

# National Statistical System of the Republic of Belarus: coordination issues

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## Summary

This report contains a description of the National Statistical System of the Republic of Belarus, the description of the main documents providing the legal basis of its functioning (Law "On State Statistics", the program of statistical work, Statute of the National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus, Strategy for the development of state statistics of the Republic of Belarus until 2017).

The report also describes the main tools to ensure coordination between other producers of official statistics.

There are specified the goals and objectives of the functioning of the following consulting bodies of the National Statistical Committee: Interagency Council on State Statistics - in terms of the adoption of coordinated decisions in the field of state statistical surveys, the Scientific and Methodological Council - in terms of a coordinated decision on the formation of evidence-based official statistical methodology.

**Key words:** institutional framework, coordination tools, mandate for data collection, Belarus

The state statistics of Belarus is an essential element of the information infrastructure of the country. One of the most important purposes of state statistics is to satisfy the needs of users in official statistical information of high quality.

The information formed in the national statistical system on the basis of state statistical observations and administrative data is a single official statistical information resource in the Republic of Belarus.

**The institutional framework** of the National Statistical System of the Republic of Belarus comprises:

the system of state statistics bodies (National Statistical Committee and territorial bodies of state statistics);

other producers of official statistics (i.e. government bodies (organizations), authorized for conducting state statistics in relation to the subordinated entities or on issues that are in their competence).

Currently 18 state agencies along with Belstat within their competence conduct state statistics (National Bank, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, Ministry

of Health, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, and others).

**The legal basis** of functioning of the National Statistical System of the Republic of Belarus is the Law of the Republic of Belarus "On state statistics".

The Law defines the procedure of organizing and conducting state statistics in the Republic of Belarus and regulates the relations connected with the exercising of state statistical activities.

For the first time this fundamental document was adopted in 1997.

Over the time, it became necessary to improve and update certain provisions of the document.

So, in 2004 it was adopted in a new version, in 2008 and 2009, the Act was amended and added.

Due to the Law in the Republic of Belarus Belstat is responsible for ensuring coordination between other producers of official statistics. In Belstat Main Department of Coordination and Development of the Statistical System is responsible for coordination issues within National Statistical System

According to the Law the National Statistical Committee is the republican state administrative body in the field of state statistics which pursues the state policy in the field of state statistics, exercise regulation, administration and **coordination of the activities of** other governmental agencies in this area.

The Statute of the National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus (approved by Decree of the President of the Republic of Belarus on August 26, 2008) is a second but no less important instrument of the legal framework for pursuing the unified state policy in the field of state statistics.

The basic tools of the National Statistical Committee, ensuring coordination the activities of the other producers of official statistics within the legal framework are the following:

development of the annual statistical work program covering all producers of official statistics;

working-out of the strategy for the development of state statistics together with the other official statistics producers;

approval of draft laws and regulations affecting the issues of conducting the state statistics;

approval of statistical tools for conducting of statistical surveys;

approval of official statistical methodology developed by the other producers of official statistics;

conclusion of agreements on information exchange.

The strategy for the development of state statistics as well as annual statistical work program forms the system of state statistical activity planning.

According to the Statute of the National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus Belstat develops together with the other governmental agencies authorized to conduct the state statistics the strategy for development of state statistics and adopts the strategy after approval of the draft strategy by Interagency Council on State Statistics.

The Law on State Statistics defines that the activities of state statistics bodies are carried out in accordance with the statistical work program. The program defines **the lists and the terms of activities** performed by all producers of official statistics.

Over the past few years, the statistical work program acquired the status of a fundamental interagency document containing the state order for the official information of all state bodies, responsible for formation of the unified statistical information resource of the country. The adoption of the program by the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus as a single complex document has allowed to synchronize statistical activities of producers of official statistics, increase the responsibility of authorized governmental agencies for meeting of the terms of execution of statistical works, raise significantly the role of the National Statistical Committee as the coordinator of activities of authorized state bodies in the field of state statistics.

The results of the statistical work program are reviewed annually on the meeting of the Interagency Council on State Statistics.

Being an advisory body, the Interagency Council takes the coordinating decisions by the means of:

annual review of the results of activities of state statistical bodies, authorized to conduct the state statistics on improvement of questionnaires for state statistical observations in order to harmonize, simplify and optimize them and to reduce the burden on respondents;

consideration of the issues of organizing and conducting state statistical surveys;

review of the drafts of the strategy for development of state statistics and statistical work program;

approval of the introduction of new questionnaires for state statistical surveys and for the departmental reporting.

Statute of the Interagency Council on State Statistics and the list of its members are adopted by the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus.

In order to fulfill the recommendations received during the Adapted Global Assessment of the National Statistical System of the Republic of Belarus in 2015 the list of the members of

Interagency Council has been expanded. The main purposes were improvement of the image of state statistics bodies, balance between the interests of the users of official statistical information in the face of governmental institutions, private businesses, research institutions.

Nowadays the Interagency Council consists of the heads of leading ministries (including the producers of official statistics), scientists, representatives of private sector, mass-media, non-governmental organizations.

Belstat pays special attention to rational choice of information sources while exercising state statistical activity. Thus, administrative data of the other state bodies are used for conducting state statistical surveys and production of official statistical information.

The Law on State Statistics determines the right of state statistics bodies for receiving the data:

from the Unified State Register of Legal Entities and Individual Entrepreneurs, other registers (records), database, maintained by governmental agencies and other state organizations;

from governmental agencies and other organizations the information necessary to organize and conduct state statistical observations and the production of the official statistics.

Today Belstat has 32 agreements on information exchange with governmental agencies to obtain administrative data.

**Belstat coordinates relationship with data suppliers** by specifying in the agreements the list of the required data, their type, format, frequency and terms of provision for the production of the official statistics. The list of organizations that signed agreements on information exchange with Belstat is available on the official website of the National Statistical Committee.

The main partners on information exchange are the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Economy, National Bank and other state bodies.

Belstat has formed the data bank on agreements on information exchange. The data bank is placed in the corporate computing network and allows to get the information on the provided by the other state bodies administrative data (by definite governmental body, type, name and frequency). The actualization of data bank is carried out with the conclusion of a new agreement.

One of the main tasks of the state statistics is to develop scientifically based official statistical methodology meeting the international standards in the field of statistics.

The Scientific and Methodological Council of the National Statistical Committee is responsible for taking decisions in the field of production of scientifically based official statistical methodology. The Council considers the official statistical methodology, developed

and approved by government agencies, authorized to conduct the state statistics, for compliance with national and international standards in the field of statistics.

For the further improving of the legal basis and institutional framework of official statistics in the Republic of Belarus a new version of the Law on state statistics was prepared in 2015.

A new version of the law is developed we take into account as much as possible the recommendations of international experts after the Adapted Global Assessment of the National Statistical System of Belarus. The coordinating role of the National Statistical Committee is strengthened, the system of official statistics producers is put in order: their authority to collect the data as well as to use administrative data in the production of official statistical information is clearly defined.

In order to meet the principle of independence in carrying state statistical activity and strengthen the coordinating role of the state statistics the Interagency Council on State Statistics and the list of its members will be approved by the National Statistical Committee.

Moreover, the basic principles of the state statistics adjusted to the UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and the European Statistics Code of Practice.

In particular, the principles of the state statistics are organized by three components: institutional environment, statistical processes and outputs.

These changes will not only allow to bring the Law on state statistics of the Republic of Belarus to the international standards and principles, but in the end to ensure an even higher quality of official statistical information.