and Planning Authority	MEPA
Ministry for Finance	MFIN
Malta Financial Services Authority	MFSA
Malta International Airport	MIA
Malta Information Technology Agency	MITA
Malta Statistics Authority	MSA
Statistical Classification of Economic Activities in the European Community	NACE
National Audit Office	NAO
National Commission for Further and Higher Education	NCFHE
National Statistics Office	NSO
National Urban Audit Co-ordinators	NUAC
Nomenclature des Units Territoriales Statistiques	NUTS
Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development	OECD
Owner-Occupied Housing Price Index	OOHPI
Producer Price Index	PPI
Purchasing Power Parities	PPP
Research and Development	R&D
Malta Office of the Refugee Commissioner	RefCom
Retail Price Index	RPI
Really Simple Syndication	RSS
Structural Business Statistics	SBS
Special Data Dissemination Standard	SDDS
Statistical Data and Metadata eXchange	SDMX
Structure of Earnings Survey	SES
Statistics on Income and Living Conditions	SILC

Single Market Statistics	SIMSTAT
Services Producer Price Indices	SPPIs
Short-term Statistics	STS
Transport Malta	TM
Tourism Satellite Accounts	TSA
United Nations	UN
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	UNESCO
UNESCO, OECD and Eurostat	UOE
Value Added Tax	VAT



17 March 2016

The Chairman
Malta Statistics Authority

In accordance with the provisions of subsection 5(g) of the Malta Statistics Authority Act XXIV of 2000, I hereby submit to you this report on the operations of the National Statistics Office for the year ended 31 December 2015.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'R. Fenech', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Reuben Fenech
Director General

MISSION STATEMENT

“Produce high-quality statistics and analysis for better decision making in Malta.”

CORE VALUES

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| Independence | Produce statistics and analysis that are free from external influence. |
| Objectivity | Present a true and factual picture of economic and social spheres through our statistics. |
| Dependability | Commit ourselves to produce quality statistics and nurture our reliability by delivering on expectations of the public sector, the business community and civil society. |
| Honesty | Stand firm by what is right, being truthful, open, clear and coherent. |

Director General's Introduction

During 2015, the NSO continued to provide the Government, the business community and society at large, vital information, analysis and statistics, on which policy makers, public and private entities, and families, based their decisions.

Continuing on the trend established in previous years, the NSO issued 239 news releases and five publications. While remaining committed to producing a wide range of reliable indicators, the Office's concerted effort was focused on the HBS.

The NSO collaborated with other departments, authorities and institutions in line with its commitment to assist users in the compilation and interpretation of statistics. Throughout the year, among other things, the NSO:

- provided tables for the annual Economic Survey and other documents published on Budget Day;
- carried out the survey on 'Sustaining Relationships: Couples and Singles in a Changing Society' for the National Centre for Family Research, an entity within the President's Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society; and
- conducted the used-cars survey on behalf of TM.

Throughout the year, regular meetings were held with users and data providers, notably the CBM, the EPD and the MFIN. Meetings were also held with the Office's main data suppliers, including the MFSA and the ETC. Ad-hoc meetings were also held with ARMS, Enemalta, Enemed, BICC and other ministries.

Apart from the publishing of news releases on a daily basis the NSO has, during 2015, published the following publications:

- Demographic Review: 2005-2012;
- Social Protection: Malta and the EU 2014;
- Demographic Review: 2013;
- Gozo in Figures: 2015; and
- Transport Statistics: 2015.

All publications have been made available online on the NSO website (www.nso.gov.mt), free of charge. In addition to the online version, the publication *Gozo in Figures 2015* was printed. This publication is a concrete example of the positive collaborative ventures which the NSO undertakes in conjunction with a variety of administrative sources. *Gozo in Figures 2015* brought together multi-domain statistics relating to Gozo, also providing comparisons with Malta as well as with the other five statistical districts. Through this publication the NSO provided a reasonably comprehensive statistical

collection that undoubtedly rendered a service to persons and organisations doing business in Gozo or having a direct relationship with the island in any way.

A number of changes in the organisation structure were put in place during the year to ensure the Office is well positioned to meet its future commitments. Most notable changes included the creation of a Data Capability Directorate and the merging of the Economics and Business Directorates. A specific Risk Unit was created whilst the External Cooperation and the Dissemination Unit have become two distinct Units.

After wide discussion, the NSO has redefined its Mission to the following: “Produce high-quality statistics and analysis for better decision making in Malta.”

In order to fulfil our mission in the right way, a set of values have been developed that will serve to guide all employees of the NSO in this endeavour. The values are:

- Independence – Produce statistics and analysis that are free from external influence;
- Objectivity – Present a true and factual picture of economic and social spheres through our statistics;
- Dependability – Commit ourselves to produce quality statistics and nurture our reliability by delivering on expectations of the public sector, the business community and civil society; and
- Honesty – Stand firm by what is right, being truthful, open, clear and coherent.

World Statistics Day

The NSO organised a number of activities in conjunction with World Statistics Day. Similar to many other national statistical institutes, the Office adhered to the theme chosen by the UN: “Better Data, Better Lives.” A seminar was held with the aim of increasing awareness on and recognition of the important role that statistics can play in shaping policy in various areas. The seminar contributions also sought to identify ways by which statistics can impact positively on societies and individual lives. The topics presented covered the economic and social spectrum, while the audience included key stakeholders and users, opinion makers, members of the media, MSA Board members and NSO staff. A second initiative was a reach-out programme among secondary-school students. The activities were purposely designed to foster the value of statistics among students by means of interactive presentations and quizzes. Three events were organised, two in Malta and one in Gozo.

Peer Review

In the first quarter of the year, Eurostat carried out their periodic Peer Review of the statistical system in Malta. In their report, the Peer Reviewers noted that despite the small size of the Office, “NSO has a large output of News Releases that are presented clearly and consistently and cover virtually all the European statistics produced by Malta.” Nevertheless, the report highlights challenges ahead that the

Office needs to meet in order to fulfil its role at both national and international level. A total of 16 recommendations were made including three directly related to the MSA.

EU Presidency 2017

Preparations are underway to ensure a smooth transition when Malta, following the Netherlands and Slovakia, will preside over the Council Working Party on Statistics in the first half of 2017, when the NSO will have the important role of coordinating the EU law-making process as regards statistical legislation. Concretely, the Office strengthened its networks with EU Member States, notably with the Netherlands and Slovakia, updated itself on pending and forthcoming legislative files, and put together a strong international relations team. The Office is also collaborating with the UK colleagues who will take over the Presidency from Malta.

Appreciation

The year has been a very important one for the NSO as a number of initiatives that set its course for the years to come have been successfully implemented. I would like to thank the members of the MSA Board for their continuous support and the employees for their commitment. 2015 will be followed by more transformation as we build the NSO of tomorrow. The task at hand is as arduous as much as is required. However I feel positive that through our clear vision, and effective strategy implementation, we shall succeed in bringing the NSO at the heart of the policy making process to help Malta make better decisions.

UNIT 01: METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH

The main role of the Methodology and Research Unit is to provide technical assistance to other units within the NSO, covering various quality and methodological areas. Methodological functions are normally required in sampling, survey and questionnaire design and statistical inference. Quality issues are domain and process-specific, to ensure that the statistical business processes employed in various domains are harmonised in terms of data and metadata. Other important areas include the anonymisation of micro and tabular data as well as the setting-up and updating of a number of administrative registers which are used for sampling, benchmarking and statistical matching.

Following the launch of the NSO metadata website (www.nso.gov.mt/metadata), which provides a comprehensive set of statistical concepts, classifications and quality reports for a number of statistical domains, the main objective for this year was the setting-up of a systematic documentation of statistical work processes in place at the NSO. These are in-line with established business processes adopted at European level.

The unit was also responsible for the coordination and setting-up of the round of peer reviews, as well as the provision of a set of improvement actions proposed to Eurostat. The peer review is an exercise carried out among all Member States to assess the degree of compliance with the Statistical Code of Practice.

In addition to the above, the unit is also regularly engaged in other specific projects in isolation. In 2015, preparatory work related to 2021 and post-2021 Census of Population and Housing was intensified in-line with the requirements of the Task Force group on Future EU Censuses on Population and Housing, of which the NSO has been actively involved since 2014.

In a separate EU-funded project, quality improvements in the LFS covering various quarterly and annual indicators have been tested.

The evaluation of the work processes in place at the NSO will pave the way for the setting-up of a Quality and Risk Management Framework which will be adopted thereafter by the Office, for ensuring compliance with the European Statistics Code of Practice in terms of the design, collection, processing and dissemination stages of statistical data, subject to a specific risk catalogue. This exercise will also serve to detect any phases of the production systems in need of standardisation or efficiency gains.

UNIT 02: REGIONAL STATISTICS

The functions of the Regional Statistics Unit mainly focused on the development and strengthening of regional data and statistics in the areas indicated hereunder:

- i. Education and Labour Market Statistics;
- ii. Regional Gross Value-Added and Business Demography Statistics;
- iii. Tourism and Transport Statistics;
- iv. Population, Culture and Environment (incl. Agriculture and Fishing) Statistics; and
- v. Urban Audit, INSPIRE Directive and GIS.

The level of detail and frequency of statistical output vary across themes and is highly dependent on the availability and robustness of data sources. The current territorial classifications applied include the breakdown of national data and estimates under three different levels:

NUTS 3 (2 regions), LAU 1 (6 districts) and LAU 2 (68 localities).

In collaboration with counterpart units within the NSO and external stakeholders, the unit is developing a statistical architecture that could facilitate both longitudinal and cross-sectional (spatial) analysis. This is intended to enable interested stakeholders, analyse the absolute and relative developments prevailing in the different subjects across territorial levels. The participation in EU projects such as the Urban Audit and INSPIRE Directive was instrumental to promote the use of GIS in the field of regional statistics.

At European level the unit deals with Eurostat¹ and the EC². The unit was actively involved in the *Working Group on Regional, Urban and Rural Development Statistics* held in Luxembourg and the *NUAC Meeting* held in Brussels. Following new responsibilities related to geospatial statistics, as from 2016 the unit shall start participating in the *GISCO Party Meeting on the Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information – Joint Meeting of National Mapping Authorities and National Statistical Institutes* held in Luxembourg.

The unit commenced work on two EU grants signed during the year. The two grants focus on the “Data collection for sub-national statistics (mainly cities)” and “Regional business and employer business demography data collection”.

The flagship project of the unit for 2015 was the compilation of the *Gozo in Figures 2015* publication, which covered 12 important statistical domains, including two new themes: education and renewable

¹ Unit C2: National accounts production, Unit C5: Integrated Global Accounts and Balance of payments, and Unit E4: Regional statistics and geographical information

² DG Regional and Urban Policy

energy harvesting statistics. The publication included first-time perspectives at district level, in the field of supply-side tourism statistics and new tourism profiles for Gozo and Comino.

The unit has the mandate to strengthen its horizontal functions within the Office and is targeting improvements in the statistical sources and output at regional level, in terms of coverage, efficiency and definition. In this respect the unit is consolidating its resources and efforts with counterpart units (within NSO) and institutions (external) in order to implement structural enhancements across major statistical domains in relation to NUTS 3, LAU1 and LAU2 levels. This shall reflect also developments in the field of geospatial statistics, a new area which the unit is entrusted to pursue during 2016 and beyond, in order to fulfil statistical obligations both within the national and EU context. In addition, the use of digital maps on the NSO website will be facilitated. This is intended to provide a wider perspective to data and also to promote coherence and comparability.

UNIT 03: SURVEYS

The Surveys Unit is responsible for the collection and dissemination of various statistical domains which range from those of a social and economic nature to environmental and educational matter. The main functions of the unit are the compilation and integration of the requested research data from external sources originating from Government and other Institutions which require the collection and verification of data sets. Data is processed, validated and produced in an appropriate format for publication as requested by the client. Additionally, the unit also provides on daily basis helpdesk assistance to external users who require data or surveys.

During the period under review, the unit was entrusted with supporting local government departments and entities including the provision of statistical support for economic analysis. Building on the sound and strong reputation for high quality statistical data, the NSO is seeking to expand its services to reach out to the wider community.

In this regard the NSO is equipped to undertake dedicated research projects specifically aimed for the needs of the private and public sector alike by conducting business surveys, questionnaires and marketing research projects to meet specific project goals.

UNIT A1: NATIONAL ACCOUNTS

The National Accounts Unit was mainly focused on the compilation of the GNI Inventory and the Process Tables which were due by regulation in December 2015. During 2015, the unit managed to address all the pending GNI reservations which were due for completion in September 2015. These two projects were both covered by a Eurostat grant. The unit also hosted GNI Information Visit which covered the reservations addressed in the GNI quality report of 2014 and the pending reservations which were addressed in 2015.

Moreover, the unit continued its routine activities which include the publication of five news releases, four GDP releases and a release on Non-Financial Accounts by Institutional Sector Accounts. The unit integrated the SBS Survey (2012 and 2013) in the June and December 2015 GDP releases. The unit was also engaged in the following tasks:

- the compilation of weights for the annual PPP exercise, including reports on VAT, rents and tips in the service industries;
- the annual GNI questionnaire and its supporting quality report for EU own resources purposes;
- the calculation of the weighted average rate for the VAT own resources exercise, VAT compensation tables and the respective reports which are then provided to DG BUDG; and
- implementation of SDMX and DSDs in National Accounts according to ESA 2010 covered by grant agreement No. 04121.2015.002-2015.173 (Action 3 – Project 4)

Following the compilation of the Supply and Use tables of 2010 including the five extra tables needed for *Input-Output Tables* in 2014, the unit compiled the Input-Output tables for 2010. The transformation of supply and use tables to symmetric input-output tables requires a set of supply and use tables at purchasers' prices and valuation matrices from which supply and use tables at basic prices can be compiled with separate results for domestic output and imports. The unit compiled an industry by industry table with a fixed product sales structure assumption. The unit provided the Input-Output table to Eurostat by the end of the year. The unit is planning a news release on Supply, Use and Input-Output tables to be published in the first half of 2016.

Considerable progress was registered in the ESA 2010 *GNI Inventory and the Process Tables*. The ESA 2010 GNI Inventory provides a detailed explanation of sources and methods used for estimating GNI in a country. It is the basis for the Eurostat assessment of the quality and exhaustiveness of GNI data and their compliance with ESA 2010. The Inventory is a reference document that is kept up-to-date to reflect the latest methodology in place. Process Tables are a tool for presenting and explaining in a tabular form what sources are used and what happens to the source figures in the process of compiling national accounts. The GNI Inventory and the Process Tables were submitted

to Eurostat by the end of the year. This inventory will replace the 2008 version currently available on the website of NSO.

Article 6 of the GNI Regulation foresees joint GNI information visits to be carried out in Member States by the Commission's services and representatives from other Member States. The visits aim at collecting additional information that is necessary to identify possible weaknesses of the GNI Inventory. At the end of this analysis, Eurostat provides an assessment on whether the Member States' figures are appropriate for own resource purposes or whether further corrections and improvements are necessary. Based on these assessments, the DG BUDG of the Commission notifies the Permanent Representative of the concerned Member State about the reservations on the country's GNI data. Countries report on the progress made on their GNI reservations in their annual Quality Reports where the methodological changes and their numerical impacts on GNI are reported. Eurostat drafts technical opinions on the countries' work on reservations. If a reservation has been adequately addressed DG BUDG notifies to the Permanent Representative of the concerned Member State that the reservation is lifted. Malta addressed six reservations throughout the year which were reported in the GNI Quality report. These reservations were discussed during the GNI information visit in February 2015.

In terms of compliance, Eurostat deems the figures provided by the unit as 'complete data delivery'. In other words, Malta provides all the data on time, with very minor, infrequent shortcomings reported. All pending GNI reservations will be tackled next year.

The greatest challenge remains achieving full compliance with Regulation (EU) No. 549/2013 where a number of derogations are still in place.

UNIT A2: PUBLIC FINANCE

The Public Finance Unit is responsible for the development, ongoing production and analysis of statistics related to the government finance statistics, the highlight being the compilation of the Malta's General Government deficit and debt levels, as established by the Maastricht Criteria. In line with the ESA 2010 requirements, the unit compiles the non-financial account, financial account and debt of the General Government Sector. Other important domains within the unit are the compilation of the Social Protection Account and the Research and Development for the Government and Higher Education sectors.

During the 2014 standard dialogue visit to Malta, Eurostat urged the unit to start compiling a report explaining substantial quarterly statistics discrepancies between the non-financial and financial accounts of the general government sector. In 2015 the report was drafted for the first time, shedding light on the causes for the high discrepancies recorded which were later rectified.

The challenge ahead can be summarised as follows:

- Eurostat's standard dialogue visit to Malta;
- The compilation of the accrued-to-date pension liabilities (the current value of pensions to be paid in the future); and
- The creation of an IT system to cater for the non-financial accounts data in cooperation with the IT Unit.

UNIT A3: BALANCE OF PAYMENTS

The Balance of Payments Unit compiles:

- the monthly and quarterly BOP statements comprising the current, capital and financial accounts;
- the IIP statement on a quarterly basis, detailing the position of Malta's foreign assets and liabilities at the end of a three-monthly period; and
- the FDI reports showing both transactions and positions, broken down by main economic sectors.

Moreover, the unit compiles the CPIS and CDIS statements, where positions are specified by country.

Altogether, nine news releases were published: four on BOP; two on IIP; two on FDI; and one on CPIS. The statements have been compiled in accordance with the guidelines laid down in the 6th edition of IMF's Balance of Payments and International Investments Position Manual (BPM6), in line with the requirements of the EC and the ECB. Monthly and quarterly statements have been timely submitted to the EC and the ECB, as well as to the IMF.

Local users and analysts benefitted from the production of statements following BPM6, as it enables comparisons between Malta and the other EU Member States. The only outstanding requirement with respect to BPM6 is 'changes in volume', which will be addressed in 2016.

UNIT A4: INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND TRANSPORT STATISTICS

The unit was actively engaged with fulfilling its primary task to compile, check and disseminate external trade and transport statistics data. Trade data are collected from two main sources: the Supplementary Declaration System (Intrastat) covering trade between EU Member States, and the CES covering Extra-EU trade (Extrastat). Transport themed data, including traffic accidents and motor vehicles are collected from administrative sources. During the year, 24 news releases covering both domains were published.

Apart from attending to the ITGS Steering Group meetings, the unit carried out work in conjunction with three Eurostat grants, of which two were finalised by the end of the year. These included the construction of a SIMSTAT database to cater for the storage and processing of EU Member States Dispatches micro-data exchanged in the course of another grant agreement known as ESSnet2. The second grant was the ESSnet2 project, which was a joint action by 20 Member States which included the implementation of trail tests for the exchange of micro-data through the DG Taxud's CCN gateway and carried out as a follow up to a previous ESSnet pilot project carried out in 2014. All data transmission deadlines to Eurostat in both domains were respected.

The unit continued with its efforts to improve and enhance its IT infrastructure to further expand the scope and functionality of the Intrastat/Extrastat System used in both the collection and dissemination of trade data. Improvements were also registered in the transport databases. An increase in the number of online users of the system has resulted in an increase in the number of declarations being lodged electronically. A system enhancement was also implemented on behalf of the MEH-SEWCU to collect additional data with respect to solar water heaters and air conditioning equipment. Throughout the year the unit supplied trade and transport data to both internal and external users on a regular and ad hoc basis. The unit has increased its cooperation with TM in various aspects in the transport domain with the scope to improve and enhance its products to the benefit of all stakeholders.

The unit has participated within the ongoing FRIBS initiative by providing feedback on ITGS issues. Apart from integrating the business statistics regulation, FRIBS will also include the production of new datasets derived from existing ones.

Next year, SIMSTAT and the redesign of Intrastat will continue to feature within the ESS Vision 2020 implementation portfolio. The unit will continue with its IT modernisation initiative supported by a Eurostat grant which was initiated in 2015 and is due to be finalised before the second quarter of 2016. This action includes the complete migration to the web environment of the current system, intended to enhance the internal and external user's experience.

UNIT A5: PRICE STATISTICS

The Price Statistics Unit fulfilled its primary task of compiling and validating the RPI and the HICP. Moreover, the unit continued the production of the HICP-CT on a voluntary basis and carried out the majority of exercises in conjunction with the PPP project. More time was allotted to the production of the housing statistics, including: the HPI, the OOHPI, the Commercial Property Price Index and the Property Volume Indices. The unit issued twenty five news releases during the year.

The unit is now fully compliant with Commission Regulation 93/2013, which establishes OOHPI with a view to improving the relevance and comparability of harmonised indices of consumer prices. More specifically, the unit ensured that the HPI series starts from 2008 whereas the OOHPI series starts from 2010 as stipulated in the regulation. A notable improvement was also recorded with respect to the Commercial Property Price Index, whereby the greater detail made available by the administrative source about the attributes of the sold properties, enabled the compilation of an index based on the median price.

The Property Market Value Index, which relies on the judgement of four local experts operating in the property market, was compiled in the first quarter of the year. The exercise entailed, among other things, establishing the 'market' price per metre squared across all localities in Malta and Gozo, distinguishing between three different areas (primary, secondary and tertiary) per locality. The unit was entrusted the task of presenting the results to the Minister for the Family and Social Solidarity in April 2015. Moreover, the unit actively participated in meetings held at the premises of the BICC to discuss the list of property attributes that the 8th schedule (to be completed by all parties purchasing a property) should cover, in order to produce superior housing statistics.

In November 2015, Commission Regulation 2015/2010, establishing 2015 as the common index reference period for the HICP, was ratified. The rescaling process will start as soon as the index referring to the month of December 2015 is final.

All Euro Area Member States are expected to start furnishing flash estimates regularly to Eurostat in 2017. This will certainly prove to be the main challenge in 2016. The unit is also committed to explore the possibility of using *scanner data* in the compilation of the HICP. The advantages of using scanner data are twofold, namely: lower costs incurred to collect prices and more detailed information about the prices and quantities of products sold. Furthermore, the unit is also committed to assess the use of *transactions data* in the compilation of the communication indices and the bus fares index.

UNIT B1: STRUCTURAL BUSINESS STATISTICS

The Structural Business Statistics Unit is responsible for the data collection, compilation and dissemination of business statistics data, based on macro-economic variables for the local scenario. The unit also compiles data on FATS statistics involving the activities of foreign subsidiaries resident in Malta (Inward FATS) and subsidiaries abroad controlled by Maltese Controlling Institutions (Outwards FATS). These datasets are anonymised and transmitted to Eurostat.

An Outward FATS News Release for the period between 2011 and 2013 was published at the end of the year. During the last quarter, the documentation of work processes (GSBPM) for all statistical domains was compiled. The unit also completed all the related quality reports.

The unit improved the timeliness related to SBS data 2013 reference year. The use of the 'edit' tool on SBS data checks was mandatory. Apart from data series checks and confidentiality pattern checks, this tool prompts Member States to provide an explanation for any warnings in the data. Since Inward FATS data is a subset of SBS data, timeliness also improved for Inward FATS 2013 reference data. The coverage for Inward FATS data increased with additional data based on NACE Rev. 2 NACE Divisions 64 to 66 (Financial and Insurance Activities).

Preliminary SBS 2015 data was compiled for all sectors and delivered for the first time. Moreover, the unit transmitted data related to a new series based on insurance services and pension funds for reference year 2013. In 2015, more SBS data cells were made available to users since the data was published at a higher level of confidentiality for the percentage dominance of one or two enterprises which dominate the data.

Due to amendments in the statistical CPA Regulation, some variables in the SBS domain will be updated for consistency as from next year. These changes mostly reflect SBS data in the composition of certain special aggregates and the revision of the classification of products by activity for business services.

UNIT B2: SHORT-TERM STATISTICS

The Short-Term Statistics Unit is responsible for the collection, compilation and dissemination of various important indicators that describe the most recent developments in the Maltese economy. These are published in index form and cover the indicators of production, turnover, number of employees, hours worked, gross wages and salaries, import prices, producer prices, construction costs and building permits. The four major domains covered by the unit are industry, construction, retail trade and services. Data-series are produced in working day and seasonally adjusted formats. In 2015, the unit published over 30 news releases and sent over 80 data transmissions to Eurostat.

The unit met all the deadlines for all the indicators required locally and by Eurostat. Local news releases included the IIP and the PPI on a monthly basis and the Short-Term Industrial Indicators and Services Indicators on a quarterly basis. It is customary for the unit to adopt a proactive approach and adhere to new European regulations before they are enacted. In fact, various regulations in the FRIBS 2018 package are already being met. These include shorter deadlines for various data transmissions and extending the coverage of calendar and seasonal adjustment. The data for the MEPA permits in square metres were also successfully back casted and sent to Eurostat and work began on the SPPIs. In fact, the SPPIs for the air transport and telecommunications sectors were finalised and data submitted to Eurostat.

There have been no new regulations in 2015 in the STS area. Overall, compliance score at EU level is currently 9.3/10 for the short-term statistics unit. Non-compliance is currently being addressed and is currently high on the unit's priorities list.

However, preparations are well underway to meet the remaining projects that fall under FRIBS. These are the ISP and the change in the frequency of the services turnover variable from quarterly to monthly. Research on the ISP is planned to start in 2016/2017. The change in the frequency of the services turnover will take place after the first quarter of 2016.

Apart from FRIBS, the conclusion of the SPPI project is also high on the priorities list. In fact, it will be the unit's main project in 2016 and 2017.

UNIT B3: AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT STATISTICS

The Agriculture and Environment Statistics Unit is responsible for the agriculture, fisheries, environmental and energy data collection and its dissemination. The main domains comprise:

- Land;
- Fruit and vegetables;
- Animals and animal products;
- Aquaculture;
- Water;
- Energy;
- Waste;
- Environmental accounting; and
- Taxes.

These datasets are regularly maintained and updated annually in accordance with the local and European requirements, as outlined through the relevant directives and regulations.

The unit published a total of 26 news releases that covered most of the above topics on a quarterly or annual basis according to the domain.

Plans are underway to conduct a FSS in 2016, in line with the requirements laid down in Regulation (EC) 1166/2008. A total of 1,500 agricultural holdings will be interviewed to collect data on the structure and use of the holdings. Also data will start being compiled for the EGSS and EPEA modules according to Regulation (EC) 535/2014.

UNIT B4: BUSINESS REGISTERS

The BR is an exhaustive list of all registered legal units in Malta. Business demographic data is taken directly from the BR and transmitted to Eurostat. The BR is the main statistical database used in survey designs. The Business Registers Unit continued maintaining certain specific areas at the legal unit level. Over 1,000 new legal units per month were included in the register and an initial questionnaire was mailed to obtain structural characteristics on these legal units.

The unit launched the Innovation Survey in 2015, covering the three year period 2012-2014. The scope of this survey is to collect information across the business sector on new or significantly improved products or processes and organisational or marketing methods. Innovation statistics are collected from enterprises employing 10 or more persons, covering a number of sectors, including the service industries. Approximately 2,000 enterprises were surveyed. The Business R&D survey collects data on research carried out by the private sector. Provisional data for the 2014 R&D survey were transmitted to Eurostat at the end of October 2015, meeting the official deadlines set. Innovation and R&D indicators are an integral part of the 2020 targets set by the EU.

The BR also caters for enterprise groups that go beyond Maltese borders. The EGR, which is a network of business registers used for statistical purposes in the EU Member States, focuses on these multinational enterprise groups.

In its quest to simplify the BR questionnaire, the unit succeeded in reducing the response burden by relying more on administrative sources. Moreover, since all registered companies are being assigned an initial code based on the NACE classification by the MFSA, the unit was able to update the register on a monthly basis. This improved timeliness is required to be maintained for the Central Credit Register.

The main challenge ahead is the maintenance of the BR on a monthly basis for new units.

UNIT C1: LIVING CONDITIONS AND CULTURE STATISTICS

The Living Conditions and Culture Statistics Unit is primarily responsible for the data collection and analysis of the SILC survey. This annual survey is carried out under European Framework Regulation (EC) No. 1177/2003, with the aim of collecting information related to the distribution of household income, education, health, employment status and material deprivation. Ad hoc research work and simulations were also carried out using this information for policy making.

In 2015, the unit was also responsible for coordinating and monitoring closely the progress registered in the HBS. This survey was launched in March 2015 and spans over 12 months. The unit managed to reduce the costs for this survey by more than €100,000, when compared to the HBS survey conducted in 2008/09, which is a great feat, especially when assessed against the backdrop of a response rate hovering around the 60 per cent mark. Results from this survey are expected to be published in the second quarter of 2017.

The domain of *Culture Statistics* falls within the remit of the unit as well. The unit continued working on the culture plan in collaboration with the Arts Council and other national stakeholders including the EPD and the Valletta 2018 Group. The unit also cooperated with Eurostat and other international institutions (e.g. UNESCO) on new initiatives aimed at providing more harmonised and better quality statistics which could be compared at international level.

In November 2015, another Valletta Participation Survey focusing on the cultural participation in Valletta, was conducted. This survey, carried out in collaboration with the Valletta 2018 Foundation, will continue in 2016 as our contribution is crucial in the development of the V18 strategy. Furthermore, the unit carried out surveys among theatres, museums and historical sites, band clubs, cinemas and libraries. Data collected from these surveys included ownership, economic sector, memberships, voluntary workers and paid employment. From these surveys, NSO also collects information on income and expenditure generated by these Institutions.

The main challenges ahead are:

- The provision of preliminary HBS results by the end of 2016; and
- Carrying out the *Culture Participation Survey*, which focuses on the financial aspects of the cultural sector.

UNIT C2: LABOUR MARKET STATISTICS

The Labour Market Statistics Unit is in charge of the collection and dissemination of statistics concerning persons and businesses operating in the labour market. A number of surveys are carried out on a regular basis in order to monitor evolving trends in this domain. These are complimented by the dissemination of data from administrative sources.

The leading enquiry entrusted to the unit is the LFS which is an ongoing household based enquiry which has the objective of splitting the 15+ population into three mutually exclusive categories, namely, employed, unemployed and inactive. The unit also carries out a number of surveys among enterprises, namely, a quarterly survey on job vacancies, the LCS and the SES. Administrative sources, on the other hand, provide information on accidents and fatalities at work, registered unemployment and registered employment data.

The unit managed to shorten the transmission of the LFS data from 12 weeks, following the end of the quarter, to 10 weeks. This work is being carried out in preparation for the introduction of the new IESS framework regulation within the coming 3 years. A further achievement relates to the transmission of data on accidents and fatalities at work which was provided one year ahead of the deadline.

At a national level, the unit worked hand in hand with the MEDE in order to ensure the correct mapping of educational attainment, especially among the younger segment of the population. This work was carried out in collaboration with the Education and Information Society Statistics Unit within the NSO and is resulting in the provision of better quality statistics on this area.

The Labour Market Unit is currently gearing itself in order to be in a position to fulfil the obligations and requirements laid down in the IESS framework regulation. In view of this the unit is working on improving its timeliness since the transmission deadlines are expected to be reduced from 12 weeks to 8 weeks. In addition, work is underway on the development of a methodology concerning the compilation of monthly unemployment rates using LFS and administrative sources. Work will also focus on new or revamped products in order to provide users with a larger variety and more user friendly output.

UNIT C3: POPULATION AND TOURISM STATISTICS

The Population and Tourism Statistics Unit is responsible for the compilation and dissemination of statistics on tourism and population.

Tourism is measured by taking both demand-side and supply-side perspectives. In order to collect information on tourism demand, the unit carries out an ongoing frontier survey at the MIA and at the Seaport. The results of this exercise are published in the inbound tourism news release (issued on a monthly basis) and the outbound tourism news release (issued on a quarterly basis). Tourism supply-side statistics, published in a monthly news release, are collected from the suppliers of tourism services, shedding light over the occupancy levels in hotels, guesthouses and hostels. The unit also collects information on National Tourism by means of a quarterly CATI survey and administrative data on Cruise Passengers from TM.

The unit is also responsible for the compilation of total population counts based on updates from the latest Population and Housing Census. The unit continued to produce estimates of total and Maltese population counts by gender, age and locality for the previous year. The unit also coordinated with various government departments to obtain information on important demographic events, including data on births, deaths, adoptions and regular and irregular migration, used for updating the total population distribution. In addition, data on marriages, separations and divorces was collected. The Demographic Review 2013, which includes detailed information on population and demography, was published in the third quarter.

The unit has achieved full compliance with respect to:

- Regulation 692/2011 on tourism statistics;
- Regulation 1260/2013 on European demographic statistics; and
- Regulation (EC) 862/2007 on migration and international protection.

The unit also compiled and disseminated three news releases on demographic statistics, namely World Population Day, World Refugee Day and Babies' Names.

Following the publication of the final results of the Census of Population and Housing 2011, one of the main tasks of the unit was to revise population estimates for the intercensal period 2006-2010. Revised time series estimates were published on the NSO website on 3 February 2015 in an extensive publication that also incorporated demographic data for reference years 2011 and 2012.

For the year ahead, the unit will be preparing for the following:

- Enhancing tourism statistics (feasibility studies on collection of more detailed information on Cruise passengers and Marinas);
- News Release on National Tourism (outbound + domestic tourism);
- Feasibility study on the “usual residence” definition; and
- Population projections 2016.

UNIT C4: EDUCATION AND INFORMATION SOCIETY STATISTICS

Work in the field of *Education Statistics* focused on fulfilling Malta's information obligations with Eurostat. In line with the requirements laid down in EC Regulation No. 912/2013, data collection was carried out at all levels of education and among all institutions offering home grown courses. The unit was committed to eradicating the risk of under reporting and a full response from education institutions was sought and achieved.

Throughout the year, the unit invested a substantial part of its resources in analysing the data it received. It was also important to structure this data in a standardised format which ensures consistency and clarity.

Malta fulfils its information obligation to Eurostat by means of the UOE Tables. These constitute a common agreement on the collection of education statistics between UNESCO, OECD and Eurostat. In 2015, local UOE data was submitted to Eurostat within the specified deadlines and the data was successfully validated.

Locally, education statistics were published in four News Releases: One concerning student enrolments and classes, a second focusing on graduates and the fields of study in which they are specialised and a third concerning student absenteeism. The latter was published for the first time in 2015. A fourth news release concerned students studying in specialised schools teaching English as a foreign language.

In fulfilling its aims, the unit frequently sought the collaboration of the MEDE and the NCFHE. During 2015, a Memorandum of Understanding between NSO and NCFHE was signed. Under the terms of this agreement the two institutions agreed on a joint data collection/sharing initiative. This enabled the reduction of the response burden.

Regulations governing the AES and the CVTS, came into force in 2014. Thus, in 2015, consultations regarding the methodology by which these two surveys shall be carried out were held, in view of their actual implementation in 2016. In fact, the implementation of the CVTS and the AES are the greatest challenges ahead.

The vast majority of the *Information Society Statistics* collected by NSO are obtained through the ICT Usage and e-Commerce in Enterprise Survey and the ICT Usage in Households and by Individuals Survey. Both these surveys are the unit's responsibility and are undertaken under the provisions of EC Regulation No. 808/2004. The year 2015 was a benchmarking year for ICT, and thus more topics than usual were included in the survey, apart from the annual core indicators.

Data from both these data collection processes undergoes thorough quality and consistency checking before being transmitted to Eurostat in September 2015. In the case of the ICT Enterprise survey only aggregated data was transmitted while the ICT Households data was submitted anonymised at micro level. Locally, ICT Statistics are released by NSO in two dedicated news releases: one for each domain.

The greatest challenge in the ICT domain is producing reliable indicators for policymaking in a timely fashion. To this end, the unit is constantly aiming at optimising every step of the ICT process, from data collection, to analysis and finally dissemination.

UNIT D1: PERSONNEL AND BUDGETARY MATTERS

The overall workforce at NSO for the year 2015, including all employees who worked part of the year and then resigned, are seconded to Ministry, are on a career break or are on maternity/parental leave adds up to 165 persons. Table 1 clearly illustrates that almost 60 per cent of the workforce is female. The statistician grade is the strongest segment of the workforce accounting for 53 per cent of total employment. The Management Team comprises the Chairman, a DG, a Director, 1 Legal Advisor, 21 Unit Managers and 1 Financial Controller. Other personnel groups include 87 statisticians, 32 executive staff, 16 clerical staff, and 4 support staff.

Table 1. NSO staff members by function: December 2015

Function	Male	Female	Total
Management team	17	9	26
Statisticians	31	56	87
Executive staff	10	22	32
Clerical staff	9	7	16
Support staff	3	1	4
Total	70	95	165

Charts 1 and 2 illustrate characteristics on the composition of NSO personnel. Apart from the dominating female concentration, especially with respect to the younger age brackets, one can note a relatively young workforce, with 72 per cent of the personnel featuring in the age brackets less than 41 years of age.

Chart 1. Composition of the workforce (2015)

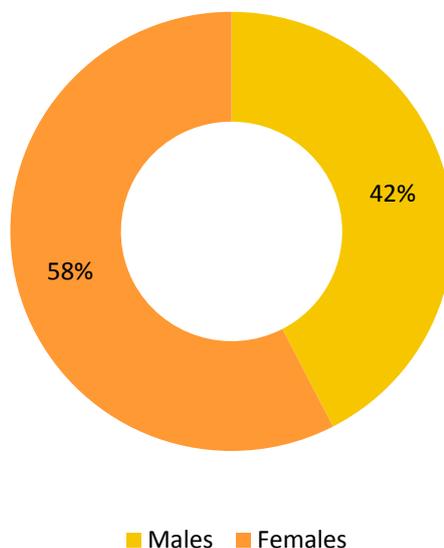
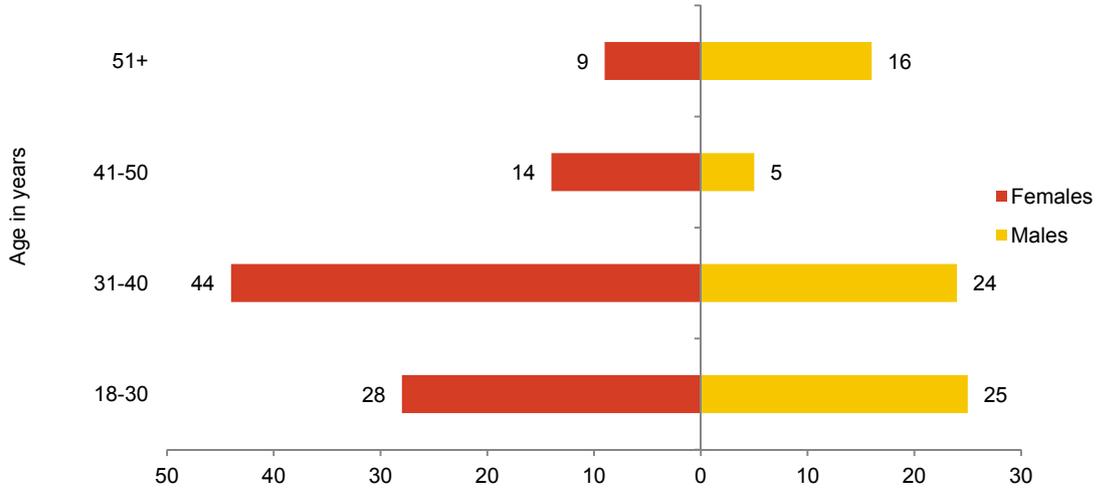


Chart 2. Staff distributed by sex and age



The NSO regularly undertakes staff intake in possession of high educational attainment. However, the Office is also committed to retain the majority of its staff thus maintaining a healthy balance between experience and academic achievement. Chart 3 shows that the majority of the employees have been working in the Office for more than 10 years.

Chart 3. Staff distributed by sex and years in service

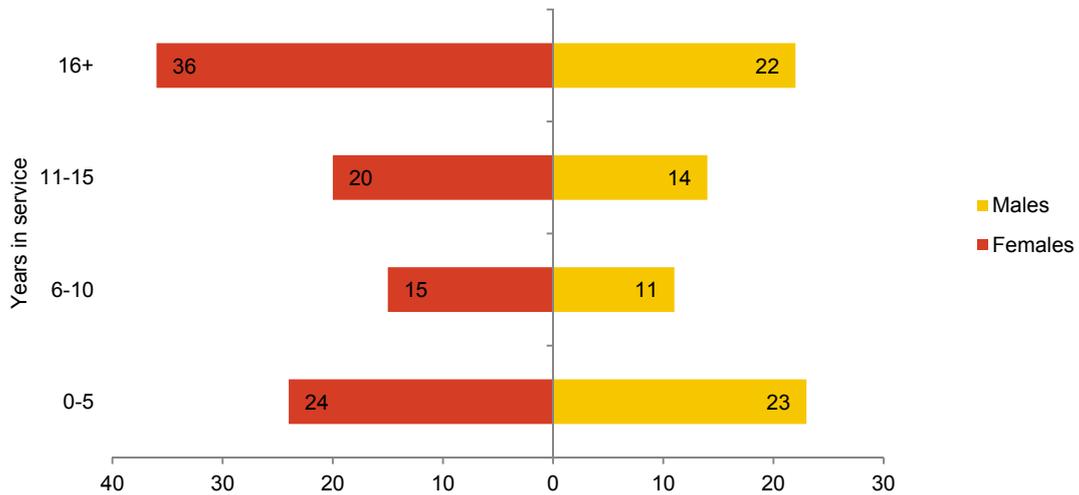


Chart 4. Staff distributed by highest level of education and years in service

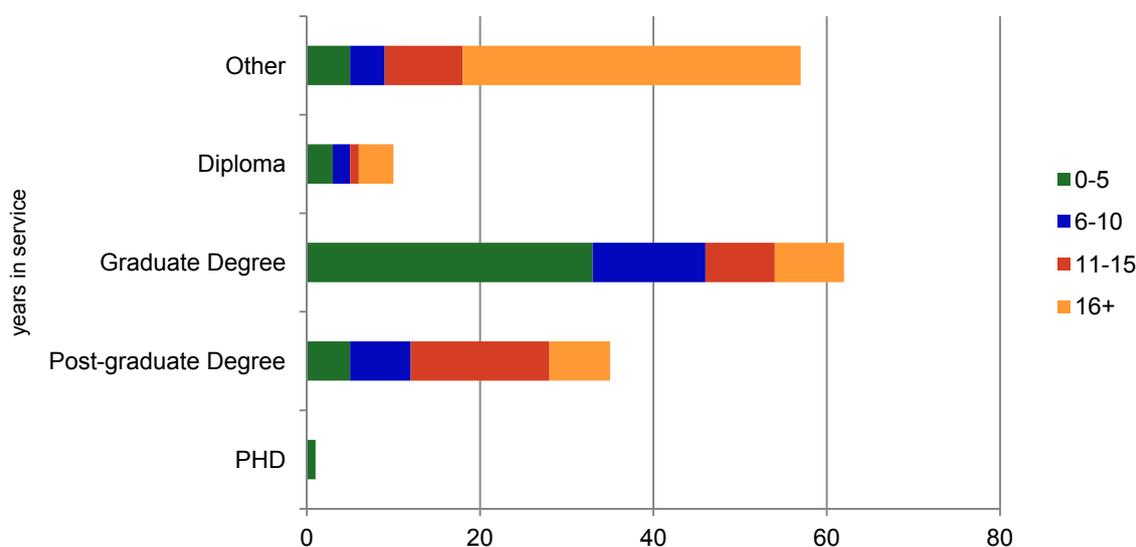


Chart 4 above, illustrates the relationship between the level of education and work experience at NSO. In line with the trends explained above, chart 4 shows that the majority of graduates have been working with the NSO for five years or less, whereas the majority of the non-graduates have been engaged by the office for more than 15 years. New recruits for the post of Statistician were required to possess an Honours degree in Statistics, Economics, Mathematics, Accountancy, Banking and Finance, or equivalent professional qualifications with any of these disciplines as a major area of study, with a Second class Lower classification as a minimum, to accede for further consideration.

During 2015, 14 employees attended courses organised by the CDRT in the various courses shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Courses organised by the CDRT: 2015

Training type	No. of participants
Budgeting, Cost and Management Analysis	2
Data Protection	1
ECDL Advanced : Database Training Course	1
Managing with Leadership	1
Presidency of the Council of the EU - Malta 2017	2
Preparing for Council Meetings	1
Public Management Toolkit Training (Module 5: Interpersonal Skills)	1
International Trends and Best Practices in External Audits in the Public Administration	1
Telephone Call and Handling Techniques	1
The Art of Writing a Good Report	2
Training Programme for Newly Appointed Executive Officers	1
Total	14

The total number of participants for local training courses (incl. CDRT) as shown in Table 3 amounted to 37.

Table 3. Local courses: 2015

Training type	No. of participants	% of Total
2015 Country Report for Malta	1	2.7
Breakfast Event from ICT Solutions	1	2.7
Central Credit Workshop	1	2.7
Effective Training Needs Analysis and Calculating ROI on Training	1	2.7
First Aid and Safety at Work	2	5.4
HR Seminar	1	2.7
Improving Board Effectiveness	1	2.7
Malta's Economy	1	2.7
MCESD National Conference	1	2.7
National Project for the Certification of Cash-Handlers	1	2.7
National Workshop on Malta's 2nd River Basin Management Plan	3	8.1
NCPE Conference	1	2.7
Open for Business - Malta Attractiveness Survey - National Conference	3	8.1
SharePoint Training	3	8.1
Team Building	9	24.3
Teknoloġija Aċċessibbli - Għażliet Aħjar	1	2.7
The Executive Events	1	2.7
The Implications of the New Retirement Pensions Act	2	5.4
The Pension's System: Is There a Sustainable Future	1	2.7
Trade Statistics - Eurostat Course	2	5.4
Total 2015	37	100.0

During 2015, 7 employees (Table 4) attended training and study visits abroad. Most of the courses were organised by Eurostat within the ESTP framework.

Table 4. Training abroad: 2015

Training type	No. of participants	% of Total
Advanced Methods for Sample Surveys	1	14.3
Combining Data from Different Sources	1	14.3
Course on Infostat Central Bank of Malta	1	14.3
Development and Use of Indicators System for Evidence-based Decision Making	1	14.3
Introduction to Seasonal Adjustment and Jdemetra +	1	14.3
Jdemetra+ For Advanced Users And / Or Hobby Developers	1	14.3
National Accounts - Introductory Course	1	14.3
Total 2015	7	100.0
<i>Total 2014</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>100.0</i>

Table 5 provides a brief outline of NSO's business abroad. The profile comprises three sections; the participation by function, the type of business attended and also the monthly distribution, depicting the ongoing travelling commitments reflecting pressures on the Office's human and financial resources.

Table 5. Travel-related profile: 2014 and 2015

Participation by function	Business trips		Business days*		Working days**	
	2014	2015	2014	2015	2014	2015
Management Team	86	74	155	141	249	214
Statisticians & Programmer III	41	36	121	74	158	113
Description by type						
Committees and Task Forces	6	1	12	2	21	3
Conferences and Seminars	10	2	19	2	27	5
Council Meetings, GNI and other Meetings	54	75	86	125	146	202
Study Visits and Training	20	9	79	38	92	44
Working Groups/Parties and Workshops	37	23	80	48	121	73
Distribution by month						
January	5	5	16	9	20	13
February	7	9	13	15	20	26
March	10	12	20	19	29	33
April	10	9	19	21	31	33
May	10	15	18	33	27	47
June	19	20	45	41	65	57
July	4	2	7	3	12	5
August	-	-	-	-	-	-
September	16	11	40	25	55	33
October	17	8	34	15	51	25
November	20	11	44	20	69	34
December	9	8	20	14	28	21

In total, NSO staff attended 110 official trips abroad, spread over 215 business days, implying a monthly average of approximately 9 trips or 18 business days. The majority of travel was conducted by the Management Team mainly to attend Working Group meetings abroad. Members of the junior staff (mainly Statisticians) are more likely to attend Study Visits and Training Courses. The latter are considered as vital for the required capacity building of the personnel since such training programmes are mentored by field-experts. Together with the in-depth learning opportunities, such programmes harness and breed the sharing of ideas and experiences with other international counterparts, mainly among participants from EU Member States.

Table 6 summarises the direct financial burden on the Office related to official business abroad. Although NSO generally receives some financial support from the EC and other institutions to cover travelling expenses in connection with Working Groups and Other Meetings, other expenses such as

subsistence allowances and insurances are in most cases borne by NSO. In 2015, NSO financed approximately 62 per cent of the total costs of all official business abroad which cost amounted to approximately €83,650.

Table 6. NSO's travel-related expenses before reimbursement: 2015

Month	Per Diem and other expenses		Travel		Insurance		Total Cost
	No. of days *	€	No. of trips	€	No. of Persons	€	€
January	11	2,527	4	1,556	4	56	2,759
February	19	4,354	8	3,239	8	112	7,705
March	28	6,002	11	5,298	11	154	11,454
April	27	6,133	9	5,019	9	126	10,177
May	38	8,935	13	7,562	13	182	17,703
June	49	11,216	19	10,378	19	266	21,860
July	3	716	2	911	2	28	1,655
August	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
September	29	7,074	10	4,816	10	140	12,030
October	20	4,526	8	3,635	8	112	8,273
November	26	6,114	11	5,019	11	140	11,273
December	20	4,673	8	3,561	8	112	8,346
Total 2015	269	62,269	103	50,993	103	1,426	113,234

Table 7 lists 9 Grant Agreements that were concluded in 2015, signifying projects that were accomplished by NSO and approved by the EC. Such agreements are essential for the NSO in view of the ever increasing statistical commitments falling within the remit of our relatively limited resources. As indicated hereunder the global value of the projects covered by the Grants Agreements concluded in 2015, totalled €736,714, of which around 28 per cent was financed by the NSO, with the remaining 72 per cent being financed by the EC.

Table 7. Grants finalised in 2015

Reference	Total cost of project	NSO contribution	EU contribution
	Euros		
Improvements in Quality in National Accounts	104,037	26,887	77,150
Merging Statistics and Geospatial Information in Member States	39,578	3,958	35,620
Horizontal and Vertical Integration: Implementing Technical and Statistical Standards in the ESS	86,971	26,092	60,879
Data Collection on ICT Usage and e-Commerce in Enterprises 2014	63,450	35,285	28,166
Data Collection on ICT Usage in Households and by Individuals	67,854	49,051	18,802
Multi-purpose Price Statistics and Housing Statistics and Real Estate Statistics	95,751	10,506	85,245
Preparation for Exchange of Micro-data on Intra-EU Trade between Member States	119,975	5,998	113,977
LFS ad-hoc Module 2014 on the Labour Market Situation of Migrants and their Immediate Descendants	55,959	16,788	39,171
Provision of Basic Information on PPP	103,139	30,942	72,197
Total for 2015	736,714	205,507	531,207

UNIT D2: EXTERNAL COOPERATION AND COMMUNICATION

In 2015 the main efforts of the External Cooperation and Communication Unit were directed towards:

- consolidating the new website;
- fine tuning the new electronic request form;
- driving forward Malta's compliance with the SDDS;
- revisiting communication and dissemination processes;
- devising new international affairs procedures; and
- providing support in cross-unit projects.

In late 2014/early 2015, the NSO went live with its new website. 2015 was a year of consolidating and addressing outstanding issues. In particular, the RSS feed service was reinstated. By means of the RSS feed, NSO news releases are deployed every day on the Eurostat website along with the releases of other national statistical institutes. The historical statistics section was also reinstated. This section consists of the rare Malta Blue Books. The decision to reinstate the material online was taken in the wake of several complaints from our users.

The change in the website environment made necessary a change in our approach to information requests submitted by users. Following an intensive consultation process among units and with MITA, the decision was taken to use the eForm promoted by Government for public services. In 2015, the NSO eForm was extensively evaluated in the face of considerable teething troubles. In all, three detailed evaluation exercises were compiled together with MITA counterparts.

One of Malta's SDDS obligations is to submit fully updated metadata sheets for all data categories every January. Early in 2015, a case of non-compliance with regard to one of the data categories in the external sector was detected. Our actions were to negotiate with the IMF a switch in flexibility options: from one that we were using for a data category in the real sector to the data category in question. Through this step, Malta gained a valuable step forward in SDDS timeliness.

In the process of revisiting the NSO communication strategy the unit put effort into identifying the directions which such a strategy may take. Part of the strategy involved channelling NSO initiatives into more user-friendly products with:

- more effort on quality compared to quantity; and
- considering new publication formats that are more in tune with current users.

The unit took forward a rationalisation exercise of news releases in consultation with directors. Topics that necessitated being retained in the news release format were identified, while others were assessed on their suitability for different publication formats, including thematic mini-publications.

In the last quarter of the year preparations started for the re-dimensioning of the unit into one that focuses on dissemination and communication. At the same time, all external and international affairs would be transferred to a new unit: In view of this restructuring, the tasks relating to the two functions were undertaken in parallel in order to ensure continuity in service.

The unit met opportunities of maximising its horizontal function through supporting cross-unit projects. Such an example was the editing of *Gozo in Figures 2015*, its desktop preparation and the organisation of its launch in September. Another instance was World Statistics Day which entailed the organisation of a seminar with the theme “Better Data, Better Lives”, as well as a series of school events for the benefit of secondary level students.

UNIT D3: IT SYSTEM

The role of the IT Systems Unit within NSO is to support the various units in IT related matters. Throughout the period under review the main focus of the unit remained software development and desktop support. Another fundamental task carried out by the unit is to research and analyse new technologies that can be exploited by the NSO.

A total of twenty one software applications were developed by the IT Systems during the twelve months under review. Five of the applications produced were designed for CATI. The remaining projects consisted of windows based applications. Software completed in 2015 includes a suite of IT tools for the Household Budgetary Survey 2015. These software applications will support the Living Conditions and Culture Statistics Unit throughout all the major stages of the HBS. Another important project undertaken in 2015 consisted of the development of a software framework to allow the collection of price data for the RPI through tablet devices.

The IT Systems Unit responded to over 180 internal calls for desktop support. These were mostly software related and therefore were instantly settled internally. Hardware related issues were tackled by the respective suppliers. There were also calls for support from the CBM and the Commissioner for Refugees on the BOP and the RefCom systems respectively.

A member of the unit formed part of a committee that was set up to introduce a new integrated IT system within the CBM. Apart from providing technical expertise on the subject he also saw the interest of the NSO throughout this project. The unit was also engaged with the maintenance and administration of four servers.

A team from the MITA contributed software development services to the NSO. The effort of this team during 2015 was exerted on enhancements and adaptations of existing software. MITA were also engaged to conduct an operational review on the technological infrastructure of the Office to identify any shortcomings. Action was then taken to remedy for the identified limitations.

From an EU perspective, the IT Systems 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 production units to transmit data to Eurostat. Other IT tools supplied by Eurostat are also supported by the IT personnel. The unit was also responsible for the maintenance of the national infrastructure for the European Census Hub.

Throughout the period covered by this report, the unit was represented in three international meetings and workshops.