

Editorial

The countries around the Mediterranean, along with the countries of central Europe, are priority regions for INSEE's cooperation.

This sixth issue of the newsletter presents two multilateral cooperation projects that were completed in 2009.

The first was a Euro-Mediterranean Partnership called MEDSTAT II.

The second was a twinning project with Bulgaria financed by the European Union.

The third article in this issue discusses cooperation with National Statistics Institutes in sub-Saharan Africa.

Last year, INSEE organised international seminars for statisticians from the countries of central Europe, the Maghreb and Africa.

Bilateral cooperation projects also continued at a sustained pace.

The majority of INSEE's cooperation actions still takes the form of bilateral projects.

Outcome of Medstat II

Medstat II ended in September 2009. The programme was aimed at strengthening the statistical information systems of partner countries around the Mediterranean. INSEE provided technical assistance for this project.

Building on existing partnerships

The European Union's policy towards the Mediterranean region is governed by the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership launched at the Barcelona Conference in 1995. The Medstat programme is part of the Barcelona Process. It is intended to support the economic transition of Mediterranean countries. Medstat II was launched in early 2006 and ended in September 2009. It was the successor to Medstat I, which ran from 1999 to 2003. The objective was to harmonise statistical methods and bring them into line with European standards, as well as to disseminate data in 9 sectors: trade in goods and services, national accounts, agriculture, social statistics, migration, transport, tourism, environment and energy. Medstat II helped to make statistical information available that could be used to monitor progress on Euro-Mediterranean cooperation. The programme targeted 10 countries: Tunisia, Israel, Morocco, Jordan, Egypt, Algeria, Lebanon, Palestinian Authority, Turkey and Syria. The programme was to be implemented under the terms of three service contracts relating to :

- coordination of "horizontal" activities: training, information systems, publications and dissemination
- activities related to the chosen statistical sectors
- installation and maintenance of IT hardware and software

With a budget of EUR 9.3 million, Medstat II was a major programme. A total of 41 workshops, 16 training seminars, 133 technical assistance missions and 39 study visits were organised, which works out to between 87 and 97 actions per participating country.

INSEE's major contribution

INSEE was part of the consortium that was responsible for the statistical part.

ADETEF, the international technical cooperation agency of the French Economy and Budget Ministries, was the principal contractor. INSEE worked alongside six other European statistics institutes and a specialised environment firm called "Plan Bleu" (1). INSEE provided nearly 30% of the resources required for the operations of the consortium.

Two experts were seconded on a full-time basis to the agency managing the project which constituted the largest contribution. INSEE ranks second, behind Spain, for the provision of expertise in short term.

The experts primarily contributed to work in the following areas : national accounts, social statistics, statistical techniques. INSEE also facilitated access to outside experts for the Medstat II team. INSEE is primarily used to dealing with these experts within the public statistics system. In addition, the close links between INSEE's International Technical Cooperation Unit and the team that ran the Medstat II project made it possible to identify and use synergies between the consortium's actions and bilateral cooperation programmes with National Statistics Institutes in the region.

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Concrete results

The concrete results achieved include: statistical publications with Eurostat, including some forty “Statistics in Focus” publications on topical issues concerning the Mediterranean basin, such as the environment, tourism and fishing.

Another outcome of the programme has been exchanges of “best practices” between Mediterranean countries and European NSIs. Medstat II set up an online teaching module on national accounts. Domestic tourism statistics manuals were designed.

Pilot surveys on tourism water requirements were carried out in Morocco, Israel and Jordan. Censuses and household surveys were used in Lebanon and Algeria to measure migratory flows.

One of the primary benefits of the programme has been the dynamic created around statistical activity. The development of the statistical aspect of the Arab Maghreb Union (2) illustrates this dynamic.

2010-2012: close involvement of the beneficiaries in the future Medstat III project

A Medstat III project has been proposed as a follow up, at the request of the heads of the NSIs in the beneficiary countries. The European Commission chose the consortium led by ADETEF, which includes INSEE, to carry out the programme. With a budget of EUR 3.8 million, the project involves six thematic sectors of public statistics and one “horizontal” sector (training-dissemination). It involves nine statistics institutes, along with private operators. Two executives from INSEE will act as Key-Experts (foreign trade and social statistics).

(1) ADETEF (principal contractor), INSEE, KSH (Hungary), ISTAT (Italy), GUS (Poland), INE (Spain), ONS (UK), Landsis (Luxembourg), Plan Bleu (France)

(2) The Arab Maghreb Union is an economic association with 5 member States (Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Libya and Mauritania).

Twinning project with Bulgaria

As part of its cooperation programme, INSEE took part in a twinning project carried out by a consortium led by the German N.S.I. DESTATIS. The aim of the twinning project was to adjust the capacities of the Bulgarian NSI with a view to managing European structural funds.

INSEE's particular task was to suggest ways of facilitating the reorganisation of the Bulgarian NSI's regional network.

Twinning goals

Bulgaria has been a member of the European Union since 1 January 2007. Bulgarian statistics are essentially compliant with European standards, but organisational changes are still required.

The twinning was undertaken with this in mind.

The project had four components:

- Improving the regional structures of the statistical institute
- Training for the NSI management team and regional managers
- Setting up a reporting system
- Reducing the burden on respondents and the NSI.

77 activities were carried out and 62 experts took part in the twinning project which was carried out at a sustained pace.

A multilateral cooperation

INSEE played an important role as the “junior partner”. Its actions mainly concerned the activities in the first component dealing with the improvement of the NSI's regional structures, as well as the production and dissemination of regional and local indicators.

Our own structure is a better match for Bulgaria's needs than the prevailing structure in Germany. Experts from the following statistics institutes or bodies took part as well: Statistics Austria, the Austrian Federal Data Processing

Centre, Statistics Finland, Statistics Denmark, GUS (Poland) and KSH (Hungary).

Contribution from INSEE

The operational phase of the twinning project with Bulgaria lasted for 18 months, from March 2008 to September 2009. The expert missions to conduct an assessment of the situation and prepare a plan of action ended in May 2008.

The action plan was then carried out during many other missions and visits to the Member States.

Thirteen French experts took part, including 12 from INSEE and one from the Ministry of Agriculture Statistics Department.

They took part in 22 activities - 8 dealing with regional reorganisation, 5 on indicators, 4 on dissemination, 4 on reducing the statistical burden and one on training.

More specifically, two study visits to France were organised. One dealt with regional organisation, indicators and dissemination, and the other dealt with the use of new technology to reduce the statistical burden.

The INSEE Regional Offices made a major contribution to this project. Four regional managers and some regional office heads took part in the twinning project as experts.

Presentation of the results at the final seminar

A preliminary account of the twinning project was given at the final seminar held in Sofia on 7 and 8 September 2009. It appears to be very positive, since much was achieved in a short time. A very comprehensive action plan was drawn up to reduce the burden on respondents and the NSI, and implementation of the plan started. Similarly, a reporting system is being set up, making the Bulgarian NSI a pioneer in this field.

Specific recommendations were made for reorganisation of the regional network (delegation of tasks between regional offices, having a small number of regional offices process certain surveys), for indicators (defining survey zones, developing infra-municipal indicators, etc.) and for

dissemination (moving towards free dissemination of all data over the Internet), and a production policy based on standard products.

A facility for publishing data from African NSIs

A project is being organised for a common publishing facility for National Statistical Institutes in French-speaking Sub-Saharan Africa. It is run by AFRISTAT and carried out in collaboration with several partners, including CEFIL (1). This facility intends to improve the dissemination of statistical information over the Internet. The study phase has been completed and the operational phase has started.

Birth of the Project

INSEE's statistical cooperation with the NSIs from French-speaking sub-Saharan Africa takes the form of technical support for AFRISTAT, the economic and statistical observatory for sub-Saharan Africa (2).

One of the aims of AFRISTAT is to support the development of the dissemination capacities of African NSIs. This new project for publishing the data produced by the NSIs was born in this context.

The starting point of the project was a seminar on "communication and the web" held by CEFIL in Libourne, France in July 2008.

The seminar was attended by the regional directors and the managers in charge of dissemination at the NSIs.

The participants gave particular thought to changes on their websites.

CEFIL started work on a project for a publishing facility that had been validated by the AFRISTAT General Director. CEFIL then prepared an application for World Bank funding, which was obtained in June 2009.

Aim of the publishing facility: moving from numbers to information

Thanks to the project the 19 national statistics institutes of the AFRISTAT member countries will be able to provide statistical information and improve their online communication.

Today's Internet users consult statistics sites to find information, and not just numbers with no commentary.

The information contained in the numbers needs to be delivered in an explicit written form. Yet, some sites just present raw data. The publishing site takes another approach: it highlights analyses based on the statistics.

The communication focuses more on the meaning of the data than on the data itself.

With this in mind, the project aims to train experts to write editorial content for a website.

Training is the core activity

A training cycle made up of seven sessions has been planned, running until April 2011. Six sessions will take place in Africa and one will take place at CEFIL in Libourne, France.

The first training session for AFRISTAT experts was held from 18 to 22 May 2009 in Bamako, Mali.

A total of 48 experts will be trained. After their training ends, they will continue to get personal assistance and advice.

The training cycle includes a seminar on communication strategy and the use of the Internet for ten General Managers and ten webmasters.

The content of the training covers two aspects: copywriting and the publishing facility.

AFRISTAT experts and managers in charge of producing and disseminating the NSIs' data will get a training on "efficient writing" for the web.

In addition, the CEFIL publishing facility will be made available to them so that they can familiarize themselves with the web as a new tool for communication.

Each African NSI and AFRISTAT will have space on the site to post its papers online during the training cycle. Experts from different countries will produce thematic features on current events in Africa.

A wide range of people working on the project

AFRISTAT is the leader of the project, with the support of INSEE through CEFIL.

AFRISTAT and CEFIL organise the training sessions. CEFIL administers the training publishing facility and provides the training, with the support of a company specialised in web content training.

In addition to the subsidy of USD 310,000 granted by the World Bank through the Trust Fund for Statistical Capacity Building (TFSCB), the project has received support from the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs.

In addition, the first training course for AFRISTAT experts in March 2009 was sponsored out of the cooperation budget of INSEE, pending the arrival of financing from the World Bank.

(1) CEFIL is an INSEE training centre.

(2) AFRISTAT is the Economic and Statistical Observatory for sub-Saharan Africa. It was set up in 1993 and its members are 19 French-speaking African countries.

Seminars and workshops

Central Europe and Balkan countries

“Activity Classification” Workshop

Zlatibor (Serbia), 18-20 May 2009. This workshop on activity classifications was organised and led by experts from INSEE. The workshop was attended by 25 managers representing 13 countries from Central Europe, including recent members of the EU and potential applicants, along with Russia and Moldavia. The workshop focused on three main themes: implementation of the new activity classification NACE rev. 2, specific topics such as the classification of industrial services, repairs, links between activity classifications, products, Prodcod and customs classifications and, finally, specific classification case studies.

Africa

Seminar on “National Accounts and Macroeconomic Aggregate Analysis” – Bamako, 21 to 25 September 2009. Experts from the INSEE International Technical Cooperation Unit took part in the third Seminar on National Accounts and Macroeconomic Aggregate Analysis organised by AFRISTAT. The seminar featured an account of the experiments with “Modelled Reconstitution” of national accounts time series in the countries. The seminar also discussed analysis and dissemination of national accounts and plans to implement SNA 2008. The French National Accounting Association (ACN) decided to devote a session to Africa at its conference in June 2010.

Maghreb

“Seasonal Adjustment” Workshop ENSAE-Paris, 26 to 28 October. The purpose of the Seasonal Adjustment Workshop is to bring very experienced seasonal adjustment practitioners together to share their experiences, work on applications and hear contributions from international experts. The second workshop was attended by twenty practitioners from Maghreb countries and sub-Saharan Africa, who worked with experts from INSEE and external organisations. Participants heard contributions from ten European and North American specialists on seasonal adjustment methods (accounting for calendar effects in data series, estimating trends, problems stemming from the economic crisis). The afternoon workshops gave participants an opportunity to familiarise themselves with seasonal adjustment software.

Bilateral Cooperation

In 2009, 70% of cooperation action in volume terms was bilateral.

Bilateral cooperation is focused on the Mediterranean region, primarily on the Maghreb, with a large proportion of resources going to Morocco and Tunisia. French-speaking African countries belonging to AFRISTAT are also a priority for INSEE's.

Technical support for AFRISTAT includes providing expertise and participation in seminars and projects.

The demand for technical assistance from countries in Central Europe and the Balkans is tapering off. In the meantime, cooperation with Serbia is still intense and should increase with other potential applicant countries, such as Croatia and Turkey.

In South America, the priority is on activities with regional bodies. The main object of INSEE's bilateral cooperation in 2009 was national accounting.

Other areas for cooperation were: modelling, statistical indicators, employment surveys, short-term economic analysis, coordination and teaching of statistics.

Missions and Study Visits in 2009

Central Europe and Balkans

Countries	Themes of actions	
	Missions	Study visits
Bulgaria	Twinning: Reorganisation of regional structures, regional and local indicators, dissemination of data, administrative sources	Twinning: Organisation of the statistical institute, Reduction of Burden
Romania	Sustainable development indicators	Household survey
Serbia	Classifications, Labour force survey, Short-term statistics	Management
Poland	Social statistics (poverty)	Social statistics (poverty)

CIS countries

Countries	Themes of actions	
	Missions	Study visits
Ukraine	World Bank project Business register, Classifications, Education statistics, Financial services, Household survey, Industrial services, Investment and construction, Metadata, Quarterly National accounts, Regional statistics, Trade statistics, Welfare social statistics	World Bank project Demography, Foreign trade statistics, Household survey, Industrial statistics, Investment, Metadata, Regional statistics, Services statistics

Mediterranean basin

Countries	Themes of actions	
	Missions	Study visits
Algeria	AMECO project: Assessment of statistical system Macroeconomic modelling, National accounts	
Lebanon	National accounts	National accounts
Medstat II project	National Accounts	
Morocco	National accounts including financial accounts	Financial accounts, Production prices, Short-term statistics, Household survey
Tunisia	Administrative statistics, Agriculture statistics, Classifications, Labour force survey, National accounts (including ERETES software), Short-term statistics, Training	Business register, Statistical coordination, Short-term statistics, National accounts (including ERETES software)

Sub-Saharan Africa

Countries	Themes of actions	
	Missions	Study visits
Cooperation with AFRISTAT	National accounts (including ERETES software) Informal economy, Social statistics (poverty) Short-term economic analysis	Demography, Macroeconomic modelling National accounts (ERETES), Statistical coordination
Burkina Faso	National accounts	
Cameroon	Macroeconomics	Organization of the statistical system
Gabon	National accounts	Short-term economic analysis
Mali		National accounts
Mauritania	National accounts (ERETES)	National accounts
Senegal	Macroeconomic modelling, National accounts (ERETES), Quarterly national accounts	

Statéco

[Publication of the n° 104 of the Stateco review](#)

Issue 104 of Stateco contains some of the best contributions made at the International Seminar on the Informal Economy in Africa (SISIA) held by AFRISTAT in Bamako in October 2008. This special issue has been published in English in the African Journal of Statistics. *If you wish to receive the review free, contact [mailto: marcel.messali@insee.fr](mailto:marcel.messali@insee.fr)*

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