

S I G M A

The bulletin of European statistics

Quality **S** *in* **Statistics**

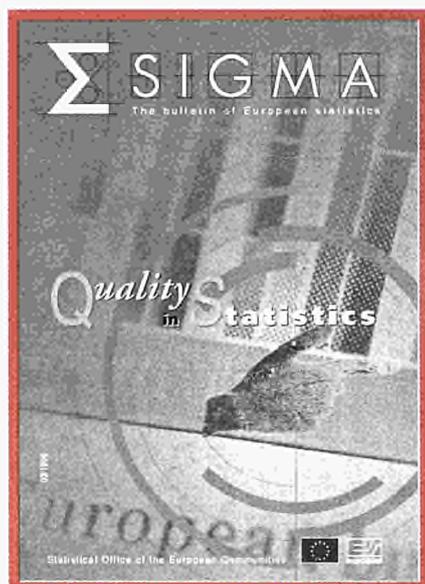
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The planned issue of *Sigma* on the Community Statistical Programme has been postponed until after the delayed



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In *this issue* of *Sigma*...

Corporate planning... quality programmes... or, more modestly, 'reorganisation' - all these terms have a common objective: to improve and optimise the functioning and output of a business. In the private sector such 'quality projects' are already well established. They are now also being discovered by the public sector. For example, a large part of the annual meeting of the Directors-General of European Statistical Offices (DGINS) in Stockholm last May was dedicated to 'quality in statistics'.

Although quality is "a concept as old as the hills" (see article on p 13), it now comes in a modern 'package' that NSIs are finding of increasing relevance in these changing times. This is why this issue of *Sigma* is devoted to '**quality**', with articles in two main groups:

- ▶ the quality concept as might be applied to the European Statistical System (ESS), and existing projects in NSIs, *and*
- ▶ the Eurostat approach to quality.

To this end we asked Eurostat Chief Adviser **Alain Chantraine** to set the scene for the theme. Then we give a summary of a key paper on quality given by Eurostat Director-General **Yves Franchet** at the 84th DGINS conference.

We then turned to NSIs to seek their views on quality projects in statistics, asking **Tim Jones** of the UK ONS, **Birgit Glimenius** and **Per Nilsson** of Statistics Sweden, **Pentti Pietilä** of Statistics Finland and **Richard van Brakel** and **Dr Peter Kooiman** of CBS, Netherlands, to describe their experience.

Roger Cubitt, **Werner Grünwald** and **Raoul Depoutot** of Eurostat then talk about the quality approach that Eurostat has chosen.

To complement all this, we also carry interviews with **Jim Cloos**, head of the Cabinet of

the President of the European Commission Jacques Santer, to learn about Commission reform plans in this area, and with **Mike Pupius** of the European Foundation for Quality Management about the 'grand design' for quality.

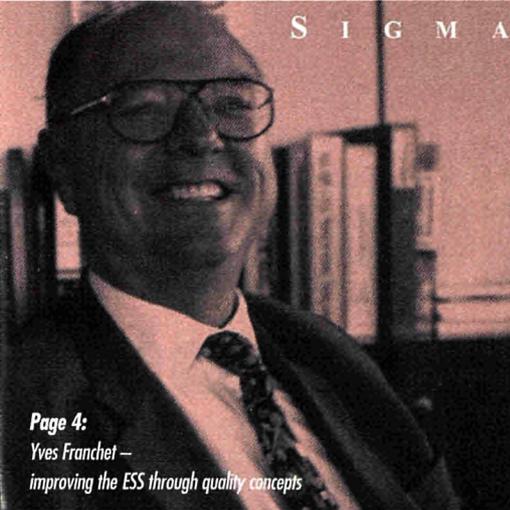
For our regular profile of an NSI, we went to Wiesbaden to meet **Johann Hahlen**, President of the Statistisches Bundesamt, known for its high-quality statistics but still preparing for future challenges in this field.

All this, we trust, will leave you with a much clearer picture of the opportunities that quality projects can bring to statistics, and convince you that while the concept of quality might be old, it is certainly not old-fashioned.

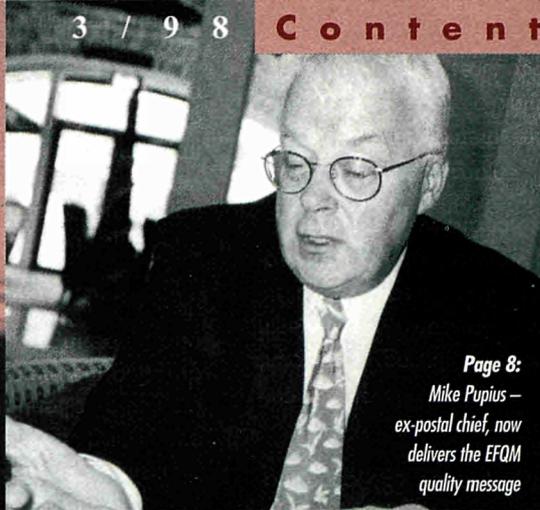
Fons Theis
Assistant chief editor

Papers of the DGINS conference are available in the publication 'Quality work and quality assurance within statistics, Proceedings of the 84th DGINS conference - Stockholm, Mai 1998', available in three languages (English, German and French). It can be obtained from Friederike Dhur, Fax: +352-4301-32594.

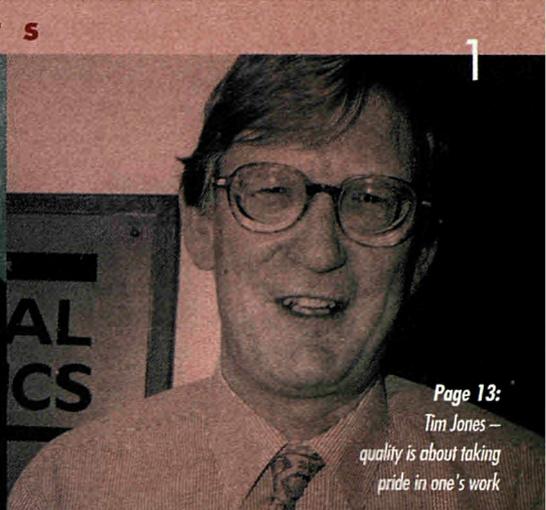
The papers are also accessible on the Internet at <http://europa.eu.int/en/comm/eurostat/serven/part7/7som.htm>



Page 4:
Yves Franchet –
improving the ESS through quality concepts



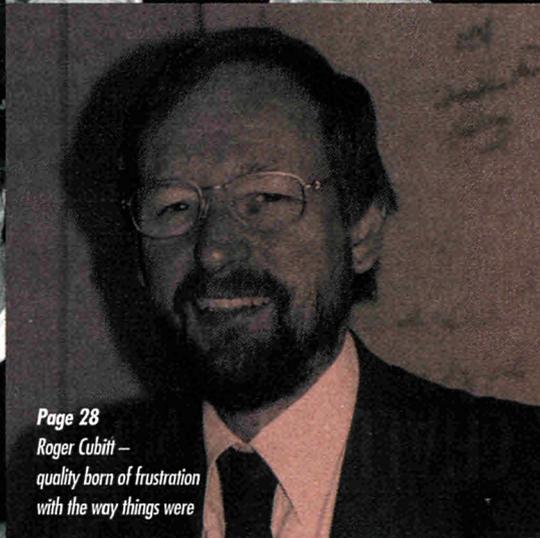
Page 8:
Mike Pupius –
ex-postal chief, now
delivers the EFQM
quality message



Page 13:
Tim Jones –
quality is about taking
pride in one's work



Page 20
Birgit Glimenius
& Per Nilsson with the
Japanese sign
for high quality



Page 28
Roger Cubitt –
quality born of frustration
with the way things were



Page 32:
Johann Hahlen –
statistics in a climate of diminishing resources

SIGMA COMMENT

Statistics and quality: two sides of the same coin?..... 2
Alain Chantraine, Eurostat Chief Adviser,
sets the scene for the theme

SIGMA THEME

QUALITY IN STATISTICS

Quality – a challenge worth the fight 4
Eurostat Director-General Yves Franchet
considers a quality concept for the European Statistical System

Can statisticians help to cut taxes?..... 8
John Wright in conversation with Mike Pupius,
EFQM's Public Sector Manager

Quality in NSIs

A concept as old as the hills 13
John Wright talks to Tim Jones of the UK ONS

Statistics, coffee or tea – quality is the key 18
Steffen Schneider meets Richard van Brakel
and Peter Kooiman of CBS Netherlands

Statistics Sweden – a leading light in TQM 20
Annika Östergren interviews Birgit Glimenius
and Per Nilsson of SCB

A quality Finnish 22
Annika Östergren meets Timo Relander
and Pentti Pietilä of Statistics Finland

The European Commission view

The shape of things to come 24
Jim Cloos, European Commission President Jacques Santer's
Cabinet Chief, talks to Barbara Jakob about the reform of the
Commission and its implications for quality

The Eurostat approach to better quality

Quality is a new galaxy 28
by Roger Cubitt, Head of Corporate Planning, Eurostat

Quality – a team effort 29
Steffen Schneider talks to Werner Grünewald,
Eurostat's Quality Control Manager

An inside job 30
Steffen Schneider interviews Raoul Depoutot about Eurostat's
Qualistat initiative

FOCUS ON MEMBER STATES

Making the most of diminishing resources 32
Barbara Jakob profiles the *Statistisches Bundesamt*

Marketing the new statistical diversity 40
Sibylle von Oppeln-Bronikowski, *Statistisches Bundesamt*, about a
marketing strategy for statistical products

FOCUS ON EUROSTAT

New home for Eurostat 43
Official inauguration of the new headquarters in Luxembourg

How EU and Russia compare 44
Publication demonstrates tangible result of statistical cooperation
with Goskomstat

Bank endorses Key figures 44
High finance sponsors a Eurostat publication

Statistics and quality, two sides of the same coin

Quality has always been one of the obvious features of statistics. With their scientific bent, statisticians have always endeavoured to measure the accuracy of their findings.

But the notion of quality is changing nowadays. The accuracy of statistical data is still important, of course, but there has been a move towards understanding the whole range of features that make up the quality of a statistical 'commodity'. In addition to reliability, we at Eurostat also focus on the relevance of concepts, speed and promptness of results, ease of access and clarity of the information put out, comparability, consistency and exhaustiveness.

While all these features are part of the whole product, users will attach more or less importance to each. When information – gross domestic product, for instance – has a financial impact, accuracy and comparability are vital. But if the same information is being used by someone interested in short-term trends, the speed with which the information is made available is the essential feature. It is for users to make up their own minds.

'Users' is perhaps the wrong word. The fact is that users are the ones who determine



quality criteria. This is where another change has occurred. Statisticians are no longer 'number freaks' in a world of their own but have become statistical informa-

tion managers, in constant touch with those who make decisions.

This transformation is possible only if the whole production set-up is ready for

change, because experts as a rule tend not to pay much attention to the needs of people outside their own little world. Experts prefer to talk to other experts.

How to change their institute – this has now been understood or begun to be implemented by most of those in charge of NSIs. It is for this reason that Eurostat, like several other statistical organisations, has opted for the concept of total quality management (TQM). This concept is at the heart of its Corporate Plan and its Qualistat programme. Total quality looks at the overall operation of the organisation and is based on the idea that, if any aspect is disregarded, quality will suffer. It covers a variety of aspects such as the existence of a strategic vision, training and motivation of staff, proper control of information processing methods and – as the central aim, of course – customer satisfaction.

Eurostat's corporate plan sets out five objectives along the way to total quality:

- ▶ user satisfaction
- ▶ product quality
- ▶ development of the European Statistical System (ESS)
- ▶ staff satisfaction, and
- ▶ in-house productivity.

Something for everyone

The Qualistat programme will offer everyone – management and staff, at their individual levels of responsibility – a series of tools to enable them to achieve these objectives, together with a chart of indicators enabling

them to track their achievements.

But Eurostat is not alone in this. It is networking closely with all the NSIs. And it is quickly becoming apparent that progress towards total quality, and especially the quality of statistical products, can be achieved only if the network as a whole can respond to these demands. The response has to be in the quality of operation (common vision, decision-making process, mutual trust, production of data etc) and in the quality of the outline of each member involved. Exchanges of best practice between members of the network and common projects will be the keystones of the quality project within the ESS.

With regard to this project, the signs are encouraging for Eurostat and the ESS. The European Commission has launched a massive operation entitled *Designing tomorrow's Commission* (see *article on page 24*) to examine how to modernise itself. The way statisticians work within the ESS and Eurostat's Corporate Plan/Qualistat project are most certainly forerunners of how to build tomorrow's Europe.

In the short term, our aim is to show that statistics and quality really are two sides of the same coin.

Alain Chantraine
Principal Adviser
Head of the Qualistat project

Eurostat

and the Qualistat programme

The Qualistat project was launched in Eurostat at the end of 1997. It is the programme that puts the Corporate Plan into operation.

Bases:

Eurostat's mission: To provide the European Union with a high-quality statistical information service

Eurostat's vision: Eurostat in 2005

Eurostat's strategy: Moving to total quality by means of total quality management

Objectives:

Qualistat has five objectives:

- ▶ user satisfaction
- ▶ quality of products and services
- ▶ development of the ESS
- ▶ staff motivation and satisfaction, and
- ▶ in-house productivity.

Means:

Qualistat has ten tools to help Eurostat attain these objectives:

- ▶ systematic review of the work programme
- ▶ reports on product quality
- ▶ reports on quality of in-house services
- ▶ user-satisfaction surveys
- ▶ cost/benefit calculations
- ▶ development plan for each unit
- ▶ performance indicators
- ▶ project management method
- ▶ staff training and development programme, and
- ▶ communication policy.

Progress:

Qualistat has a set of progress indicators:

- ▶ for each objective in the Corporate Plan, indicators will be used so progress can be reviewed regularly.

Quality was the focus of the 84th Conference of the Directors of National Statistical Institutes (DGINS) in Stockholm at the end of May 1998. In a keynote address, Eurostat Director-General YVES FRANCHET considered how the concept of quality might be used to improve the European Statistical System (ESS). Below, *Sigma* highlights extracts¹ from his presentation.

Quality

– A CHALLENGE WORTH THE **fight**

How can we improve performance of the ESS through the application of quality concepts?

First we need to understand the changing environment in which we operate, recognise the features of the ESS that make it distinctive, adapt the 'text book' quality notions to suit our own circumstances, and find ways of applying these in practice. I am particularly keen that any improvement should be implemented with the full participation and support of all ESS partners.

Among factors that will shape demand on the ESS and influence our ability to respond are:

- ▶ Demand for European statistics is expected to show a marked increase. This will be driven by such factors as the single currency, growing interest in service sector statistics, developments in new fields such as environmental statistics and the needs of EU enlargement.
- ▶ At best, resources available to Eurostat and NSIs are expected to remain level but possibly to fall.
- ▶ The growing gap between user needs and ESS ability to deliver will put ever-increasing focus on the responsiveness, efficiency and effectiveness of the system as a whole.

▶ There is evidence that scope for improvement in planning and delivering ESS outputs is significant.

▶ The new Five-Year ESS Work Programme to 2002 explicitly acknowledges the need for improvements: better planning, improved customer focus, greater professionalism, improved ESS coordination...

▶ Challenge of the single currency will bring significant new pressure in several ways. It will also give statistical work a high political profile, not always welcome!

▶ EU enlargement to 20 or more members will force a rethink of ESS practices and procedures.

A diverse mission

In the absence of any agreed ESS mission statement I use the Eurostat one as a starting point:



To provide a high-quality statistical

information service to the EU: to national governments and parliaments and international institutions, particularly those of the EU; to the business community; and to other users of statistics at regional, national and European levels."

This implies contributions in the following areas:

- ▶ Agreeing and implementing appropriate standards and methods – this extends to cooperation with international organisations and seeking necessary new European legislation.
- ▶ Planning, monitoring and evaluating ESS work with particular attention to coordinating the overall network and meeting quality targets.
- ▶ Providing European institutions and Member States with information needed to implement, monitor and evaluate Community policies.
- ▶ Disseminating our statistics to the European public at large including businesses.

The general notion of a 'product' applies to the ESS without major difficulty. The ESS produces mainly public statistics and analyses, both widely disseminated, free or far below cost of production.

ESS customers or users can be classified as:

- ▶ institutions
- ▶ the media
- ▶ social 'actors'
- ▶ researchers, students

- ▶ businesses, and
- ▶ the ESS 'internal market'.

It is important to distinguish between direct and indirect users. The first use ESS statistics and analyses by buying publications directly from the ESS. The second use ESS products reproduced in other reports or in general data-banks – or derived from ESS primary products 'recycled' by other organisations, for example OECD or private companies. In the latter case it is, of course, much more difficult to know these users and investigate their satisfaction.

In devising ways of ensuring the ESS meets its goals, we must acknowledge special features that can affect the application of management models or solutions – especially those imported from the private sector. In particular:

- ▶ The ESS lacks the unified command structure, decision-making and budgetary processes normally associated with a single organisation.
- ▶ Its relationships with main suppliers and users are affected by the absence of pricing, charging or normal commercial markets for many of its products.

We need more debate and agreement on what the ESS is and how its mission should be formulated and interpreted. We need a clearer understanding of ESS products and users, and a shared view of their relative importance. While ESS structures do not reflect those of a normal commercial business, they are not unique and could be understood better through the growing management literature on 'networked enterprises'.

Interdependence the key

I believe the ESS is best viewed as a complex 'network venture' of the type often referred to in management literature in the context of 'virtual organisations' or 'networked enterprises'.

The key message for all ESS partners must be our interdependence.

Our customers will have limited interest in whether data weakness or delays arise in one part of the system or another. The image of all component parts benefits if the final product is appreciated – and suffers if not. We must ensure the very diversity of our combined European experience acts to our benefit, through a constant search for best practice.

I believe it should be possible to agree quality concepts that will assist in improving ESS work; to agree practical applications that will put them into effect; and to agree priorities for action. Taking the approach of the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) as a starting point (see article on page 8), we can see eight dominant themes that pervade all quality management literature:

- ▶ Focus on customers. In the ESS I regard this as vital, despite (perhaps because of) complications inherent in the absence of charging and the complexity of user relationships.
- ▶ Supplier partnerships – *in particular* the need to build trust and appropriate integration with supplying agencies.

- ▶ Development and involvement of staff – *in particular* the importance of communication and staff development.
- ▶ Systematic management of processes and facts – *in particular* for the ESS better documentation of processes and better understanding of linkages and flows between Member States and Eurostat.
- ▶ Continuous improvement – *in particular* ensuring an ESS culture encouraging original thought and improvement through 'benchmarking'.
- ▶ Leadership and consistency of purpose – *in particular* better ESS decision-making.
- ▶ Public responsibility.
- ▶ Results orientation – *in particular* tackling the substantial problems in the ESS of measuring output and productivity.

for assessing organisational performance. This is designed for single organisations rather than networked enterprises. However, the quality approach in general and EFQM model in particular do provide a useful starting point for adaptation to ESS circumstances.

Strengths & weaknesses

Eurostat believes we need a better grasp of current ESS strengths and weaknesses to plan effective improvements

Key strengths include the depth of knowledge and experience shared by our staff, the close liaison among us and the framework provided by European legislation

Main weaknesses include restriction of resources, weak formulation of overall strategy and ineffective evaluation of progress.

The quality of complex products is difficult to assess. Many users may have no clear idea of the concept of quality of a statistical product,

In conjunction with these themes, EFQM proposes a model for use as a framework



- ▶ Despite useful initial progress in clarifying concepts of data quality, there are many ESS areas where such concepts are not yet fully applied, and users' understanding of such matters is often meagre.
- ▶ In many areas, absence of external independent tests to judge data quality means that careful analysis of the total data-producing chain is particularly important.
- ▶ Given the complexity of roles played by Member States and the European Commission as data suppliers and users, any simple notion of independent suppliers and customers is clearly untenable.

since the concept itself is very difficult to understand. The concept of accuracy is especially difficult to grasp, since by their very nature there are errors in all statistical products.

What prevails is a rather vague quality image of each NSI. This means that any obvious error communicated to users not culturally close to the statistical community will probably damage confidence in other statistics produced by the same NSI – unless the communication of ‘quality’ is sufficiently well managed. So information on the quality of statistical products is crucial to securing a ‘quality image’.

Eurostat believes several criteria define statistical quality:

- ▶ relevance of statistical concepts
- ▶ accuracy of estimates
- ▶ timeliness and punctuality
- ▶ accessibility and clarity of information
- ▶ comparability of statistics
- ▶ coherence, and
- ▶ completeness.

Although not measures of quality, resources available for statistical production and the form-filling burden on respondents act as constraints on quality.

What do these components mean for us?

Relevance: Statistics are relevant if they meet user needs. So identification of users and their expectations is necessary.

Accuracy of estimates: Accuracy is defined as the closeness between the estimated value and the true but unknown value. Assessing accuracy of an estimate involves analysing the total error associated with it.

Timeliness and punctuality: Most users want up-to-date figures published frequently to an established timetable.

Accessibility and clarity of information: Statistical data have most value when easily accessible to users, available in ways they want and adequately documented. Assistance in using and interpreting statistics should also be forthcoming from the providers.

Comparability of statistics: Statistics for a given characteristic have the greatest usefulness when they enable reliable comparisons of values taken by the characteristic across space and over time.

Coherence: When originating from a single source, statistics are coherent in that elementary concepts can be combined reliably in more complex ways. When originating from different sources – in particular from statistical surveys of different frequency – statistics are only coherent insofar as they are based on common definitions, classifications and methodology.

Completeness: Statistics should reflect the needs and priorities expressed by ESS users.

Quality in action

The following analysis of quality has been chosen by Eurostat:

Since Eurostat is the Statistical Office of the European Commission, **comparability is important. Since all technical work is coordinated by thematic committees or working groups, there must be a particular focus on coherence. Completeness emphasises the effort of providing statistics**

in an increasing number of domains, following the extension of the competence of the EU.

Improved data quality, while clearly of paramount importance to ESS success, is far from the whole story. Let us examine, using the EFQM model, other aspects of ESS performance that must be tackled if we are to meet customer needs.

Over recent years, useful progress has been made in establishing a framework within which we can judge the quality of national and international statistical products. We now need to gain wide acceptance of these proposals and see them applied across all ESS outputs.”

Leadership: In the absence of a unified command and decision-making structure associated with a single organisation, improved ESS leadership must be sought through, among other things

- ▶ more effective use of ‘partnership’ arrangements
- ▶ more emphasis on strategic issues
- ▶ fewer *tours de table* where there are no new issues of substance to uncover
- ▶ meetings only when really needed
- ▶ more attention to agreed strategy eg the Five-Year Programme, and
- ▶ clearer, agreed guidance from ESS senior staff on quality issues.

In a society with a high rate of change, statisticians have to adapt at a rapid pace. The necessity to harmonize existing statistics, budget restrictions and complaints about the burden on respondents represent major challenges to NSIs. It should, however, be clear that before the EU statistical system is harmonized it will have to adapt.”

Network management: Staff commitment and motivation on ESS issues should be pursued through

- ▶ greater use of common training programmes
- ▶ more information on ESS developments eg through *Sigma*
- ▶ more open target-setting at national, unit and personal levels to encourage transparency on who does what
- ▶ staff attitude surveys coordinated ESS-wide, and
- ▶ encouragement of networking eg common access to Eurostat’s *Cybernews* and national equivalents.

Policy and strategy: Attention to ESS strategy orientation should be encouraged through

- ▶ more reference to five-year and annual programmes as day-to-day tools, and
- ▶ an increased role for cost-benefit analysis.

Resources, including staff: Tackling ESS resource management across the entire system is very much in its infancy.

Improvements should be sought through

- ▶ greater interchange of staff at all management levels
- ▶ more seminars and training courses on subjects of common ESS interest
- ▶ sharing experience on how analysis and documentation of statistical processes should be tackled
- ▶ full documentation of all key ESS processes
- ▶ joint application of 'benchmarking' activity to identify 'best in class'
- ▶ particular attention to statistical methods with wide application across ESS work, and
- ▶ particular attention to data handling at the interface of Member State and Eurostat activities to eliminate unnecessary changes of medium, data formats etc.

"In the eyes of many users the level of service supporting our figures is just as important as data quality itself. We therefore need information on how this service level is perceived that is regular and comprehensive. There is scope for major improvements in the way we plan, authorise, monitor and evaluate ESS activities."

Eurostat's drive for quality

In late 1996 Eurostat launched a quality initiative, working with consultants. Inevitably, much of the early months was occupied by preliminary dis-

cussions and pilot testing of a range of approaches to judge what best suited Eurostat's needs. Next key task was preparation of a corporate plan outlining Eurostat's mission, confirming our strengths and weaknesses and setting objectives.

So... Eurostat has agreed a definition of quality of statistics. We have launched a series of internal quality reports. We have appointed a quality manager to coordinate several programmes dealing with quality of statistics. And...

▶ In parallel, we have incorporated a reference to quality reports in proposals for new legislation. This has been accepted without difficulty by Member States.

▶ A working group on quality of business statistics has been created. This will make a technical proposal – to the preparatory Statistical Programme Committee (SPC) on structural business statistics – on a definition of quality of business statistics, a glossary on their quality, and a standard for quality reports in both structural and short-term statistics.

▶ A pilot project for implementation of a quality report was launched at end-1997 with Commission funding and run by the UK Office for National Statistics, Statistics Sweden and the UK Universities of Southampton and Bath.

▶ A model for simulations on quality optimisation, started in 1995 and run by Statistics Netherlands, finished in first half of 1998.

▶ First presentation of quality reports has been made to Member State delegates of working groups on the statistics of tourism, salaries and

labour costs and the environment.

▶ Directors of ESS social statistics met in a traditional 'think-tank' session at Mondorf in Luxembourg in early-1998 and discussed quality in social statistics.

▶ A first Training of European Statisticians (TES) course on quality of statistics was organised by Eurostat and Statistics Sweden in November 1998.

▶ An attempt to organise purely technical groups on a voluntary basis has been made in seasonal adjustment. It seems to work well and prove that scale economics are possible within the ESS.

"The Eurostat Qualistat initiative is a way of achieving improved performance across all aspects of Eurostat activity. Eurostat is an important but relatively small element of the whole ESS. Real benefits of a quality approach will come only through extension of the initiative ESS-wide."

Forward within the ESS

I am keen that, wherever feasible, this initiative should be broadened to an ESS perspective – to encourage participation across all ESS component organisations. How?

I believe the ESS should:

▶ *Progressively attach a quality report to all statistics and intermediate products.* This to be achieved by around 2005 for statistics, starting with all data that have been harmonised. The question of intermediate products should

be tackled in the context of preparing for negotiations on international intermediate products at world level.

▶ *Progressively improve the quality of statistics along an agreed plan* – in particular as far as timeliness, clarity, comparability and coherence are concerned. The systematic review for monitoring the next Five-year Statistical Programme should be accompanied by a proposal for specific quality improvements for all statistics.

▶ *Adapt better to user needs.* Surveys of user satisfaction, already conducted by some Member States, should be coordinated better with those envisaged at European level and being launched by Eurostat in 1998-99.

▶ *Develop more coordinated analyses of statistics produced.*

There is a need for a substantial debate throughout the ESS on what ESS quality improvements we can realistically expect in the medium term.

Secondly, we need some formal apparatus to take the initiative forward. This could build on existing structures or be quite new.

Finally, we need to ensure that progress is reported promptly to all who need to know about it, and evaluated fully to guide future quality planning.

The challenge may be large and daunting. But conversion of the ESS to a high-performance quality organisation will make it all worthwhile.

1 Full text of Mr Franchet's presentation available in the publication *Quality work and quality assurance within statistics, Proceedings of the 84th DGINS conference - Stockholm, May 1998* (see inside cover) or on the internet: <http://europa.eu.int/en/comm/eurostat/serven/part7/7som.htm>

The old-fashioned phrase is 'The customer is always right'. Organisations nowadays, including more and more in the public sector, talk instead of 'customer-focus through total quality management (TQM) and organisational excellence'. The jargon may jar, but TQM logic seems impeccable and has been adopted by many of the world's biggest and best businesses. The Brussels-based European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) is the standard bearer of this philosophy. To discover possible benefits and implications for national statistical institutes, *Sigma's* JOHN WRIGHT consulted MIKE PUPIUS, EFQM's Public Sector Manager.

Mike Pupius is used to delivering messages. He was once "in charge of getting letters from A to B" as a top executive in the British Post Office. Of all the messages he passes to me during our interview, one stands out in particular:

"By embracing total quality management (TQM) or organisational excellence, NSIs, along with the rest of the public sector, can contribute to reducing taxes and stimulating economic growth."

Statisticians helping to cut taxes – now there's a novel thought. Here's the rationale:

"EFQM's mission is to be the driving force of sustainable excellence in Europe. EFQM was formed in 1988 by a group of companies with the

Can statisticians really help to cut TAXES?

vision of a Europe that was truly competitive in the world market-place.

"Our belief is that by embracing EFQM philosophy the public sector can deliver better value in its services to customers, and that such improved effectiveness can itself contribute to European competitiveness.

"If you see 'Flagship Europe' as an organisation, the public sector could be viewed as its administrative overhead. By improving its effectiveness you can actually lower taxes and use the wealth thus released to generate economic growth.

"So TQM in the public sector has the potential to be a prime driver in improving European competitiveness. I believe that's what the

European Commission and the EU are all about, really, because Europe is an entity that is competing in the world market-place."

I meet **Pupius** in a hotel lobby in his home town of Sheffield *en route* from Brussels to deliver the EFQM message to an audience of potential 'converts' in another part of England.

I say that what I would really like to ask is: if you were approached by the director-general of an NSI who said he or she wanted to go down the TQM road advocated by EFQM, what would you advise – how would you 'sell' the concept?

Says Pupius:
"The 'father' of TQM, Dr W Edwards Deming was a statistician and the tools and techniques originate from statistical process control. To the study of variability he added psychology, systems thinking and the theory of knowledge."

Pupius doesn't beat around the bush. It's straight to the core message...

"Such an organisation needs to undertake a full review of its current state. Where the EFQM business excellence model helps is by providing an holistic framework for

enabling it to identify where it is at one point in time, bearing in mind that all organisations have different histories and different visions of the future.

"'Current state' is a way of assessing an organisation's strengths and areas for improvement. It can also provide a method of comparison with any other organisation – private or public – that has

Working up a strategy

Mike Pupius is responsible for promoting all aspects of EFQM, in particular use of the EFQM model in European public sector organisations. He explains: "I am working on identifying a key strategy for identifying exemplars and champions and working in collaboration with other European partners to develop approaches to implementing the principles of organisational excellence in the public sector."

He joined EFQM around a year ago on secondment from the British Post Office where he was Director of Business Excellence and Planning for the Royal Mail in North-East England. Before that he was in charge of the Sheffield postal district.

The British Post Office has embraced the European quality model. Its Chief Executive, John Roberts, **Pupius** explains, "demonstrates his commitment as President of EFQM. He would say that organisational

excellence is a way of working that will achieve balanced stakeholder satisfaction to improve the probability of long-term success. By balanced stakeholder satisfaction he would mean taking account not just of the shareholder – in our case the Government – but looking at the needs of the customer, the employee and society as a whole: how we perform as a responsible corporate entity. And, I suppose, my being seconded to EFQM is another contribution."

Born out of global competition

In 1988 the presidents of 14 leading European companies realised that the increasing global competition was threatening Europe's market position. So they set up EFQM.

They encouraged others to join and in 1989 the Foundation was officially inaugurated at the first EFQM forum in Montreux, Switzerland.

Now there are over 700 members: organisations representing almost every sector (private and public), industry and country in Europe – all, in EFQM's words, "committed to total

used the same framework. The UK Civil Service is introducing the EFQM business excellence model as the underlying framework for 'benchmarking'. A major initiative called the Public Sector Benchmarking Project aims at introducing the model throughout government.

"Our model [see panel, next page] embodies the whole framework of total quality management. It's underpinned by a set of fundamental concepts that are totally aligned to the body of knowledge that exists in this field. So it presents a very powerful tool for assessing yourself against a world-class standard of excellence.

"The EFQM Quality Award is benchmarked with other inter-

quality and dedicated to the pursuit of business excellence".

EFQM's vision is: a world in which organisations in Europe excel.

Its mission: to be the driving force for sustainable excellence in organisations in Europe.

Its values: as members and employees, to

- ▶ **strive for organisational excellence**
- ▶ **be customer-driven and focused**
- ▶ **value people and teamwork**
- ▶ **demonstrate respect for society**
- ▶ **act with integrity.**

national awards of this nature. We feel ours is at least comparable, and in some cases we have seen changes in the other award schemes as they have learnt from us. Our award has global significance, although we call it European: it's up against the best in the world."

Customer is king

So let's consider specifically how all this might be relevant to an NSI that has the quality gleam in its eye...

Pupius: "I would start by asking the questions the model asks, but with a statistical bias:

- ▶ How does the NSI measure the perception of its current customers?

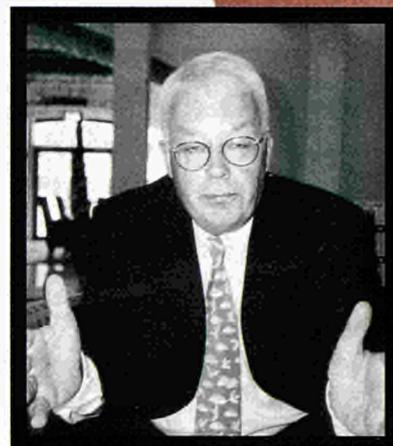
- ▶ Has it defined its customers? What are their particular needs?
- ▶ Is it assessing its performance against customer expectations?

"It should then start to look at what we call the 'enablers': what's in position in the organisation to achieve customer expectations. It might be the timeliness of statistical production; the quality of the statistics; their readability. Or it might be the way NSI employees answer enquiries: simple things like how many rings of the telephone to get through; are queries answered directly or passed around; are customers satisfied with the way their enquiries are dealt with?"

"So there's richness just in the 'box' I would call customer satisfaction and what it can actually reveal about how the organisation can improve."

Pupius warms to his subject: "Quality is a word that is almost being surpassed now. Quality management has become total quality management, indicating an holistic approach – almost a philosophy. But that's now moving on to excellence; and really, in the public sector, we need to talk about organisational excellence, because the word 'business' has difficult connotations. However, if you talk about organisational excellence, I believe the same principles apply in the public sector as in the private sector. The only difference is that public sector organisations are not for profit and have to work within a complex political framework that often constrains the way they actually manage and operate.

"So then I would say to the NSI, 'Start looking at the



Knocking on the door

This (below) shows the latest European Quality Award winners. British Telecom, says **Pupius**, is one of the largest if not the largest organisation to win a prize – “some achievement for an organisation of that size”.

He adds: “What you won’t see are any public sector companies. The public sector award was introduced in 1995/96. We’ve had applicants but no prizewinners. But we’re pleased to announce two finalists this year – one part of the UK tax office, the other a division of Spanish railways.

“In TQM terms the public sector tends to trail about 20-30 per cent below the private sector. But some of the best are knocking on the door of the best in the private sector.”



The Award winners...

Large company:



SME:



Prize winners

Large company:



EU: United Kingdom:

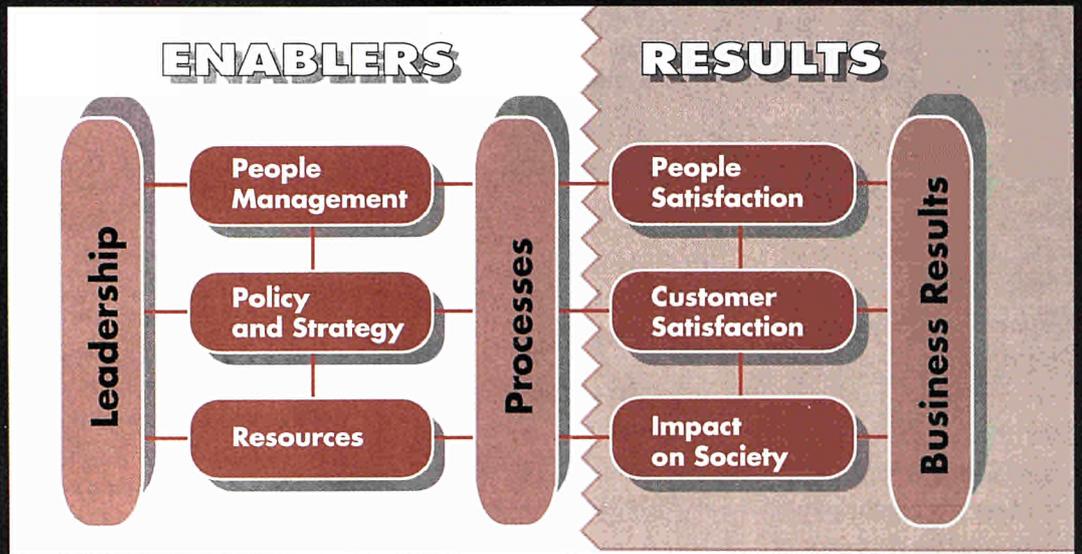


SME:

GASNALSA



A MODEL FOR EXCELLENCE



The EFQM business model (pictured here), a non-prescriptive framework based on nine criteria, can be used to assess an organisation’s progress towards business excellence. The model recognises there are many approaches to achieving sustainable excellence in all aspects of performance. It is based on the premise that:

Customer satisfaction, people (employee) satisfaction and impact on society are achieved through leadership driving poli-

cy and strategy, people management, resources and processes, leading ultimately to excellence in business results.

Within this framework certain fundamental concepts underpin the EFQM model. Behaviour, activities or initiatives based on these concepts are often referred to as total quality management (TQM).

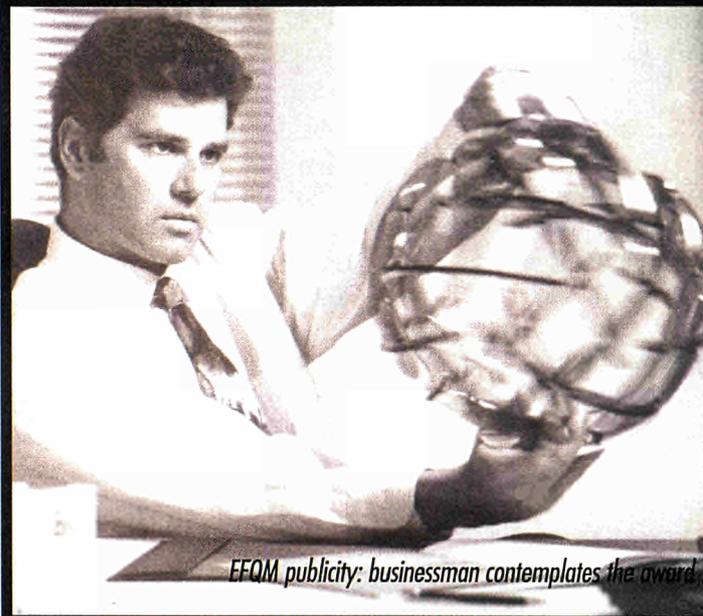
EFQM’s objective has been to provide a model that represents the TQM philosophy and can be applied in prac-

tice to all organisations irrespective of country, size, sector or stage along their journey to excellence.

Self-assessment is EFQM’s basic method for improving performance. EFQM is convinced that, applied rigorously, this will help organisations, big and small, in both private and public sectors, to work more effectively.

Self-assessment is a comprehensive, systematic and regular review of an organisation’s activities and results with respect to the business excellence model.

AN AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE



EFQM publicity: businessman contemplates the award

Organisations based in Europe that have been practising self-assessment can apply for the European Quality Award. This has been run annually by EFQM since 1992 when it was launched by Martin Bangemann, Member of the European Commission, which is a joint sponsor.

By applying for the award, organisations can reap many benefits. The application process provides unbiased external assessment of its position against the EFQM model and sharpens the focus of its self-assessment procedures.

other stakeholders in terms of organisational results and the targets required: key stakeholders are the people who work for the NSI. What are *their* needs and expectations as internal customers of the NSI management team? What are they looking for in terms of training and development, staff appraisal, communication, involvement, empowerment... Is there any measure of *their* perception of how the NSI is being led, managed, directed?"

He continues: "Then you take it back to leadership.

"Is there any sense of mission? Where's the organisation actually going? As an NSI, it is absolutely crucial to the way the country operates. What's the vision of the person in charge? Is that vision shared? Is it then translated into a plan that actually enables that vision to be acted out? Does the plan have input from the stakeholders, from benchmarking; has it taken on board good practice by benchmarking against other organisations in other parts of the world – the US and Japan, for example? How do these countries manage statistics?"

"So that's the sort of dialogue we would get into.

"Then I would ask, 'Have you identified your key processes and their owners? Have you mapped them, put in measurement systems, targets, standards... And then, if you do see opportunities for changes, how do you involve people in that process and plan the changes.'"

Pupius continues: "This is a challenging area for the European public sector. It links into modernisation and the new public management practices. Often these are seen as organisational and structural changes when really they are

about improving processes and delivery of the core service to the prime customer. And in the case of many public sector organisations that prime customer is the citizen – the person out there is the street receiving the range of public services deployed through regional and local government, local agencies, the police, hospitals, schools and so on.

"So, in the whole public sector context, the citizen as customer is absolutely the centre of it all.

'Tremendous opportunity'

"There's a tremendous opportunity for using TQM for benchmarking in the public sector right across Europe. We're currently working on a project with the European Institute of Public Administration to try and

introduce TQM at government ministry level. We've adapted the model to soften the language so it's less full of jargon, more attuned to public administration.

"The main distinctions lie in the identity of the leaders, customers and suppliers, which may differ substantially from that found in the private sector. We're realising that the model really *can* apply across the whole public sector; that it offers an opportunity of tremendously powerful benchmarking to compare and contrast leadership and process management.

"An NSI's assessment, for example, could be compared to that of a similar organisation in the UK, Germany, Spain... If they seem to be performing better, what are they doing better – is there

good practice that one could perhaps adopt?"

But **Pupius** cautions: "I don't underestimate the size of the task. Organisations that begin the journey from quality and total quality management to business excellence and then organisational excellence are, typically, taking ten years – and even then they still see substantial room for improvement."

So is TQM inevitable, unstoppable?

"It's whether you think continuous improvement, excellence, is worthwhile or not. If you don't, then you don't do it. You have to ask the question, 'If we *don't* go for total quality/organisational excellence are we going to survive in the long run; are we being fair to the citizen; shall we be providing best value?'

A new language

Total quality management... enablers... champions... stakeholders – I have to confess to *Pupius* that I am uneasy with TQM jargon. Maybe I'm not alone?

Clearly, he's heard this reservation before!

"Total quality management... The *total* implies the totality of the organisation. *Quality management* is about achieving excellence: using tools and techniques and principles, even a philosophical framework, to turn an organisation from one that might be control-oriented and lacking customer-focus to one in which the sole focus is on the customer, both external and internal.

"So it introduces words like *customer*. And in the public sector this is a difficult word and there *is* a language issue, because in some countries *customer* doesn't translate easily. Perhaps a better definition in such circumstances is 'the beneficiary of the service or product'.

"So there are some words that perhaps could be called jargon. But I would say that if you begin a new way of thinking you sometimes start by learning new words, terms and concepts. I think the jargon is something to be aware of, and you need to demystify it and help people in translating some of the language. Once they understand very basic terms like *cus-*

tomers, leader, supplier, process, and see the overall framework, they quickly understand.

"I have had no problem in conducting very meaningful discussions in the public sector with people who see no more jargon in this than in their own profession. Each profession has a 'language', I suppose. Ours is the language of leadership, of management, of producing excellence and results, and it tends to transcend professional boundaries.

"But, in the public sector, the bottom line is: 'This is for the citizen'. Everybody understands that."

Within the international statistical arena, the UK Office for National Statistics is gaining a reputation for expertise in the field of 'quality'. Its chief 'quality guru' is TIM JONES – official title: Director, Methods and Quality Division. *Sigma's* JOHN WRIGHT talked to him at ONS HQ in London.

A concept as old as the hills

Sometimes people seem to act as if quality at work is a recent 'invention' – a concept set to revolutionise the workplace, NSIs included, in a blaze of management zeal and 'buzz words'.

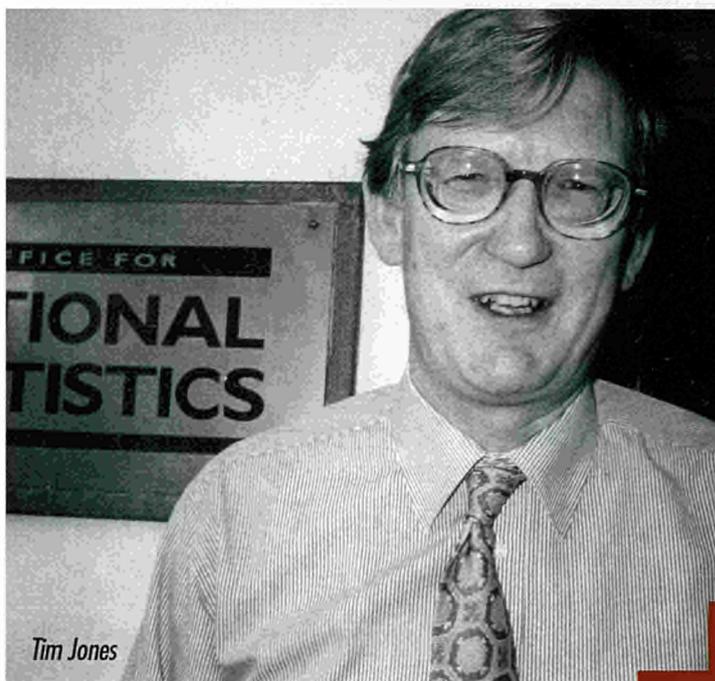
But, for me, one phrase used by **Tim Jones** – a man who clearly has a healthy disrespect for management jargon – sums up the concept of 'quality' and demonstrates that it's actually as old as the hills...

Quality, he maintains, is, among other things, about taking a pride in one's work.

This conjures up an image of a mediaeval craftsman labouring all his working life to bring perfection to one of Europe's great cathedrals. Management consultants might describe this as 'total quality commitment'; to the craftsman it was probably 'a labour of love'. It really amounts to the same thing: just as relevant now to statistics as it was then to stonework or carvings.

In the way that one does, I ask **Tim Jones** to sum up his view of 'quality statistics' in a word or phrase.

"I don't think I'll accept that invitation", he replies. "Quality must be all-pervasive



and has so many facets that it's a bit trite to try to sum it up. Obviously there are a number of 'buzz words' one could come up with – but everybody knows them already, so I don't think they cut much ice."

So how would he describe quality in the ONS context?

"First, it's the top of our list of vision and values. To a large extent we go along with Eurostat and others that it's about relevance, accuracy, timeliness, clarity and accessibility, comparability and consistency – a fairly long list of attributes."

He continues: "As quality is so all-pervasive one can't really separate it from a lot of other

things. And that's perhaps one of the issues. There's a lot talked about quality management these days and there are a number of different views about that.

"In the ONS, which is a very new organisation, we've been concentrating mostly on working together following the merger [in 1996 of the Central Statistical Office, responsible for UK economic statistics, and the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, which looked after social statistics]. We have a general office programme called ONS 2000. This is led mainly by the human resources development people to promote [ONS Director] Tim Holt's vision that

we should be a world-class statistical organisation.

"Within this programme there are five objectives: quality output is the first. The others are perhaps equally important. The second is looking after our data-providers – that's all to do with the cost of providing information. Then there's the need for integrity. The fourth is value for money; and the fifth motivating our staff to develop quality outputs.

"There are so many facets to this concept of quality. People use it in so many different ways. They talk about 'fitness for purpose' – for example, the elements you stick on to statistical outputs; but, of course, across the office there are quite a lot of people not directly working on statistical outputs but still interested in doing a quality job.

"There's a tension in that. We can't necessarily apply the statistical ideas to everybody in the office."

Mystery shopping

Jones continues: "But coming back to statistics, one of my primary concerns is methodology and improving its use in the office in a number of ways. One example is in Newport [the ONS offices in South Wales] where we do surveys to obtain monthly

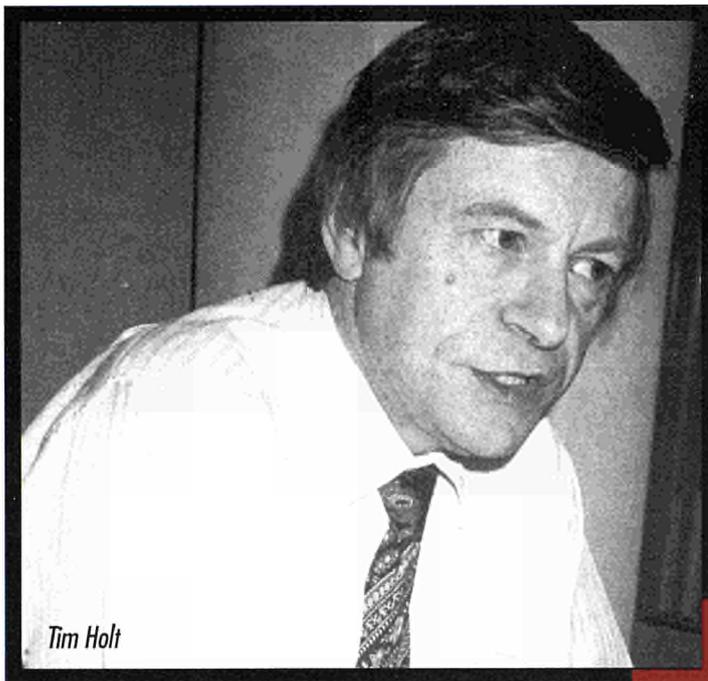
information on turnover and so on for the index of production and on employment.

"One thing we have been looking at is how we exploit administrative data – such as those from the Inland Revenue PAYE or social security systems – to improve the quality of our statistical estimates quite substantially by establishing the size of businesses in advance.

"But there are a number of other things going on throughout the office. A totally different example is in the registration of births, marriages and deaths, for which we are responsible – if you want a certificate you can ring up the office. Earlier this year we employed a firm that operates a kind of 'mystery shopping' service. They ring up and measure how long it takes to obtain answers to a number of questions agreed in advance with the office. That provides pointers to where the service might need to be improved or changed to maximise efficiency and customer satisfaction.

"A totally different example again is the programme being put in place to monitor the quality of the operation of the next census in 2001.

"Clearly, it's a very high priority in the census to make sure everybody is covered. So there's a whole lot of thinking about how that might be done. However good your planning, inevitably there will be people missed: some groups are particularly hard to get hold of. This major project is about planning how to correct for such omissions in order to produce accurate estimates, which is quite ambitious.



Tim Holt

"A further step is actually to produce census tables compatible with what we know about likely under-coverage. The object there is to provide information that is as accurate as possible and consistent – two elements of quality I mentioned earlier."

Quality is at the heart of public confidence in official statistics and evaluating it, and reporting on it, in a way that leads to an open discussion of quality issues is central to enhancing public confidence. But beyond this, official statisticians, need to find ways to present statistics so as to convey quality, enhance understanding and avoid over-interpretation."

Tim Holt and Tim Jones in their paper to the 84th DGINS Conference in Stockholm, May 1998.

"As official statisticians, quality must be at the heart of all that we do. Today there is so much information, from so many sources, and some of it – perhaps most of it – of dubious quality, that the output that official statisticians produce must be recognised as authoritative and of the highest quality."

Tim Holt, ONS Director, and Tim Jones in a paper to the 84th DGINS Conference in Stockholm, May 1998, entitled *Quality work and conflicting quality objectives*.

We're all 'customers' now

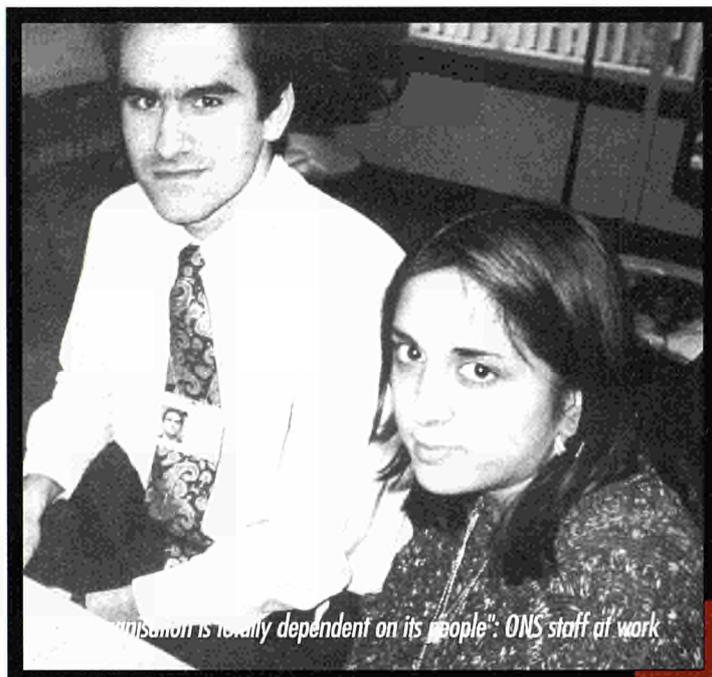
But, I press, what's new about all this?

Jones: "I don't think it is new. Quality is something we've always needed to consider."

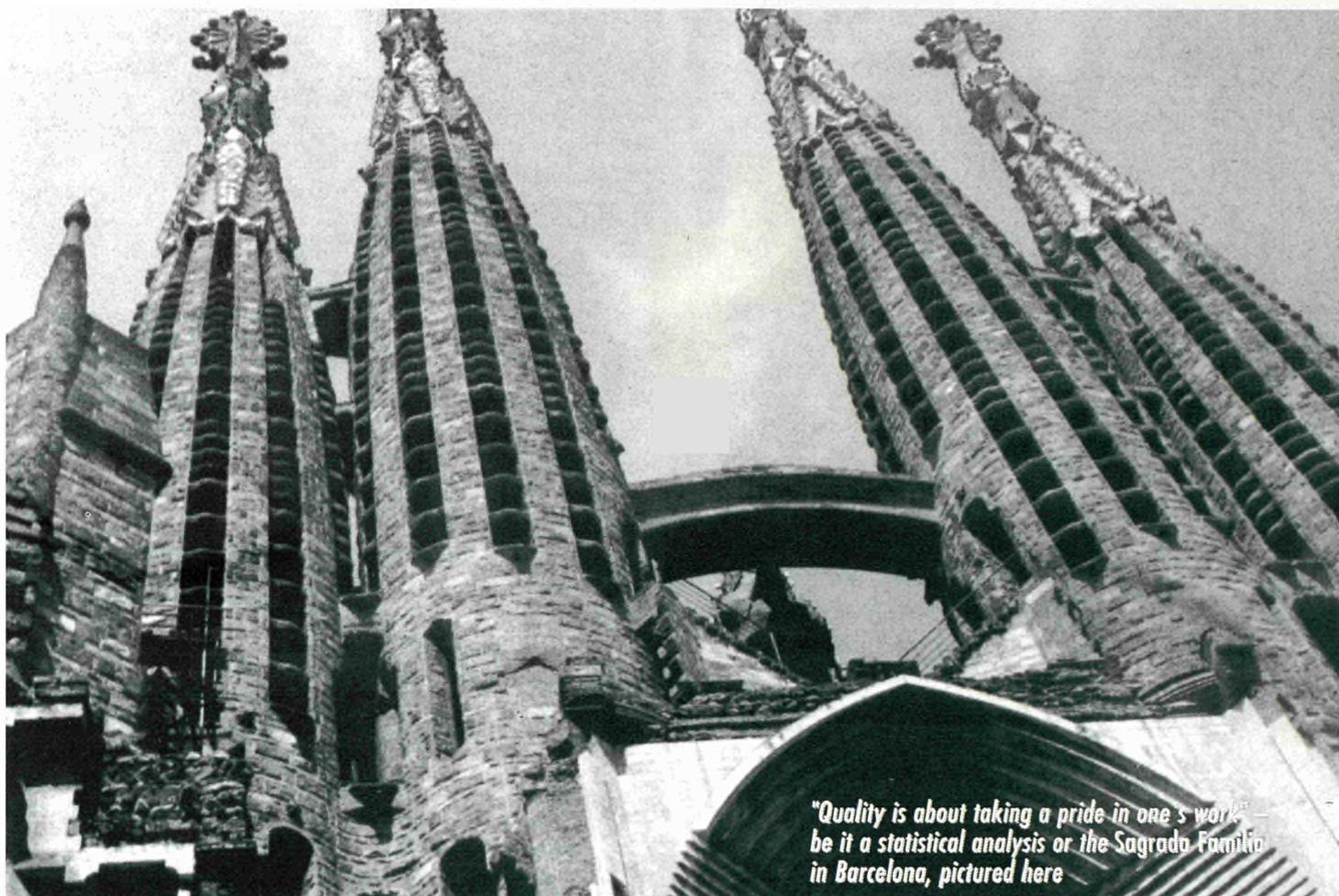
But, I insist, why is everybody acting as though it has just been discovered?

"Are they?", he laughs. "I don't think they are, really. Quality management perhaps – maybe that's had something to do with it. OK, so the DGINS had a meeting about quality this year. I don't see that makes it new. But it is something that one needs to come back to all the time; and, as I say, it is definitely top of our list."

He goes on: "There are obviously trade-offs between



Organisation is totally dependent on its people": ONS staff at work



quality and cost and feasibility, but it's always been like that, as far as I know. I suppose it depends what you emphasise. Under the umbrella of quality – and no doubt rightly – people are emphasising the importance of customer-focus as a key element of the quality concept. Again, that comes down to the first of the 'quality attributes' – that the figures are relevant: what the customer wants and needs."

This, I observe, is something that perhaps has changed – a sign of a shift in outlook – because when I worked in UK statistics one talked about 'users' rather than 'customers'...

Jones: "Yes, I think so. Our major customers are still

within government but, of course, there has been a major change since that time. We were really not encouraged at all to consider anybody outside government as being worthy of very much attention. The Rayner Doctrine [which, in Mrs Thatcher's 'reign' in the 1980s, focused government on cost-cutting and core activities] is well and truly dead and buried.

"So, yes, we do now need to determine what the customers find useful. I think a key thing is accessibility, and that's one reason we are developing the new *Statbase* database, accessible through the Internet, to provide our data to anybody who wants them in a user-friendly way.

“Years ago, quality in statistics might have been synonymous with accuracy. But nowadays it is a much wider concept. It is multi-faceted. It depends ultimately on what users consider to be important. The statistics we produce must address their needs. But there is a wide range of users. Understanding who they are and what aspects of quality matter most is crucial.”

Tim Holt and Tim Jones in their paper to the 84th DGINS Conference in Stockholm, May 1998.

"This is in tune with the concept of National Statistics, which is part of the Government's proposals for ensuring statistics are

produced in an independent and reliable way, free from political interference and so on.

Quality check-up

"One thing we have done is produce what we call a *Statistical quality checklist* that we have distributed across the GSS [Government Statistical Service]. We set up a GSS committee called the Methods Committee that discusses these kinds of things. The checklist was one thing that emerged...

"In other words, what sort of things should one consider in describing statistical outputs to enable the customer to understand how the figures are compiled, how reliable they are and the processes that led to the results?"

"And would you believe, it's actually been translated into Russian!"

The introduction to the ONS *Statistical quality checklist* says: "Users of statistics need information which enables them to assess the quality (fitness for purpose) of the data. They need to understand:

- ▶ the context in which the data were assembled and analysed
- ▶ the methods adopted and limitations these impose
- ▶ the reliability of the figures
- ▶ the way they relate to other available data on the same subject.

"The GSS has long recognised the need to provide users with information about the quality of statistics, and about analytical techniques used to derive the figures."

The checklist consists of questions to be considered by statisticians when describing their data in a report or publication. It also gives examples of explanations to be included. ONS stresses that the questions may be neither necessary nor sufficient in every context. And they should not be regarded as a rigid format.

The main checklist is as follows:

OBJECTIVES

- ▶ Why was the enquiry carried out?
- ▶ What information was being sought?
- ▶ What were the topics covered and the main data items?
- ▶ What national or international standards were used to define the data items?

COVERAGE

Target population

- ▶ What is the target population of the inquiry?
- ▶ Does this population have a standard set of criteria that allows its units to be identified and classified?

The Statistical quality checklist

- ▶ If a target population classification exists, is there a readily accessible reference to it? If so, what is that reference?

Study population

- ▶ What is the study population for the inquiry?
- ▶ How close is the study population to the target population?

Sampling frame

- ▶ If the inquiry involved the selection of a sample, what sampling frame was used for sample selection?
- ▶ Has this frame changed over time? If so, how?
- ▶ Has the frame been updated to take account of births, deaths and other relevant changes to the study population?
- ▶ What summary tabulations of key frame variables are provided in the report?

DESIGN

Sample-based enquiries

- ▶ What type of sample design was used?
- ▶ What were the target and achieved sample sizes?
- ▶ If the sample design involved

[Statisticians should] ... provide guidance and interpretation to help users understand and use the statistics. This entails informing users of any aspects of the underlying data that could affect the interpretation of the statistics, providing information on accuracy, and making available methods of sampling, collection and analysis for public examination, so that users may make their own interpretation of the statistics.

Extract from UK Official Statistics Code of Practice.

stratification, how were these strata defined?

- ▶ What method was used to select the sample?
- ▶ For a continuing inquiry, have there been any changes over time in the sample design methodology?

Data definitions

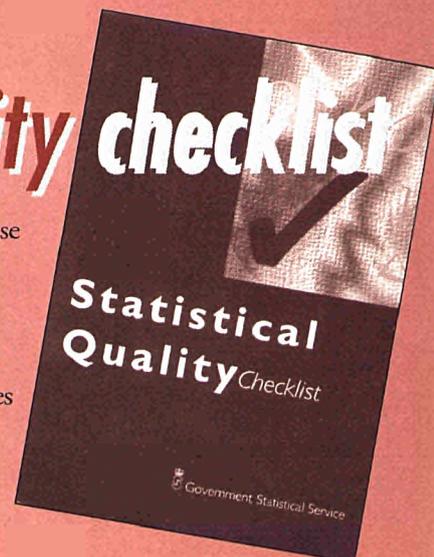
- ▶ Are underlying concepts described and definitions of key items provided?
- ▶ Is a copy of the questionnaire or return provided?
- ▶ For a continuing inquiry, is there information as to whether or not data item definitions have changed over time?

Data collection methods

- ▶ If the data were collected by interview, what was the training or relevant expertise of the interviewers?
- ▶ What checks on the quality of the information were made as it was captured?
- ▶ What procedures were used to minimise respondent errors in the inquiry?
- ▶ Was any pilot testing of the data collection methods carried out?
- ▶ Are there any items collected in the inquiry for which the data are suspect?
- ▶ What procedures were used to minimise non-response?

Data processing

- ▶ What procedures were used to minimise processing errors?
- ▶ Were there systematic controls in place for the detection and verification of 'outliers' and for the correction of introduced errors?
- ▶ What procedures were followed to prevent disclosure of confidential information?



ANALYSIS

Estimation

- ▶ If the inquiry was based on a sample, what method of sample weighting was used to calculate the estimates contained in the report?
- ▶ Were the sample estimates grossed up to known population values?
- ▶ In the case of time-series, were seasonal adjustment or trend estimation techniques used?

Reliability

- ▶ Are estimates of sampling standard errors provided?
- ▶ Does the report provide an assessment of the impact of non-sampling errors on the quality of the estimates derived in the inquiry?
- ▶ Is a table showing the extent of non-response provided?
- ▶ Are there any known differences between respondents and non-respondents?
- ▶ Was there item non-response?
- ▶ Were imputation methods used to create 'complete' unit records from those with item non-response?

Copies of the Statistical quality checklist may be obtained, price £5 each (plus £4.95 each air mail charge for orders from outside the UK) from: ONS Direct, Room D140, Government Buildings, Cardiff Road, Newport, Gwent, NP9 1XG, UK. Tel: 0044 1633 812078; fax: 0044 1633 812762.

Quality 'a state of mind'

The ONS, I remark, seems to be developing this international reputation for 'quality expertise'. So it must be pretty good at it?

Tim Jones, ever modest: "There's a lot we are doing but a lot still to do. There's a concept – again under the quality umbrella – called continuous improvement, and that's what we're into."

Particular areas that need improvement?

"There are none that *don't* require improvement – there's always something you can be doing. So the list is pretty long. Simply harnessing the new technology is clearly a crucial element of continuous improvement. Otherwise we would just fossilise."

"Therefore a lot of effort has to go into exploiting technological advances – into developing better ways to capture data and disseminate information."

"There are enormous difficulties in collecting data from businesses, and it's expensive. And, on the household side, we're always struggling against attitudes – people too busy to take part in surveys."

"Together with CBS Netherlands, we've been in the lead in developing the use of computer-assisted interviews in household surveys – the enumerator uses a laptop with a special programme to guide him or her through the survey questions."

"That particular initiative has meant considerable improvement to quality and timeliness. Some of the surveys are pretty complex but with a computer you can build in the kind of pathway you need to follow, depending on the circum-

stances. If a respondent has a job then you need to ask a lot of questions about the job. If they haven't got a job then you need to ask a different set of questions."

"So the laptop can be programmed to do that. And then to query anything that looks implausible – things that, in the past, might not have been picked up until the stuff came back to the office."

Jones goes on: "My job primarily is to do with methodology and, OK, quality as well. But the emphasis has been on the methodological side because it's a means to achieving better quality in many ways. The job, really, is to make sure we know about and use the most up-to-date methods."

"On the quality side, we have just launched a project to consider what corporate quality assurance action we need to take to demonstrate that our products are of the best possible quality. I think this will be an interesting exercise."

"One thing that is an open question is how far we should become involved in auditing what our staff are doing. In fact, ONS has a system of internal audits already, which isn't just about finance but whether people are doing what they're supposed to be doing."

"There's the whole question of how one does organise 'quality control' at corporate level. This is important because if I were the only one responsible for quality in the office that wouldn't be very good, would it?"

I remark that this seems to bring us back to where we started: that quality is a labour of love, a state of mind. Do the staff, I want to know, take this quality business seriously or is there the attitude that it's just the latest management fad?

Jones: "That's one reason why we haven't got a latest 'fad' on quality, I would say. Our programme is the ONS 2000 programme I mentioned earlier and under that there are all kinds of initiatives."

"One thing we are involved in is the UK Investors in People scheme. This involves us in ensuring that all our staff understand what they are doing and how they fit into the organisation, that their training needs are considered and acted upon and evaluated afterwards. You could consider this an element of our overall strategy, whether you call it quality or whatever."

A 'leader of the pack'?

"There's no doubt", **Jones** adds, "that any organisation is totally dependent on its people and their willingness to be positive and enjoy their work and take a pride in it. In the end, it's down to everyone to see how things can be done better."

"And I think there's a tremendous amount of goodwill in the office. For example, one achievement coming to fruition in the next few days will be publication for the first time of the new national accounts on the ESA (European System of Accounts) basis."

"Achieving this change has been a tremendous effort. I think everyone involved must be exhausted!"

"We are, I think, only the second country to publish such figures (Denmark being the first) and the first to produce all the back series that go with them. I have always been in favour of doing things according to international standards. It's going to upset some customers because any change does. However, the long-term benefits will be tremendous in terms of comparability and the fact that we no

longer make our own rules but follow those that others follow."

So, modest Mr Jones, you can no longer deny that the UK is a 'leader of the pack' in 'quality statistics' compared to other EU NSIs, can you?

Still reluctant to be drawn too far... "You'd better ask them! I think that, hopefully, we're becoming regarded as such, along with others. I think Statistics Sweden, for example, has a very good track record in this field."

"My division is involved in a contract [funded by Eurostat's SUP.COM programme] that we bid for in conjunction with Statistics Sweden and the Universities of Bath and Southampton to develop so-called model quality reports for business statistics."

"This covers a number of aspects of accuracy and coherence and comparability. That's going on at the moment so, in that respect, I guess we are regarded as well up with the field."



Mediaeval craftsman's 'labour of love' = 'total quality commitment'?

What has quality in statistics to do with the refreshments trolley that serves the needs of an NSI's staff? Eurostat's STEFFEN SCHNEIDER found the answer on a visit to CBS Netherlands in Voorburg, discovering that..

Statistics, COFFEE OR TEA – quality is the key

We all need coffee. Or tea. Or at least water.

All are available in unlimited quantities at CBS Netherlands – the Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek in Voorburg. Three times a day a refreshments trolley roams the corridors – a service whose value will be appreciated by anyone deprived of such essentials for a lengthy period: useful, punctual, precise, time-saving for the supplier and, most importantly, tailored to user requirements.

"You can't imagine how irritated people get if someone changes the schedule or, worse still, the quality of the coffee!" says a member of staff, unwittingly giving me the catchword for this interview: quality. The concept is obviously not foreign to the CBS.

This impression is confirmed shortly afterwards in my conversation with **Dr Peter Kooiman**, Head of the CBS Statistical Methods Department, and **Richard van Brakel**, the quality manager working directly under the director of statistical policy, both members of a small staff directly supporting the Director-General. The tone is set by **Kooiman's** modest aside, "But it's not all that easy. We're not too bad in ESS terms, but there are others who are ahead of us."

My two interviewees tell me: "The quality initiative at CBS

was started for a pretty serious reason: the restructuring planned since 1993 and put into practice from 1995. The plan was known as 'TEMPO': T for timing, E for efficiency, M for modernisation, P for professional approach and O for *onafhankelijkheid*, the Dutch for independence" (for full report see Sigma 4/1997 – CBS profile).

The spur for this initiative was a dual problem: an inadequate service that was not even user-friendly. "We were stewing in our own juice, as the saying goes", they say. "When we had a go at solving these problems by reorganising statistical procedures and getting better-qualified staff, we came across TQM, the Total Quality Management model. We found it in the time-honoured fashion: by reading about it. That's how quality became our buzz word."

'Never seen as a panacea'

I ask: can you apply a completely theoretical system to the CBS just like that?

"No. It's not by chance that quality systems encompass organisational structures, responsibilities, procedures and infrastructure for securing quality – in other words, virtually all the activities and tools of a given organisation. Quality is not a numerical problem. This is why it's so closely bound up with



Dr Peter Kooiman:
A statistically reliable figure for 1994 that is not published until 1996 probably has poor quality."

organisation and management: it's an extremely sensitive issue that needs careful and intuitive handling. We've never been interested in quality as a salvation or panacea.

"But there are various quality systems that differ in their philosophy and scope and in how radical the rules are. After long discussions we opted for a somewhat more modest, pragmatic approach as offered by TQM, as distinct from the ISO standard, for instance. The background to this was dramatic restructuring at our workplace: production undergoing a complete overhaul, electronic data interchange being introduced and new discussion and decision-making structures being put in place."

And how closely do you keep to the TQM prescription?

"To be honest, we're not all that interested in TQM as such as a theoretical model and coherent strategy. We prefer to be pragmatic, here as everywhere else, and to concentrate on a series of selected factors. At the moment,

after the first phase of quality discussions, we're talking about how to adapt our approach to achieving greater corporate identity and commitment, involving such aspects as continuous training, house-style and leadership culture.

"For us quality is a top-down initiative. There's a Director-General's steering committee that communicates the initiative to individual directors. Since success depends largely on the commitment of the director concerned, our strategy is to awaken the interest of the staff, motivate them and stimulate them."

This brings us to the most fascinating part of the interview: the audit, one of two pillars of the corporate strategy the CBS opted for in 1996. The paper presented by **Willem de Vries** and **Richard van Brakel** at the 84th DGINS Conference in Stockholm in May 1998 puts it this way:

Auditing is a technique with three aims:

- ▶ to find out what each department is doing in terms of quality management
- ▶ to draw up proposals for improving quality management, and
- ▶ to determine best practices and incorporate these in the quality strategy.

Peter Kooimann puts it quite casually: "Pragmatic or not, everyone has to go through the audit. In the end everyone has to comply.

"I can't say it often enough: auditing isn't an anonymous inspection and monitoring system for spotlighting dark corners and sweeping out the cobwebs. It should be seen as a source of help and advice – as a tool for

identifying where and how improvements can be made. This is why we adopted a code of conduct after the two pilot projects in 1996."

Vast majority of the auditors are long-serving and experienced members of staff, but some younger people were brought in to motivate them and expand their field of vision. **Richard van Brakel** was delighted with the results. "It took them about an hour to recognise problems we had been labouring with for 25 years, some of which we had never even talked about."

Dr Peter Kooiman
Quality is not a numerical problem, but one of organisation, management, motivation and responsibility."

There have been 27 audits at CBS so far. The verdict? Positive. **Peter Kooiman** and **Richard van Brakel** stress that everyone *but everyone* is involved. Cooperation is working and people are pulling their weight: more than 70% of those surveyed in the two 1996 pilot projects were convinced that the audit was useful; 90% thought the atmosphere had been relaxed during the discussions; 71% found the discussion rounds good; 90% said the resulting report was good and clearly expressed, and 65% found its recommendations helpful.

They explain: "The further you go down the hierarchical ladder, the more open the discussions become. People are quite simply glad that someone is taking an interest in their work and their problems. The combination of individual audits gives you an

excellent picture of the entire office. And, in the meantime, we're moving towards auditing entire processes."

I want to know if so much flexibility isn't an invitation to abuse the system? Those taking part in an initiative of this kind might be tempted not to take it seriously. And there might even be auditors who take liberties.

"Of course the audits have to have some teeth", **Richard van Brakel** says. "If the auditors discover weaknesses and unprofessional behaviour, they will report on them and bring them up for discussion, and the final reports fix agreements on how specific improvements are to be achieved. And no-one gets by without a systematic follow-up."

Obviously good auditors do not grow on trees. Says **van Brakel**: "Good staff are

We certainly don't claim that statistical auditing was 'invented' by CBS. In fact, the approach we have taken was partly inspired by similar activities in Statistics Canada for a number of years."

Willem de Vries and Richard van Brakel, Quality system and quality audits: discussion paper for the 84th DGINS Conference on Quality, Stockholm 1998.

always busy. We spent a lot of time on digging out good people. After three days' training by external consultants they were let loose on the staff. Some colleagues even demonstrated their true qualities by auditing.

"Nowadays a directorate will be proud of having sent us a good auditor – which is, of course, a great help in winning over hesitant directorates to the quality discussion. We draw attention to such things and try to give the front-runners free rein. One of the *avant-garde* has actually already run a quality management workshop off his own bat."

Personal quality to the fore

One of the points in the CBS business plan deals with the training and motivation of the staff. Are there courses on quality?

Dr Kooiman: "We're concentrating on the younger staff at present. Once recruited they have to do the rounds of the various departments for two years and rotate between projects. That's our on-the-job training. Then there are nine or ten courses adding up to 50 days' training over two years.

"One of the most important things we've discovered is that what counts most is personal quality. This is why we have one of the most stringent of selection procedures, which enables us to take only the best: academic, smart, young, bright people. For us this is an investment in future quality. In ten to 15 years' time these people will be on the CBS board."

Lastly, I introduce the unavoidable subject of cost...

Richard van Brakel "It's not so much the measures themselves that cost money as the time and concentration spent on the audits. We work within guidelines that have to be constantly adapted and we document everything very carefully.

"Some people are already up to their necks in day-to-day statistical work and have difficulty keeping up", **Dr Kooiman** states. "For them, quality is an added burden. But people who do their job well, are up-to-date with developments and have mastered the processes have no problems with auditing. Cost of a particular audit then becomes an indicator of the quality of their work."

Auditing, both maintain, is an experience everyone should gain from...

Richard van Brakel thinks it definitely would be worth starting a discussion forum on quality at ESS level to exchange experiences and take joint decisions on projects, perhaps even involving the USA and Statistics Canada.

Which brings us back to CBS and their modesty. An attractive quality, but one must not underestimate the important things that CBS has to say in the European and international discussion on quality. They firmly believe that their quality initiative will deliver what they have always wanted for their 100th anniversary in 1999: relevance, punctuality and, most important of all, a perfect match with user requirements.

Statistics Sweden (SCB) is no stranger to quality assurance; it has a commitment dating back many years. In 1993 it became the first EU NSI to embrace Total Quality Management (TQM). *Sigma's* ANNIKA ÖSTERGREN went to Stockholm to talk to BIRGIT GLIMENIUS and PER NILSSON, two of the in-house 'quality gurus' in SCB's R&D Department, about success and setbacks on the quality front.

SCB A 'LEADING LIGHT' IN TQM

"The difference TQM has made", says **Per Nilsson**, "is that now we have quality throughout the production processes. We work continually on improving all that we do. We have focused on the customer, and almost everyone in the organisation is involved."

Perhaps the final goal has not yet been achieved – but a lot of ground has been covered on the way. The TQM effort began when SCB was assigned a changed role in the production of official statistics. SCB had been responsible for the country's entire statistical output since 1965. Then the Government decided in 1993 to spread the responsibility throughout 25 agencies.

Many government agencies still use SCB's services, but with the option of placing the work elsewhere or producing statistics themselves. Thus SCB has to compete for many of its 'orders'.

This competitive environment, combined with a lower budget, greater demand for faster delivery and new demands driven by EU accession, meant SCB had to boost its operational efficiency and make user demand its key focus.

"TQM is based on long-term thinking, a strong desire to move with the times, and an



Per Nilsson and Birgit Glimenius: "You have to work in all directions"

ongoing commitment to continual improvement", adds **Birgit Glimenius**. "This encompasses *all* products, *all* operational processes and *all* employees. In addition to customer orientation, efforts are systematically geared to improving work processes.

Customer focus the key

"The switch from producer to customer orientation is a mainstay of the SCB approach", she adds. "Users are brought into play and specify their requirements from the outset – and that's something new. It used to be a case of our deciding from an ivory tower what the fin-

ished product should look like. We gave users what we supposed they needed. Now they're involved much earlier."

In the TQM context, work is driven by customers' needs and wishes. They can specify their requirements and receive updates on the quality of the statistics being produced. Good customer relations are also about sticking to agreements, meeting supply deadlines and delivering the service or product in the form promised.

Over 120 projects

Much actual TQM work undertaken by SCB has been in the

form of projects. Among other things, a number of work processes have been revamped. Over 120 projects have been launched, with around half already completed.

In each case, project participants are all those in some way involved in the process earmarked for improvement. There are also 67 specially-trained TQM 'pilots' whose remit is to help participants formulate project goals, collect data on the particular process and use TQM tools, such as flowcharts, Pareto diagrams, control charts, etc.

Projects fall into various categories. One comprises projects designed to bring about improvement – for example, shorten production time. Another category is geared to enhancing process efficiency, which may involve giving users greater influence or reducing production costs. A third type of project addresses the standardisation of procedures featured in several statistical programmes.

"We discovered major differences among the various SCB departments in terms of the way non-response is handled, how forms are designed and methods used to analyse time-series", says **Per Nilsson**. "This relates to both choice of method and level of ambition.

'Reinventing the wheel' in the various parts of an organisation costs time and money – and quality suffers."

Nilsson and SCB colleagues have produced a manual called *Reducing non-response*. It sets out how SCB should tackle non-response problems, the underlying approach being to identify current best methods and persuade the entire organisation to adopt them.

"It's a terrible waste of resources if all the programme heads put their minds to solving a common specific problem. This is not only time-consuming but also leads to different solutions being adopted in various parts of the organisation. By identifying the current best method, we're able to give customers an answer to how SCB is rising to the challenge."

Mapping with flowcharts

But the most common type of project is one designed to improve a particular work process. The first step is to map the process concerned – for example, by using a flowchart. This exercise is a team effort by everyone involved in the process in one way or other. Customer/supplier relationships are identified and analysed for duplication. Out-and-out errors are eliminated, the process is audited, and stabilisation and standardisation work can begin.

According to **Birgit Glimenius**, "flowcharts are very useful tools. Everyone involved in a particular process comes to realise that, before a job arrives on his or her desk, it has been processed elsewhere, and that, in turn, his or her

work is important for the next step. This awareness has not only increased motivation but has also led to greater understanding of what an individual's work is all about."

"A further result is that we're better able to satisfy customer requirements", **Per Nilsson** adds. "We've also saved time – and, as everyone knows, time is money!"

It takes time...

Around half SCB's 1,300 employees have now participated in a TQM project, and both **Glimenius** and **Nilsson** reckon staff have taken TQM philosophy on board. But they also agree that it takes time for attitudes to change – a long time.

Both emphasise that, for TQM to succeed, the organisation needs not only time and patience but also the full support and commitment of management. And it's precisely here that SCB has experienced problems – as a result of middle-management not being sufficiently committed from the word 'go'. Middle-managers felt they had been overtaken by other staff with superior TQM skills.

Birgit Glimenius again: "If TQM is to function properly and permeate the entire organisation, managers must be a driving force actively engaged in discussions. They must put TQM on agendas for meetings, ask questions and be fully involved to demonstrate that 'this thing is important'. Otherwise, the impetus will fade. In some cases, managers have merely indulged in 'cherry-picking', with one focusing on customers and another on the requirements of his or her

own particular programme. This has led to variations within the organisation; and, where there are differences in approach between large departments, TQM becomes a strength-sapping affair."

Nevertheless, **Jan Carling**, SCB's Director-General, is satisfied with the work so far. In terms of quality assurance, Statistics Sweden is seen as a leading light among Swedish government agencies. But this doesn't mean TQM will be put on the back-burner. Featuring prominently on SCB's immediate agenda are programmes designed to enhance staff skills further; train more 'pilots'; detect and remedy deficiencies; develop steering models for the follow-up phase; gear everyone to the idea of continually improving work quality rather than 'picking the low-hanging fruits'; and evaluate activities already carried out.

Competitors in the wings

"Apart from anything else, it's vital we get our quality message across to the customer", says **Nilsson**. "In a competitive arena, we must make it clear to our clients that quality is of the essence. After all, they take decisions on the basis of the information we supply. So that information has to be sound. If we don't show them how important this is, we shall lose orders.

"The same services are on offer from other organisations – of varying repute. They can work for a lower price because, for them, quality is not writ large."

* The background shows the Japanese sign for high quality.

Typical SCB TQM project

Project participants begin by formulating a mission statement together with the 'pilot'. They must define the project goal clearly and unambiguously. For example, the stated aim might be to produce a product more quickly. But no deadline is set as this could easily cause the group to become bogged down. And, in any case, it might be possible to deliver results even more rapidly. This is what **Birgit Glimenius** calls an 'open mission statement'.

The processes in focus are then described as a whole and in detail by flowcharts. These provide everyone in the group with a clear picture of the processes. The charts indicate the structure and logic underlying every step in the processes, identifying problems and bottlenecks (critical variables) as well as duplication and scope for improvements. Mostly, data are collected for variables of interest. Through detailed discussions the group can determine changes needed and set about the task accordingly.

Results are not long in coming. Completed projects have yielded improvements in numerous areas: quicker publication, enhanced cooperation between users and colleagues, less duplication of effort and shorter individual lead times...

A post-project evaluation is undertaken as a matter of course.

A big change is taking place at Statistics Finland. The NSI is shifting from product to process quality, with the focus on staff development and customer relations. The method: Total Quality Management. *Sigma's* ANNIKA ÖSTERGREN talked to Statistics Finland's Director-General TIMO RELANDER and Quality Manager PENTTI PIETILÄ.

A quality FINNISH

Changing people's attitudes has been the hardest part, although both **Timo Relander** and **Pentti Pietilä** think that most have understood what Total Quality Management (TQM) is all about.

Transformation of Statistics Finland from a product-oriented environment to one that focuses on customers and markets demands a lot of effort. To achieve the goal – being one of the best statistical offices and *the* best office

in the Finnish administration by 2003 – means acquiring intimate knowledge of itself, its customers, its markets and future trends.

"It's really a new mind-set, and it takes time", says **Relander**. "But TQM will give Statistics Finland the opportunity to work in a more proactive way and enable us to adapt faster to new and rapidly changing circumstances."

Although their TQM is still in its infancy, it has already paid



Pentti Pietilä

off. Statistics Finland can, after only three years down the quality road, proudly present itself as having the highest level of customer satisfaction ever in its history.

Statistics Finland's TQM first saw light of day in 1996 at the same time as the Government established a project to define a common quality strategy for the Finnish public sector. The basic principles of TQM were taken as a starting point, but, at the same time, adapted to be applicable to the public sector. The dual role of the public sector, as user and producer and organiser of public services, makes it difficult to consider quality of service only from a customer's point-of-view.

"The same customer can actually be, at the same time, a user, a decision-maker and part of the production chain, such as a business in its role as a data provider", **Relander** points out.

Statistics Finland's aim is to know who their customers are and what they need at all

times. To this end it undertakes customer-satisfaction surveys and is establishing a new database of customers.

The plan is to divide customers into three groups – key, permanent and one-off – to ensure they are treated according to their different needs. In the new programme, customers are involved in the production process from the start. In this way Statistics Finland hopes to know what the customers *really* want, not only what the NSI *thinks* they need. To help customers, products are accompanied by 'quality declarations' that give basic information about the quality of the statistics and show critical points and possible pitfalls within the datasets.

"So far we have added product presentations to our annual publications", **Relander** continues. "In future our aim is to define the quality criteria more clearly and give more comprehensive and standardised quality declarations, not only in publications but to means of dissemination."



Timo Relander

Staff the key to TQM

Staff development is the cornerstone of Statistics Finland's TQM. So far over 120 people have participated in basic quality training and 20 have become quality 'pilots'. Training has focused on process control, current best practice, teamwork, production and use of checklists and other quality tools. Training has been undertaken in quality projects and, step-by-step, these will be expanded to involve the whole organisation and staff.

"It's important for people to discuss their work", says **Pentti Pietilä**. "Most feel they have little time to think about future developments and improvements. But many improvements can actually stem just from people at all levels sitting down and discussing their work."

The press office, for example, has produced a manual with basic rules and checklists for the issue of news releases. Another project group has formulated guidelines for cost calculations and contract and pricing practices for marketing.

"We are also carrying out an employee satisfaction survey that will give us information on what people think about their work and how it can be improved", **Pietilä** adds.

But the effort extends beyond training people in 'quality thinking'.

"Quality programmes should also be about improving statistical methods", says **Timo Relander**. "We have concentrated on standardisation and development of survey methodology. This covers, for example, new estimation models and use of registers to improve estimations. A new

cognitive laboratory for questionnaire design and testing was established in 1998."

The NSI has also established a programme for development of professional skills in close cooperation with the University of Helsinki. Twenty people will take part in this programme, which aims at improving statistical skills and keeping staff up-to-date with latest developments in statistics. The programme runs for four years – three months a year – and is a combination of work and study.

Boost to motivation

As a boost to motivation, a new salary system has been negotiated with the trade unions. Everyone will receive a basic salary that can be increased by up to 45% depending on performance.

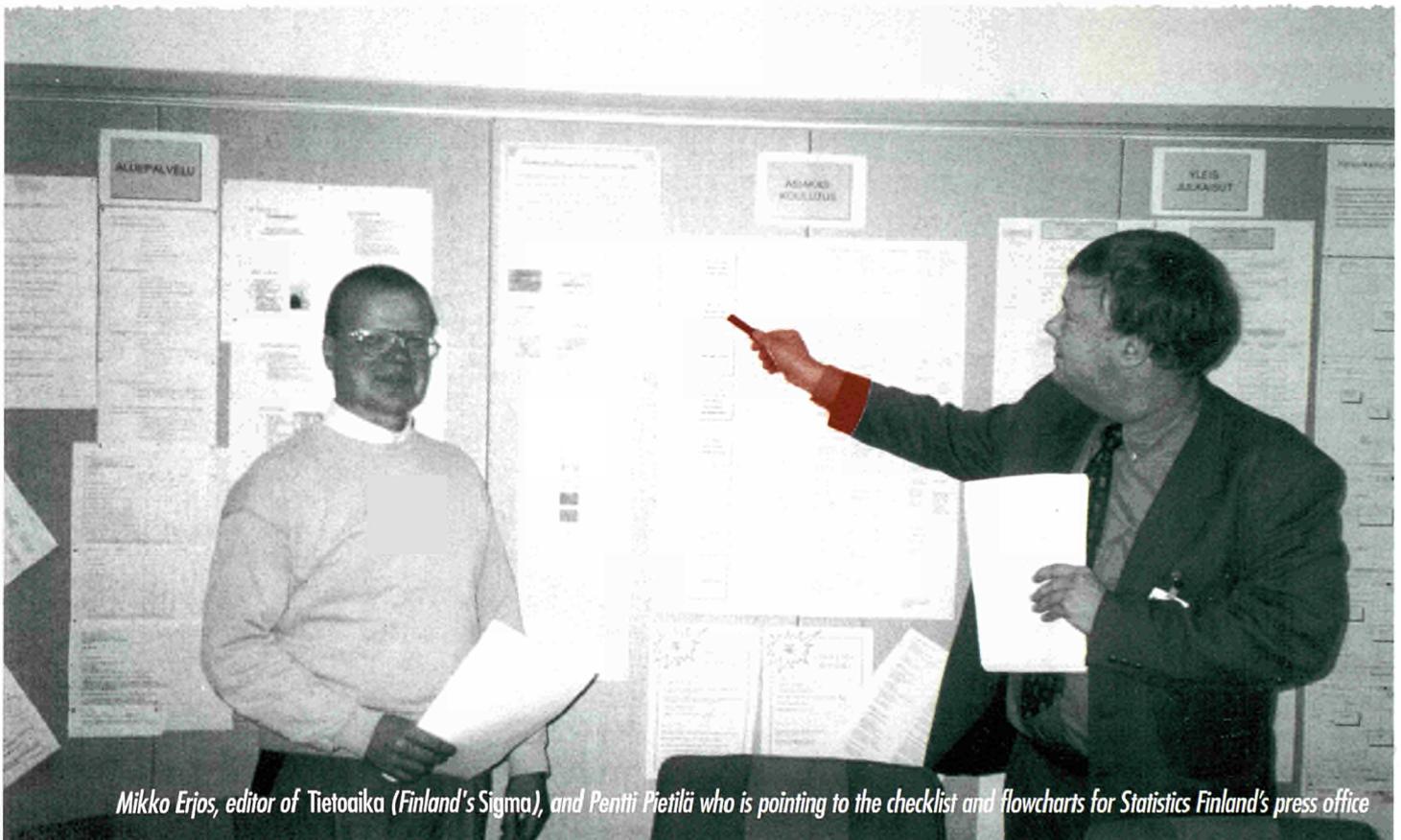
"The additional educational programme is very important

as staff development is central to our TQM work", adds **Relander**. "And the new salary system gives us a new opportunity of retaining people and rewarding them for good work."

Pentti Pietilä says Statistics Finland staff seems to have understood how TQM can contribute to improving their work...

"Last week two people came and asked me how to start working with quality. One wanted to analyse the quality of his team's work. The other was interested in what his internal customers thought about the team's products and services.

"This is a very good sign, I think, since it means people see TQM as a tool they can use themselves. And it shows they have heard about it in a positive manner."



Mikko Erjos, editor of Tietoaika (Finland's Sigma), and Pentti Pietilä who is pointing to the checklist and flowcharts for Statistics Finland's press office

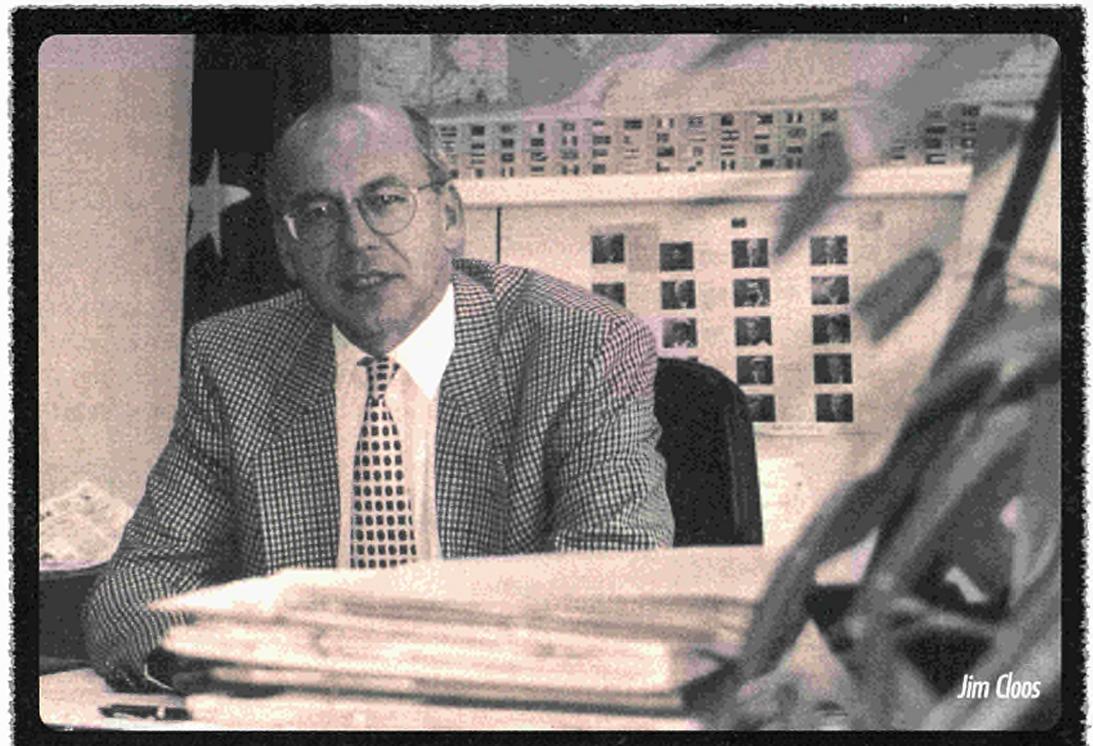
The European Commission has launched a reform programme that aims to equip it for the future. *Sigma's* BARBARA JAKOB wanted to know what it was all about and where Eurostat's quality initiative might fit into the picture. For answers she interviewed JIM CLOOS, *Chef de cabinet* for Jacques Santer, the Commission President. Assisted by other top officials, he is fronting a steering group entrusted with reflecting on the Commission and...

... The shape of things to come

Work started in 1995 on the SEM2000 project to improve financial management in the Commission. A year later it was the turn of personnel management with MAP2000. To clarify the meaning and purpose of all this, individual projects were grouped in a more general framework. One guiding principle of this 'mega-project', which is called 'Tomorrow's Commission', is the closer involvement of staff.

I ask Jim Cloos how far discussions have gone?

"The first aspect we have to tackle is the future role and mission of the Commission. We have to adapt to new circumstances: the completion of the internal market, the euro, EU enlargement, globalisation... What conclusions can be drawn from the high level of integration already achieved? In which areas do we need 'more Europe', and in which perhaps less? In other words, how should we apply the principle of subsidiarity? How should we adapt our working methods to these new circumstances? These are just some of the questions that have to be answered.



"On the basis of this analysis, we then want to take a critical look at the overall structure of the Commission and the way it is organised into departments dealing with different portfolios. To do this, we have launched a screening exercise to examine the existing organisational structure. Using this analysis of the existing system as our point of departure, we want to draw up an overall project for reform in the first half of 1999.

"Finally, we are seeking to modernise our management methods, and this exercise will

also, of course, encompass the plans for financial management in SEM2000 and personnel management in MAP2000.

"These are the three main subject areas covered by 'Tomorrow's Commission'.

Determining fields of action

"The first steps have been taken in the field of management, but we want to go further and tackle other areas. For this reason we have set up a joint reflection group made up of representatives of staff and the administration and chaired by Sir

David Williamson, former Secretary-General of the Commission. Its remit is to scrutinise all aspects of personnel management and come up with proposed fields of action.

"The MAP2000 concept already exists, but I think there is a need for ongoing critical analysis to determine if we are on the right track, or whether other measures should also perhaps be taken. The thinking behind MAP2000 is that a modern management structure should give people more responsibility with decision-making decentralised.

“I must first stress that I do not advocate reform simply for the sake of change. I believe that it is in the interests of the institution and of its officials to review working methods in the light of the new responsibilities and circumstances.”

Jacques Santer in an open letter to Commission staff.

“A whole range of specific proposals for achieving these aims has already been implemented – for example, Director-Generals have been given greater responsibility for managing their own departments and for various budgets such as travel expenses, training and accommodation. And tasks carried out centrally by DG IX (Personnel and Administration) have been delegated to the individual departments.”

Open to suggestions

Mr Cloos continues: “We are not trying to claim that we have hit the jackpot and solved all our problems. The concept requires ongoing adjustment and development. This was the reason for setting up the Williamson Group, whose findings we intend to discuss, and for inviting staff to take part in discussions. We remain open to all suggestions.

“Reform such as ‘Tomorrow’s Commission’ is relatively long drawn out. People need time to get used to the fact that things change, and a certain amount of time is also needed to explain these changes.

“At the moment we are still feeling our way. During this learn-

ing process we wish to adopt an open-minded approach and observe how the various measures develop ‘in the field’.”

A reform project of this type always depends very much on the individuals involved. How well, I ask, has it been received?

Cloos: “I know this is sometimes a sore point. Although MAP2000 was discussed with staff representatives, there is a feeling that it was dictated and decreed by the powers-that-be.

“A certain degree of scepticism is understandable. But in a large organisation like ours initiatives

have to come from the top. In saying this, it was precisely because we were aware of the need to conduct a proper debate with the staff that we came up with the ‘Tomorrow’s Commission’ initiative. This is also why Mr Santer recently wrote to all staff urging them to take part in the deliberations and discussions.

“A steering group composed of five *Chefs de cabinet* and five Directors-General, including Yves Franchet of Eurostat, meets regularly to try and draw up guidelines. One topic we have discussed is internal communi-

cations. We are at the disposal of any Directorate-General that wishes to debate these issues. We need to establish direct contact on a much more regular basis than before and are therefore making efforts to get a wide-ranging discussion programme up and running.

Time for individual initiatives

“Apart from that, the Directorates-General are urged to take matters into their own hands. A number of DGs are already hard at work: DG XVI (Regional Policy and Cohesion) has consulted staff on the questions raised by the ‘Tomorrow’s Commission’ project, organised a one-day seminar on this topic and discussed the issues at stake. When DG V (Employment, Industrial Relations and Social Affairs) was reorganised, staff were very closely involved. Eurostat, for its part, has launched a Total Quality Management project.”

I then ask to what extent the ‘Tomorrow’s Commission’ initiative is a quality management-style approach?

Cloos: “The purpose of this initiative is to improve significantly the quality of our output and of our operations in general. Quality for the Commission is a matter of strengthening its role in the institutional apparatus, since such an institution derives its legitimacy from the quality of its work. The Commission’s role is immensely important and will remain so in the future.

“Improving quality is not simply mechanical. For me, it also means setting the right priorities and using the limited human and financial resources at our

CLEAR OBJECTIVES

Says Jim Cloos: “The *Cabinets* have the important task of advising the EU Commissioners on policy. At the same time they provide the link with the various sectoral Commission departments and formulate and monitor policy decisions taken by Members of the Commission. This relationship, which is quite specific to the Commission, can sometimes lead to tension when, for example, Commission departments accuse the *Cabinets* of practising micro-management. This delicate matter is also to be thrown open to discussion.

“The problem does, of course, depend very much on the individual *Cabinets*, Commissioners and Directorates-General, and is one which has to be addressed by both sides. On one hand, I expect the quality of the work produced by the different departments to be of the highest level, and one factor that would certainly be very useful here is greater quality control within the various DGs.

“On the other hand, the *Cabinets* must forgo their desire to decide themselves how everything is to be done. They need to issue clear guidelines so that all staff are aware of the main political priorities and know what they are working towards.”



disposal as effectively as possible. There has to be a correlation between political and budgetary priorities and decisions on personnel policy."

I say that quality management in a public administration is, of course, subject to special conditions. There is, for example, much less scope for rewarding or sanctioning employees than in the private sector.

"Many people think we should introduce financial bonuses. I personally have my doubts about this. I do not believe that bureaucracy and quality are necessarily in opposition. People are not motivated for purely material reasons. Most who work here believe in what they do. Many are also stimulated by the multicultural environment and working alongside many other nationalities in a number of languages. And, given that the financial rewards are also attractive, I see no need to introduce the type of individual financial bonuses paid in the private sector. The considerable difficulties involved in measuring public sector performance would more than likely cause us even greater problems.

"The key component is motivation. We should, however, also

improve career development prospects for our staff, and thereby add to motivation. Work well done should also be more clearly appreciated. The other side of the coin is that sanctions should be imposed on people whose work is not up to scratch. Poor-quality work should not be tolerated, and in this respect full use has clearly not been made in the past of provisions that exist in Staff Regulations.

"Job satisfaction is important, and we as officials do enjoy the privilege of secure employment. That, for me, also forms part of motivation. We should not view everything purely in terms of material gain.

"It does, however, go without saying that we are always ready to take an objective and unprejudiced look at any proposals presented to us, such as those produced by the Williamson Group."

The idea of gauging oneself against others and using this comparison to try and make improvements – nowadays known as 'benchmarking' – has been mooted time and again in recent years as a quality man-

agement tool. Is this, I want to know, also feasible for the Commission?

Cloos: "It is certainly an interesting approach. We did something similar at the Extraordinary Summit in Luxembourg with regard to tackling unemployment. This is an innovation in that a structure was devised within which the Member States, obviously with help from the Commission, set themselves objectives and then conduct joint discussions within the Council on how to attain these. This gives rise to a certain element of peer pressure. Each country compares its approach and the results it has achieved with those of other Member States.

"I also think that this type of benchmarking can be used in certain fields for comparing individual Directorates-General. Not everything, however, can be quantified and compared, so it would be wrong and artificial to try and apply this very interesting approach across the board."

Towards 2000

So how will the Commission look in the year 2000?



The purpose of 'Tomorrow's Commission'... was not to supply ready-made answers but to provide a framework for some overall thinking..."

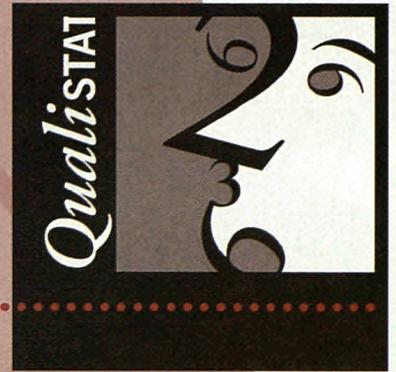
Jacques Santer in an open letter to Commission staff.

"Our ambition is that when this Commission's term of office comes to an end in 2000 people will say: the Commission has produced some good work, rationalised its administrative structures and improved its management.

"I have my own ideas about how we might achieve this eg by encouraging mobility, extending opportunities for further training and improving communications. It seems to me, however, to be of capital importance that we pay heed to the suggestions and discussions emanating from the different departments.

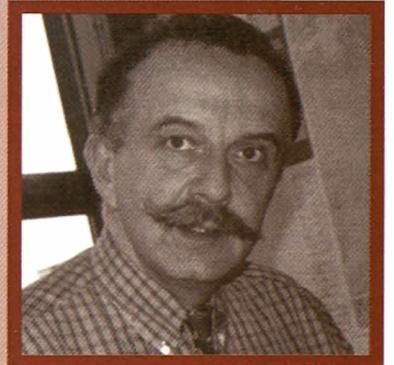
"I would like to post the message that we shall continue to sound people out and that the door is far from closed on new ideas.

"We want to keep listening."



The Qualistat project

currently being implemented by Eurostat has its origins in the Corporate Plan that began four years ago. By implementing this plan, Eurostat expects to achieve firm objectives in keeping with its mission to provide the European Union with a high-quality statistical information service.



The three following articles introduce some of the key aspects of Qualistat:

- ▶ **Roger Cubitt**, nominated by Eurostat Director-General Yves Franchet as Head of Corporate Planning, gives the background of corporate planning in Eurostat and the origins of Qualistat.
- ▶ **Werner Grünewald**, Quality Control Manager, explains his role in the framework of what he likes to consider as 'a public enterprise'.
- ▶ **Raoul Depoutot**, leader of the Qualitstat module on quality of statistical output, discusses the importance of quality reports within Eurostat as well as for the European Statistical System as a whole.

Roger Cubitt, Head of Corporate Planning, explains how quality became top of Eurostat's agenda...and corporate planning became Qualistat.

QUALITY is *a new* GALAXY

The initial impetus for Qualistat came from a growing frustration about the way Eurostat worked and the fact that we did not use our talents to the full.

But underlying this were some very concrete challenges that arose at the beginning of the nineties: namely the increase in Eurostat's operational budget and the problem of human resources. This meant not only more work, but our staff more and more confronted by the need to delegate and to manage processes in a more flexible way. We were simply not prepared for this; the organisation remained too hierarchical.

It was in 1993 that corporate planning came to Eurostat. The approach was already familiar to the UK's ONS, CBS in the Netherlands and Statistics Canada. We created a task force, formulated a mission statement and indulged in a lot of brainstorming. One important consideration was the extent to which the business approach could be used within a public administration.

In a second step, between 1994 and 1996, we identified, with the help of Arthur Andersen Consulting, 60 im-

provement actions. Our quality task force was then asked to select 20 of these and draft a first version of our corporate plan.

Fascinating & challenging

To become head of such a project was both fascinating and challenging and, as a Eurostat head of unit at the same time, I had some very precise ideas about how to improve things. But we soon realised that it would be impossible to manage the project with only a few people.

So the idea was to create a network. We found members of staff who were ready to run one or more of the 20 individual modules over a year. The first thing they did was to find their own groups of volunteers. As a result, we had about 80 people directly engaged in the process – people of all grades, including seconded national officials. And these people presented the results of their work directly to Eurostat's Directors, something hitherto unknown. It was a real case of from the bottom up!

Cooperation between the groups worked quite well; a lot

of it was down to personal relationships. Some challenges faced were very practical, even trivial. For instance, DHL would send a parcel from Washington to Eurostat within a day, but it took another three days for it to travel from our front door to the appropriate office. One of us solved the problem with two hours' concentrated thought!

Three of the 20 modules dealt with statistical quality. These were challenges of a different type. We had the feeling of entering a different galaxy and began to realise the scale of the project we had undertaken. The further we went the more we discovered and the more we had to consider.

Focus on EFQM

Paul Thornton, one of the prime consultants to the UK ONS, recommended the EFQM model (see article on page 8) during the first ever seminar of Eurostat Directors on this subject in July 1995. He gave us an idea of how to improve Eurostat's working procedures and give our work a whole new dimension, creating a culture of service. For the first time we broke down the goals of our mission statement, describing the quality project in terms of mission,

corporate plan, business plan and operational action.

Where is Eurostat in this area compared to other NSIs?

Well, we have caught up a little in relation to the front-runners. But there are many differences. We are part of a larger administration, so if, for instance, the new Eurostat building is more expensive than the old one, this does not adversely influence our budget.

What about the current quality challenges?

We now need to make it work. We have to give the staff feedback to make them understand what business plans, unit development plans and quality are all about. The message is: *you must use the tools that we have developed.*

People must give quality a chance. And the only way of changing ingrained behaviour is to train people in change rather than simply issuing orders. For this reason, the training courses started recently on quality, teamwork and communication are crucial to the whole project. Training has never been so important within Eurostat.

QUALITY — a TEAM effort

by Steffen Schneider

Since the beginning of 1998 Eurostat has had a quality control manager with the task of coordinating all measures to improve the overall quality of its work. The job has been undertaken by **Werner Grünewald**, reporting to Eurostat Director-General Yves Franchet.

His responsibilities embrace:

- ▶ analysing and summarising available information on quality indicators and user satisfaction, obtained from surveys and complaints and from quality reports
- ▶ coordinating corrective measures proposed by the Eurostat Management Committee
- ▶ preparing special Management Committee meetings on quality, and
- ▶ identifying and organising necessary further training in quality.

His guiding principles are:

- ▶ "You can't do everything at once"
- ▶ "The important thing is results, not the paper on which they're printed", and
- ▶ "Things will only work if the staff are with you, not against you".

His aim: to see Eurostat as a 'public enterprise' — operating like a private sector enterprise within the public sector, with a more user-oriented vision.

Isn't this aiming rather high?

Werner Grünewald doesn't



WERNER GRÜNEWALD

who has a degree in economics and a doctorate in statistics, has worked at Eurostat since April 1992. Having started in R&D and innovation statistics and then moved to business registers, he has been responsible for regional national accounts and regional social statistics since March 1996.

entirely disagree. "Admittedly, nobody has any idea what the outcome will be. But I wouldn't have taken this job if not convinced that I would be able to do it. And, anyway, this is the best opportunity to prove that I can act as well as criticise."

He is convinced something must be done in both areas — statistics and management. The aim is to improve the quality of products and services, the way staff are managed, organisation of further training and staff motivation.

He started with the 'low-hanging fruit': talking with staff, try-

ing to get them on his side and making sure at all costs that efforts to improve quality do not mean even more work for everyone.

Improving the quality of products, services and customer relations is the key to his agenda "We need to tighten the service we are providing and be more time-efficient. Once we have defined the dimensions of quality we then have to imbue them with life. This will mean convincing NSIs, staff and management that we are on the right track. It might well mean more work in the short term but we shall reap the benefits in the longer term with our customers within the Commission and in our relations with the Member States."

A 'public enterprise'

His brainchild within the Qualistat initiative is to turn Eurostat into a 'public enterprise'. But, as he points out, the present culture is not something that is going to change overnight. "Eurostat has not necessarily worked on these lines up to now. It is evident, however, that progress has been made — above all thanks to the team work of the ten Qualistat modules, dealing with rolling reviews, user-satisfaction surveys, staff development, Qualistat communication, quality of statistical outputs and non-statistical services, unit development plans, cost-benefit, project management and office-wide indicators."

One question he has to answer constantly is: "How can the concept of 'total quality', which actually comes from the private

sector, be applied to a Directorate-General of the European Commission?" Only one thing is clear to him: "We're not going to implement strategies that will mirror the private sector, simply because we are so unique and have our own way of doing things."

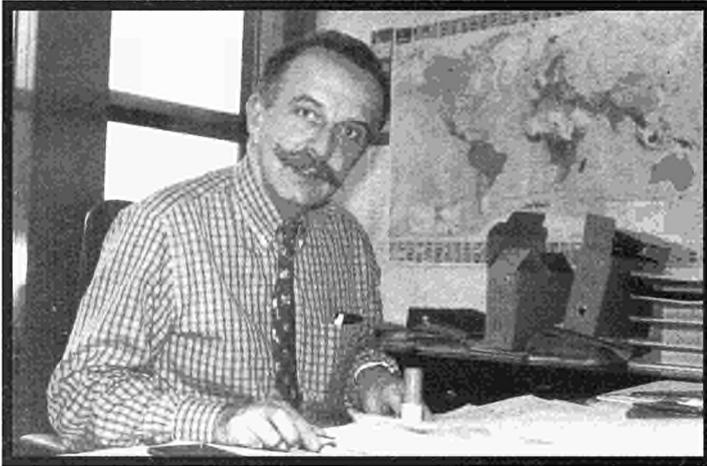
He says people's reaction to his Qualistat brainwave has been mixed. "Most staff are in favour of making Eurostat a public enterprise, but, on the other side of the coin, there are those who express doubts." Nevertheless, he adds, those who have voiced their concerns have not been against the idea in principle. "The most important thing is that staff support change, because it really needs a team effort. It's not a job for one person; that way it would certainly be more of a struggle."

An important motivating factor is that the quality project is unique in the Commission. As far as corporate planning and quality are concerned, Eurostat is a sort of 'pilot DG on the quiet', whose activities are being closely observed. But, as **Grünewald** adds, "Statistics Sweden has its own quality director. That is the scale against which we should measure ourselves."

There may be difficulties in starting this new way of tackling corporate planning and quality but **Werner Grünewald** feels positive, declaring "I am learning on the job". Importantly, he adds, the support he receives from colleagues and the fact of working within a qualified team encourage him to carry on.

If successful, quality reports will be "regarded by Eurostat managers, staff and key users as effective and relevant". This is one challenge of the Eurostat Qualistat initiative. STEFFEN SCHNEIDER spoke to project leader RAOUL DEPOUTOT about the quality of statistical outputs, a project that has proved to be...

... an INSIDE JOB



Raoul Depoutot arrived at Eurostat over four years ago. First thing I wanted to know was whether statistical quality was already a subject of discussion at that time.

He says: "When I arrived at Eurostat, I heard several people talking about quality. The item was already 'in the air'. But after a while I realised that things became very difficult as soon as the discussion rose above the level of general consideration. People wanted to do their best, but didn't know how to tackle the problem."

The answer is not really surprising but it shows how much has been accomplished over the last few years, thanks to the involvement of a handful of enthusiastic and sometimes idealistic people.

Some had been dealing with the subject for a long time and made **Raoul Depoutot** feel there was "a synergy of people who had a conviction". Together they looked at things

already done in previous task forces and talked about how to define quality, motivate people and reward quality efforts.

Depoutot says: "At that time Eurostat found itself in the first wave of its corporate planning project – a period of 'bottom-up' brainstorming. People had to make suggestions and since I had worked on methodology I felt I could contribute something to quality.

"From the beginning", he adds, "it was a real challenge. The work was a long-term effort and sometimes some of us were even close to giving up. All the time we had to ask ourselves how realistic our efforts were."

At first the group discussed the subject very informally. There was no official definition of 'quality'. Only one thing was clear: they shouldn't try to 'reinvent the wheel'.

One aspect was how far product quality depended on those

outside Eurostat. **Depoutot** says: "It is relatively rare to find an organisation whose work depends so much on the outside. Quality is quality. But having information on it and improving it are two different things. This is especially so in Eurostat's case, since much of the process is outside the organisation. It's extremely difficult to control the quality of inputs."

It soon became clear that they had to distinguish between the assessment of product quality and assessment of people's work.

'Quality is scientific'

The group succeeded in convincing others that quality is neither subjective evaluation nor purely academic, but that one can deal with it in a concrete and objective fashion. It is scientific and can be addressed as such. This scientific approach has been accepted by most but is focused only on quality control. It does not cover all the strategic and managerial aspects of quality work. These are also crucial, and tackled by other groups.

"However", **Depoutot** continues, "some people were rapidly demotivated, saying we were having little influence on Member States. They said 'We can't impose things on Member States; they will do what they want to do, when they want to do it'."

And the project provoked a kind of conflict between generations. He adds: "Newcomers can appear arrogant, so we had to avoid giving experienced people the impression that their views were being ignored. When you say you want to work on quality that implies something has been unsatisfactory and you have to avoid opposing too many people.

"So it was very difficult to maintain a high level of motivation and purpose in a group that wanted to motivate other people. There were highs and there were lows. The group had to convince the Eurostat Management Committee – give it concrete examples, prove things were realistic.

"We benefited from the approval by the hierarchy of the role of XL (a consultancy group that acted as a sort of guarantee of the general approach); the need to measure quality output systematically; and from the commitment of Roger Cubitt, the corporate planning project leader" (see article on page 28).

So, I ask, is this all leading to a happy ending?

More a beginning, says **Depoutot**.

"The actual work can now begin. Transfer of know-how is one thing; the other is sharing convictions. And quality activity should not be an extra – the icing on the cake – but a new way of 'cooking'. Aim is to make quality a natural pre-occupation of all staff – to create a culture of quality, work in teams, communicate horizontally, cooperate, make things happen. There is no reason to fail."

MEASURE OF SUCCESS

Raoul Depoutot leads *Quality of statistical outputs*, one of ten modules of the Qualistat project.

Aims of this module are:

- ▶ to assist work related to establishing a quality assurance scheme for Eurostat
- ▶ through quality reports, to establish the current level of knowledge in Eurostat about the quality of its statistical products
- ▶ subsequently, to assist units in improving this level, and
- ▶ to coordinate the methodology of internal quality reports with that of quality reports to be provided by NSIs under recent Regulations.

Need for coherence

Outside Eurostat, quality reports are implemented in different ways and at different levels in different NSIs. There is already a structure for discussing quality in business statistics within the European Statistical System (ESS) and this might be extended to other statistical areas. No legal obligation is envisaged, but certain coherence is necessary. People involved have to avoid confusion and ensure consistency. For Eurostat this means comparability and conventional definitions.

Eurostat is, at the same time, involved in the measurement of the quality of the statistics it disseminates (*Eurostat quality reports*) and in the stimulation of a common European standard for statistical quality and quality reports (*ESS quality reports*).

For *Eurostat quality reports*, the Eurostat quality steering committee adopted a unique framework reference for the definition of quality in statistics and for quality reports. To

prepare this, Eurostat worked very closely with Statistics Sweden.

Two people there, Eva Elvers and Håkan Lindström, had been involved earlier with Eurostat's internal quality group. This cooperation between the two offices was of great benefit.

The internal group also took stock of the thorough work in this area in the seventies and eighties by the US Bureau of the Census and Statistics Canada.

For *ESS quality reports*, there was a working group for discussing quality in structural business statistics within the ESS. In May 1998 this mandate was extended to other statistical areas, and the working group is now called *Assessment of quality in statistics*.

No legal basis is envisaged for the precise definition of quality in statistics and the corresponding vocabulary, but a certain legitimacy for agreements by this working group is necessary. People

throughout the ESS involved in the evaluation of quality have to avoid confusion and ensure consistency.

Within this working group, Eurostat has benefited from many inputs by NSIs that are the most advanced in evaluating quality. These, in **Depoutot's**, view are Statistics Sweden and the UK's ONS.

Assessment of quality in the ESS is, **Depoutot** adds, the only objective way to measure progress and to prove public money is used efficiently. Some Member States are still reluctant to invest in systematic assessment of statistical quality. But **Depoutot** notices that cooperation is improving, with many NSIs starting to launch quality assessment.

Will they succeed?

He says the ESS "will be soon recognised as a mature actor in the quality area. We are presenting this work in many national and international conferences and, in 2000, we are organising an important international conference on statistical quality in Luxembourg."

Werner Grünewald, Eurostat quality manager, shares this optimism. It is up to him and the Eurostat Directors to give life to the quality culture, to create the communication that will lead to a productive structure.

Will they succeed?

The result of the first pilot project is encouraging. Most statisticians are happy to rely on a precise and detailed guide to identifying the quality concept. They accept the need for advice in this field.

Raoul Depoutot concludes: "Quality assessment is both very technical and very emotional: it raises many scientific issues and also has psychological implications – possible feelings of guilt, reproach or injustice among those being evaluated. It's important to find ways of overcoming such psychological difficulties in order to address the more technical ones in a less passionate climate. This is difficult enough inside a single organisation. Throughout the ESS it's quite a challenge!"

EUROSTAT DEFINITION OF STATISTICAL QUALITY

The totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bears on their ability to satisfy stated or implied needs.

Statistical quality can be defined with reference to several criteria:

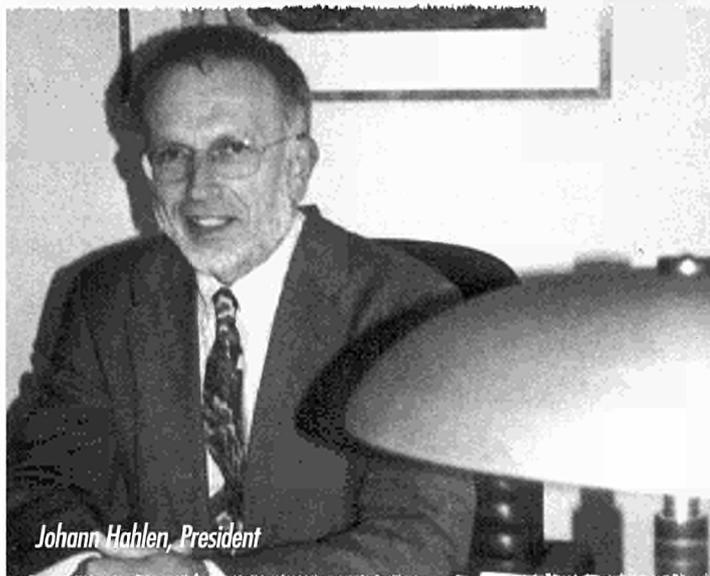
- Relevance of statistical concepts
- Accuracy of estimates
- Timeliness and punctuality in disseminating results
- Accessibility and clarity of information
- Comparability of statistics
- Coherence
- Completeness

After a brief absence, we return to our series of portraits of NSIs in EU Member States with this article by BARBARA JAKOB on Germany's *Statistisches Bundesamt*.

Making the most of diminishing resources

When Johann Hahlen took over as President of the Statistisches Bundesamt (StBA) in October 1995, German statistics had just come to grips with unification and were being asked to respond to a fresh challenge. A strict programme of budgetary stringency had been prescribed for all government administrative services, including the Statistisches Bundesamt. This is still the case, even though people's expectations of statistics are as high as ever. I wanted to find out how German official statistics aimed to cope with future demands against this backdrop of austerity and to hear the views of Germany's top statistician.

Major changes are afoot with the Federal Government's move from Bonn to Berlin before the end of the millennium, and part of the deal is that the Berlin branch office of the StBA and its workforce of over 700 people is to relocate to Bonn. This will mean that around a quarter of the StBA's operations (staff, projects etc) will have to 'move house'. On top of that, the Federal Government decided, in the interests of reaching a socially acceptable solution, that no



Johann Hahlen, President

Johann Hahlen (55) has been the head of the *Statistisches Bundesamt* since October 1995. A lawyer by training, he commutes between his home in the Cologne/Bonn area and Wiesbaden, the seat of the StBA. Both his children have now left home – his daughter is studying biology and his son has followed in his father's footsteps by studying law.

After completing his legal studies, Johann Hahlen worked first of all as a lawyer in Cologne, a period that brings back fond memories, before moving to the Federal Ministry of the Interior in 1972. During his time there, he worked in a wide variety of departments, ranging from the legal directorate to sport. One very frustrating experience was the time he spent in the Border Commission, dealing with incidents on the then border between East and West Germany. "Every day we saw evidence of the inhumane treatment meted out by the regime to its own citizens", he explains.

The five years he spent working as an assistant for the CDU/CSU faction in the *Bundestag* gave him a behind-the-scenes view of politics. On his return to the Federal Ministry of the Interior, he then took over the management of the budget, just at the time of German unification – an exciting task, he says.

government employee in the lower salary areas should be compelled to move from Bonn to Berlin. Neither would any statistician in the lower level in Berlin be forced to make the move to Bonn. The upshot of this decision for the StBA is that some three-quarters of its 700-strong workforce in Berlin will exchange jobs with government employees in Bonn.

Says **Mr Hahlen**: "After the move to Bonn, we shall have less than one-quarter of our former workforce from Berlin, plus the new staff who have transferred from the *Bundestag* or the Ministry of the Interior. Since most of these have never worked in statistics, they will first of all have to attend statistical induction and retraining courses. Many of our colleagues working in the fields of statistics concerned will therefore be faced with a mountain of work that, from mid-1999 onwards, will effectively have to be tackled by new staff."

No talk of failure

It is difficult at the moment to estimate what effect this socially acceptable solution will have on operations, but according to **Mr Hahlen** there is "no talk of failure". He cites two grounds for optimism: firstly, the 'hard core' will still be there, and secondly, the new staff are highly qualified. He believes that "sta-

SECOND IN COMMAND AT THE STATISTISCHES BUNDESAMT



Heinrich Lützel,
Vice-President

tistical knowledge can be acquired". Given that there is no specific vocational training in Germany for statisticians, most of the staff at the Wiesbaden headquarters also came with general qualifications and received their training in statistics 'on the job'.

I ask if there is room alongside this major project for other objectives?

Some time ago, work began at the StBA on a project that the President describes as 'reorientation', but which could also be labelled 'quality management'.

"I attach great importance to the efforts being made everywhere nowadays to improve the quality of work. This is no mere fad. On the contrary, it is with great interest that we are watching where our colleagues in the Netherlands, Sweden, France and now Eurostat are heading. These projects might all have different names, but the differences are merely semantic. In effect, we are all faced with the same dilemma: with limited, and sometimes even dwindling, resources, we have to carry out our statistical activities to at least the same standard, if not better than before, while making them more client-oriented."

He therefore also welcomes Eurostat's approach of giving colleagues from other NSIs the opportunity to report on their initiatives at the meetings of the Statistical Programme Committee (SPC). "We are keeping an eye on the routes they are taking and have already come up with some ideas on how to improve the quality of our work. The next step we should like to take is to develop systematic quality management, and we shall

Heinrich Lützel (60), has been Vice-President since August 1997. He succeeded the late Dr Bürgin, who died of cancer in May 1997. A graduate in economics, Mr Lützel has worked at the StBA in the field of national accounts since 1968. In December 1982 he was appointed Head of the National Accounts Department. As a permanent member of the 'core group', he was heavily involved in the revision of the former European System of Integrated Economic Accounts (ESA 1995). Through the Executive Body of the Committee on Monetary, Financial and Balance of Payments Statistics (CMFB) he has close contact with Eurostat and the European statistical community. He took an active part in the work carried out side-by-side with Eurostat to clear questions of doubt in the accounting of deficit, consultations he rates as "very constructive". His final verdict on this is: "We were able to clear up all the problems and doubts before the figures eventually came out."

shortly be arranging a meeting with all the department heads to discuss this objective. We also picked up a good few ideas from the SPC meeting in Stockholm, where topics were broached from a quality management angle."

For Mr Hahlen the key to this reorientation is to get away from the idea of 'sta-

tistics as fulfilling a legal obligation" and to take on board the belief that customers are to be offered a service. Certain steps have already been taken in this direction, with the development of a model at the end of last year, as well as the introduction of a cost-performance analysis that is now to be incorporated into a management control programme, and a range of other measures.

"We have tried to improve the focus of our output by enlisting the Statistical Advisory Board, which includes users and information providers. It is through dialogue with this body that we wish to develop ideas for the next parliamentary term. We want to grasp the initiative ourselves and, together with the Advisory Board, reflect on where we can make improvements by extending the range of services we offer and providing more up-to-date and better quality information. We shall, for example, make efforts to step up our work on services statistics."

At the same time, new 'service times' have been introduced – for a trial period a contact person must be on hand in each statistical department between the hours of 8am and 5pm – which clearly affect all staff. It means, adds Mr Hahlen that "all those who take the service ethos seriously are forced to look beyond their own particular field and broaden their horizons. During these service times they are representing the whole of a specific domain of work and are also required to answer questions on areas outside their own specialised fields."

The marketing of official statistics is a matter very closely linked to this more client-oriented approach. Of the Statistisches Bundesamt's total budget of DM 246 million in 1997, the sale of publications etc brought in DM 15 million – around 6% of expenditure.

"It is unlikely that this figure will rise substantially", says Mr Hahlen. "Like our colleagues in the Netherlands, for example, we believe that we cannot and should not operate as a commercial

**Obligations
to society**

enterprise, in view of our obligations towards society as a whole and the dictates of objectivity, neutrality and scientific research. It would therefore be unrealistic to think that most or even half of our operations could be financed from our own income."

Marketing a public asset

Are official statistics a public asset, or can they be marketed? **Sibylle von Oppeln-Bronikowski**, Head of Publications and the Central Information Service at StBA, has examined this issue from all angles. The conclusion reached by the marketing project group was "both, at the same time".

This group was given the task of determining how to satisfy the demands of the information society, which, in the words of **Ms von Oppeln**, is "one of the stiffest challenges facing us nowadays. Since we

actually have the product in demand, ie information, the issue is 'simply' one of bringing it on to the information market."

The work of this project group began with a question: *Is it possible for an official statistical service to make its products available as a public asset produced by the State infrastructure, and market them at the same time?*

Ms von Oppeln: "On one hand, it is the democratic right of each citizen to be able to use the services and infrastructure provided by the State. On the other hand – and this argument can also be seen as 'democratic' – if someone comes to us with special requirements, it is not right that other citizens should subsidise the work involved.

"This is why we tried to devise a model that would help us reconcile these conflicting demands (see also article on

page 40). This model has its roots in the meetings held by the Eurostat Working Party on Dissemination, where 'best practices' were exchanged. Our Swiss colleague, Mr Armin Grossenbacher, presented an outline of the model, which we embraced and developed. It now forms the basis of StBA's marketing policy.

"The model is based on the very varied information requirements of users. The first requirement is to supply basic information, highly aggregated data. As examples of products that meet this demand we can cite press services, leaflets, brochures, general information services and the free provision of information on the Internet. We should like to offer such products free of charge and ensure equal access for all to such information. To do so, we want to be represented at every possible level and make use of any opportunity that arises to disseminate information.

"The main point in common linking the second group of requirements is the fact that these can be met by our standard products, such as printed publications, a CD-ROM or even use of our database, which we offer over the Internet in return for a fee. In meeting these requirements, we bring together everything we think our users might need and for which we can compile price lists. Tailor-made packages are offered to quite specific target groups. To do this, we have to carry out market research and ask the users how we can best adapt our products to their requirements.

"One very exciting segment, to which we should undoubtedly pay more attention in certain fields, is the provision of made-to-measure services and products. This segment is made up of individuals or enterprises who come to us with quite specific needs and for whom we have to provide individual solutions. In such instances, we see ourselves as

'Midwife' to democracy



Johann Hahlen with a map of electoral areas

The President of the *Statistisches Bundesamt* is also the Federal Returning Officer, ie he heads a Federal Electoral Committee with whose help he decides which political groups may be allowed to stand for election as democratic parties.

Of the 60 parties that applied to stand for the *Bundestag* elections in September 1998, 34 were given the go-ahead by the Federal Electoral Committee. The work carried out by the Federal Returning Officer is very responsible. One wrong decision means that the whole election process is jeopardised and the results can be contested.

In general terms, it is the task of the Federal Returning Officer to ensure that the election runs smoothly and that all the provisions are correctly applied, for example the conditions under which handicapped electors can be assisted in registering their votes.

While the bulk of the preparatory work for organising an election is carried out at local level, it is the Federal Returning Officer who collates all the information on the election day itself. He has to ensure that there are no hitches in the count, and it is he who announces the result. To be on the safe side, for example, back-

up computer facilities were rented at the last election to ensure the whole procedure was watertight.

"In the run-up to a *Bundestag* election, we really have our work cut out. This was my first election as Federal Returning Officer and I had not realised that it involved so much work", admits **Mr Hahlen**. "But it is all worthwhile because one knows that one is helping democracy to win."

Once the dust settled on the federal elections of autumn 1998, however, it was time to prepare for the European Parliament elections in June 1999.



Angela Schaff, head of the press office



Sibylle von Oppeln-Bronikowski, head of the publications division, Central Information Service

craftsmen, as we calculate the individual cost of the service, issue a quotation and commit ourselves to specific delivery dates.

"We do not see any contradiction in the fact that we offer a public information service in the form of statistics on the one hand, and adapt our services to market conditions on the other. The marketing model helps us to harmonise these two aspects."

Key public mandate

Press relations form another important branch of the reorientation project, and the person in charge of these at *StBA* is **Angela Schaff**. "We want to use the media to convey our image as an information service provider to society", she explains. "We want to show that we are *the* central information service provider, with new products and new information components."

The basis for relations with the press is the general mandate

whereby the *StBA* is obliged under the Federal Statistics Act to provide information for the public as a whole.

Ms Schaff: "We therefore pursue an active press policy of publishing every statistical result. We issue around 400 press releases each year. One feature that might distinguish us from other NSIs is that we organise a very large number of press conferences and meetings with the press. We make every effort to publicise important results and, above all, new statistics in this way, and have been pretty successful in doing so. Not so long ago the meeting we held with the press on our newly-introduced business registration statistics was well reported throughout Germany.

"A linchpin of our work is total transparency. For example, we put out a weekly information calendar containing all *StBA's* publication deadlines, and in future we plan to supplement this with an annual publications schedule. This makes research and

preparatory work easier for journalists and helps us achieve much broader media coverage and a greater media presence."

A second important criterion is equality of treatment – "a sort of code of practice for dealing with the press. However, the news agencies, since they act as the principal relays, receive the data with an embargo of 5-10 minutes."

There is someone on hand 11 hours a day in the press office to deal with journalists, and full use is made of this facility. As a rule, all queries are answered the same day. "I see press relations as also being a form of dialogue", says **Ms Schaff**. "The reward for paying close attention to the requirements of journalists is greater understanding from them on key issues. This does not, of course, completely rule out the problem of awkward press reports.

"With our Internet service we have also become very international. We publish our press reports in two languages at the same time as we dispatch our

faxes, and there is very strong demand for our information from the USA, Canada and Japan, particularly from the banking sector.

"For some years now, we have also been making greater efforts to organise workshops where journalists can learn about statistics. Such workshops might, for example, be held when existing statistics are changed or new statistics are introduced. When journalists are given prior information about changes in the methodology or presentation, we can hope for greater understanding and thus also better reporting.

"One important lesson we learned in 1995 when we changed our industrial statistics is that we must provide tailor-made information not just for journalists but also for important user groups such as financial analysts and bankers."

The press and general public do not question the technical autonomy of the *Statistisches Bundesamt*, which is obliged by the Federal Statistics Act to

compile objective, neutral and scientific information. It is generally known that it is a *Bundesoberbehörde*, ie one level below a Federal Ministry, and falls within the sphere of competence of the Federal Minister of the Interior. This is primarily of relevance in terms of the budget.

It works in conjunction with all sorts of different departments. "In this sense, we have to cover the same range of demands as Eurostat has with the different Commission Directorates-General", explains **Mr Hahlen**. "The Office is independent in all that it does. There are times when politicians do not particularly like this, but our publications are not subject to any correction or filtering. We decide what we publish and when. The only concession we make – and even then only for relevant information – is to show our figures to the department concerned on the afternoon before publication, prior to their release at 8 o'clock the following morning.

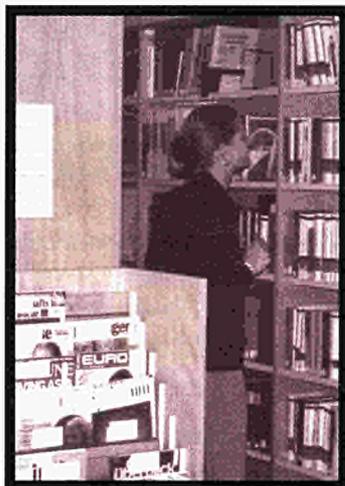
"I am very proud of the fact that our technical autonomy is respected. The Maastricht criteria, for example, were of enormous political importance, but there was no hint of an attempt to influence us or our work in any way whatsoever. The former Federal Chancellor, Helmut Kohl, himself stated that there must be no question marks over the integrity of the Statistical Office. This was simply not a topic for discussion.

Cooperative federalism

"We nurture a very close relationship with the statistical offices of the *Länder*, which we term 'cooperative federalism', as we have no authority

whatsoever to issue instructions to them. I cannot specifically demand that they behave in a certain way."

The *StBA*'s role as a federal body is to devise statistical concepts and methods and to combine, analyse and publish the results at federal level. The actual task of data collection and verification generally falls to the statistical offices of the *Länder*. There are only a few instances, such as statistics on



intra-Community trade, where this work is carried out centrally by the *StBA*.

Mr Hahlen: "The 16 *Länder* offices have to fulfil their tasks in accordance with the respective legislation, so one might assume that they all do so in a uniform and parallel fashion. In practice, however, the diversity of local circumstances and opportunities means that some of the procedures can differ. This may, for example, result in our not receiving all the results at the same time. We do have deadlines, but, for various reasons, these deadlines are often not kept.

"This explains why we have now introduced a type of early warning system. We are informed as soon as delays occur, so that we can react to the situation at an earlier stage by, for example, allocating more staff to that area. This synchronisation and coordination of quality is another of our responsibilities and requires a good deal of dialogue, personal contact and diplomacy. This is the price one must pay for federalism, which now and then demands more effort than a centralised system."

Coordination and diplomacy are two of the hardest tasks that Eurostat has to accomplish within the EU. And **Mr Hahlen** would like to see Eurostat pay more attention first and foremost to conditions in Member States when pursuing these goals. This is why he welcomes and supports the views of the head of CBS Netherlands, Ad Abrahamse, who basically believes that NSIs should not leave Eurostat on its own to cope with demands made by the Commission. "There is no doubt that Eurostat, which is

formally part of the Commission, is in a difficult position when faced with demands for statistics from other Directorates-General. It may therefore be helpful if a representative from the NSIs can draw attention to the situation in Member States and the consequences of any measures implemented.

"When statistical programmes are being drawn up in Europe, thought must be given to the resulting burden and additional expenditure for the Member States and parties concerned", insists **Mr Hahlen**. In saying this, he stresses that he is an ardent European who is committed to Europe and EMU but who would like priorities to be more clearly defined and a better balance struck between costs and benefits.

EMU 'an absolute priority'

He adds: "We at *StBA* are Europeans by conviction and feel that EMU offers, for those countries involved, an enormous and perhaps vital opportunity to assert our position on the world stage. We also see it as a major challenge for official statistics and believe that we handled the birth of EMU and the euro with such aplomb because we worked together with Eurostat and the other NSIs.

"In Germany at any rate, we have been looking forward to the kick-off. Many people perhaps thought we would then return to the workaday routine of statistics, but this is not the case. We must breathe life into EMU, which has been given substance by the Stability Pact. We have to

The StBA library and (bottom) information point

keep working hard to meet the enormous demands of the Pact, and this presents us with an ongoing challenge. For this reason we have placed the provision of data for EMU and the European Central Bank right at the top of our list of priorities.

"This being so, we are determined to call upon our colleagues, our information providers, the statistical offices of the *Länder* and even Eurostat to set the same priorities.

"This also explains why we keep referring to this issue with regard to the Statistical Programme. We are not entirely satisfied with the results to date and feel that greater progress could be made in many matters relating to EMU, such as the further development of the consumer price index or, in due course, the most rapid method of transmitting data to the ECB. This is also the background against which one should view the memorandum from the Federal Government in January 1996, which made the case to the Commission for moderation when shaping European statistics.

"We have recognised that it is not possible to do everything at the same time and that EMU has absolute priority", says **Mr Hahlen**.

Setting achievable goals

It is for this reason that he feels that the Community Statistical Programme is still too extensive. "If you set priorities, then you must, by necessity, put other matters on the back burner. It is unrealistic to think

A LEGACY OF COOPERATION - AND MORE

Despite its tight budget, the *Statistisches Bundesamt* is active in many fields of international statistical cooperation.



Martina Hahn, consultant to the working group for inter- and supra-national cooperation

Martina Hahn, consultant to the working group for inter- and supra-national cooperation, explains: "Following the unification of Germany, we took over some of the contacts established by the former GDR. We also feel a moral obligation to help countries switching over to a market economy to meet the requirements of European statistics. This applies to the applicant countries and to all the others.

"We have launched a whole range of bilateral projects, partly on the basis of agreements covering the individual fields concerned, such as foreign trade, business statistics or price statistics. We do not only cooperate with our immediate neighbours: our range of contacts extends

from the Russian Federation to Belarus and Georgia, and from Mongolia to Palestine. Some of these projects are also carried out in association with Eurostat or other EU Member States.

"China is a case apart, in that this is the largest single project ever carried out by an official statistical service in the field of bilateral cooperation. It is with good reason that this project is called *The radical reorganisation of industrial and transport statistics in the People's Republic of China*, as in size alone it far exceeds anything that has gone before.

"We were chosen for two different reasons: on one hand, no doubt, because of Germany's federal structure, which has certain similarities with China's;

and also because of our experience with the former GDR, where we managed to shift the focus towards meeting the demands of a market economy. The Chinese themselves have shown tremendous interest in the project, which we are carrying out in association with the Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. This is apparent not just from their excellent and expert preparations and huge input, but also from the fact that they are contributing two-thirds of the financial costs of the project. Alongside the larger project for the Ministry, we are also running a smaller one of our own, for which we are carrying out a range of individual measures together with the Chinese Statistical Office."

In recent years, the dissemination of information has been the subject of an increasing number of cooperation projects. "No wonder", says **Ms von Oppeln**. "Once the statistical foundations had been laid, the classifications adjusted and new production methods introduced, once everything was up and running, people started asking questions such as 'Who uses the data?' and 'What can we do for our users?'. This is something quite new, because up until now all these countries have been producing statistics almost exclusively for the government. It was therefore no surprise that, after we had started a project with the Ukraine, virtually all the countries involved in cooperation projects came to us with the same requirement."

that in the course of the next five years we can achieve everything that has been set out in the Programme. We want to implement the projects that have been accorded priority status, which is why I would much prefer to see a

narrower programme, which sets even clearer priorities and contains more limited objectives.

"We have made the mistake once already of making promises to Europe that we

could not then keep, because they were harder to carry out than we anticipated. In some cases this has also been a great disappointment for our customers in Germany. The changeover to the new classifications of economic activities

and goods (NACE and PRODCOM) has seriously tarnished the image of German official statistics, because German industry and industrial federations no longer knew where they stood, and it was also accompanied initially by a dip in quality. We are still having to make up lost ground."

There are, therefore, obviously discrepancies between national and EU perceptions of what is essential, I say.

Mr Hahlen: "It is important to distinguish between apparent and actual differences. In areas such as business registers or statistics on services, there have been shortcomings in Germany's statistics and these certainly need to be remedied. Given that this type of business register can be useful for a whole range of European statistical requirements, we are devoting all our energy to it.

"If the impression were to be given that the StBA would prefer not to do this, then this would be entirely wrong. We are finding it difficult because we are still at the development stage. A good deal of time and effort has to be devoted to compiling this register, since the data on several million enterprises have to be assembled from other registers. We are, however, quite happy to bear this 'pain'.

"The same applies to statistics on services. We know from the EU Regulations on short-term indicators and structural surveys that we need to improve our future coverage of services. At the moment we are looking into ways and means of bringing this about. We should like to introduce separate statistics on services,

but there is political opposition to this idea because it is felt that the burden on those obliged to provide the information would be too high."

'Europe the catalyst'

He continues: "If it should happen that we do not receive the statistics on services, or cannot do so on time, then we want to compile the data required from our other statistical sources. We are quite confident of success, even though this, too, is a very ambitious development project. These are fields in which the European statistical system has acted as the catalyst for

Germany, and we are working hard to get results.

"On the other hand, there are also areas of genuine disagreement, where there are true conflicts of interest: things the Commission might see as essential but which we at national level have difficulties in understanding on a cost/benefit basis. To be perfectly honest, there are fields we have to skip over because we do not have sufficient budgetary and human resources in Wiesbaden and the 16 *Länder* offices to achieve them.

"This is where I feel that priorities need to be defined more

clearly. In our view, this applies to the ideas being mooted for a whole range of 'social' statistics, such as those on poverty or education. While these issues may in themselves be of intrinsic importance and validity, we are juggling with limited resources, and savings do have to be made somewhere."

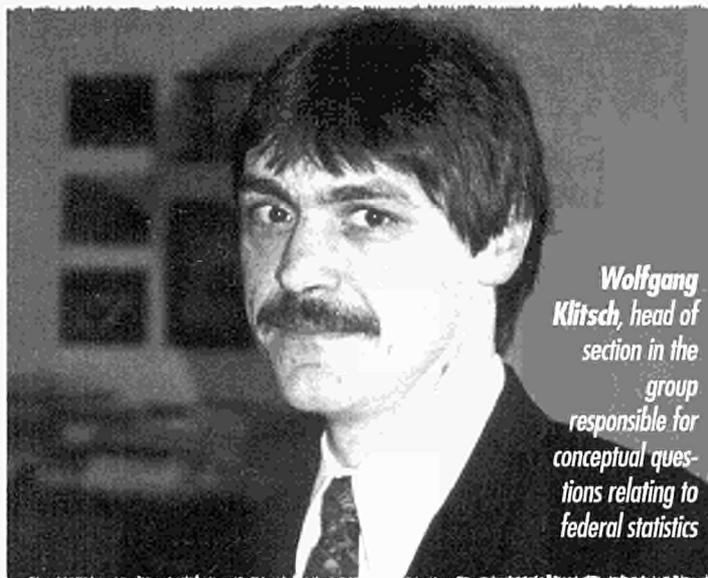
There is, on the other hand, one future project that he feels merits much greater attention from Europe: Integrated Environmental Accounts (IEA). Following the example of its Swedish, Dutch, French and UK colleagues, StBA has, in recent years, established a similar link between economic and environmental data. Using an 'ecological area sample survey', information will be obtained on land use in the national economy and the development of biodiversity.

In the longer term...

What, I ask, are the longer-term prospects for European statistics?

Mr Hahlen: "I think the SPC will become even more important in the future, which is why I applaud the fact that discussions are under way on how its work can be made more effective to cope with EU enlargement. An SPC with 20 or more Member States will inevitably become rather inflexible as a forum for discussion and decision-making. We welcome the constructive contribution made by others, such as our UK colleague Tim Holt, who have conveyed their thoughts on this matter."

[Mr Holt, Director of the UK ONS, presented a report on improving statistical partner-



Wolfgang Klitsch, head of section in the group responsible for conceptual questions relating to federal statistics

Wolfgang Klitsch, who is in charge of conceptual questions relating to federal statistics, describes the budget situation faced by the German statistical service as "the dilemma of having to make the most of diminishing resources.

"Staff numbers at *Statistisches Bundesamt* have been falling year by year. But the number of tasks we have to fulfil for national and European purposes has further increased. Since 1993 a gap has opened between tasks and resources of about 500 full-time jobs. We have to fill this gap by strict rationalisation and financial prudence. The situation is not much different in the statistical offices of the *Länder*."

Adds **Mr Hahlen** regretfully: "This means we cannot make nearly as much progress as we would like, and are forced to put aside much of the work we would like to undertake."

ship in the EU at one of the meetings of the SPC. One topic covered was the SPC itself and how its operating methods could be improved to promote better cooperation between NSIs and Eurostat.

Mr Holt suggested the following alternative:

- ▶ implementation of an SPC office at Director level as the leading body of the SPC, or

- ▶ implementation of a leading working group (the 'Sherpa' solution)] .

"We are, finally", concludes Mr Hahlen, "very happy that a separate Article has

now been devoted to statistics in the Amsterdam Treaty. As a point of reference for our activities, this is of key importance to both Eurostat and NSIs."

Statistics: a reflection of the times

The 18th century was the era when statistics became all the rage, not just as an academic discipline for future civil servants, but also as a literary genre. But the concept of 'statistics' was understood somewhat differently from now. At that time it embraced a whole range of academic disciplines: certain aspects of political science, geography, history, and often also jurisprudence, economics, military science and public administration. The *disciplina politico-statistica* was the embodiment of everything the 'modern' statesman needed to know.

Causal statistics based on arithmetic principles originated in England in the 17th century. The main proponents of this technique in Germany were Kaspar Neumann and Johann Peter Süßmilch – the latter a military chaplain in a regiment of Frederick the Great's army – who used statistics primarily for demographic surveys. The second half of the 18th century then saw the emergence of other types of statistics, chiefly those relating to economic potential.

The first attempts to compile official statistics on a permanent basis can be seen in Germany at that time in the form of collections of material for the *Beschreibungen des Staats- und Volkslebens* (descriptions of the State and the life of the people). The institutionalisation of statistical activity began in the early 19th century when the territorial reorganisation of Germany and increasing industrialisation forced the *Länder* to step up their statistical observations on topography, population, agriculture, industrial activity and State finances. As a result, statistical bureaux were founded first of all in Prussia in 1805, then in Bavaria in 1808 and Württemberg in 1820. These were later to become the statistical offices of the *Länder*.

From 1834 onwards, the German *Zollverein* developed statistical activities ranging across different *Länder*, particularly in the fields of foreign trade and population censuses. The foundation of the German Empire led eventually to the establishment of a central statistical office in 1872. This *Kaiserliches Statistisches Amt* (Imperial Statistical Office) was a branch of the *Reichsamt des Inneren* (Imperial Home Office).

The years of hyperinflation from 1920-1923 witnessed the development of short-term price and wage statistics in particular. The



creation of a single department dealing with national finances led to the compilation of extensive statistics on the public finances of all central, regional and local authorities and the expansion of statistics on taxation. National income statistics were developed in connection with the reparations negotiations.

During the Third *Reich*, there was a shift of statistical work from the *Länder* to the *Reich*, and certain tasks were also delegated to other services and organisations.

In 1946, after the end of the Second World War, a statistical office was set up in the British occupied zone in Hamburg. Statistical offices were also established in the American zone and their work was coordinated by a statistical committee working for the regional council for the US occupied zone in Stuttgart. With the amalgamation of the British and American occupied zones, the Statistical

Office of this Unified Economic Area (*Bizonia*) was set up in 1948. This was the forerunner of the *Statistisches Bundesamt*, which emerged after the foundation of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1949.

The German Central Authority for Statistics was set up in the Soviet occupied zone in 1945, at the same time as regional and district statistical offices came into being across the territory of what was to become the German Democratic Republic (GDR). As a result of territorial reform in the GDR, official statistics were soon centralised at the Central Statistical Office (*Statistisches Zentralamt*) in East Berlin.

With German unification on 3 October 1990, the statistical laws of the Federal Republic immediately entered into force in the new *Länder* and East Berlin. Since as long ago as January 1991, all statistics in the new *Länder* have been compiled in accordance with the concepts and methods used for federal statistics. Some of the staff working for the GDR Statistical Office were assigned to the *StBA*. All the rest joined the Joint Statistical Office for the new *Länder*, which was responsible for the tasks carried out by the *Länder* offices until fully-operational offices were up and running in each of the five new *Länder*.

SIBYLLE VON OPPELN-BRONIKOWSKI, in charge of publications and central information services at the German Federal Statistical Office (*Statistisches Bundesamt*), describes...

Marketing the new statistical diversity

Demand for statistical products and services has burgeoned in most countries in recent years. Since no one has yet managed to work out a coherent marketing and pricing policy, some basic questions, such as copyright, discounts, licences, payment systems and revenue accounting, remain to be answered.

The Federal Statistical Office and the German *Länder* statistical offices offer a wide range of statistical publications. As well as regular printed volumes, such as yearbooks, statistical reports etc, there are large numbers of leaflets, brochures, press releases and thematic texts. Then there are new dissemination media developed through information technology: the CD-ROM with its huge capacity and ever-expanding Internet and e-mail services.

A further factor in German statistical dissemination is multi-language provision: products are increasingly marketed internationally as well as nationally, with many available in English as well as German.

To this multiplicity of data provision must be added custom-

made solutions to changing and ever-increasing demand for statistics from a variety of users, all of whom need tailor-made data: ministries, public administration at all levels, organisations and institutions, domestic and foreign companies, associations, national and international press, commercial information services and universities.

Questions about questions

This new situation poses a long list of questions:

- ▶ Are statistics public property or can they be sold commercially?
- ▶ Which products and services should be marketed and at what prices?
- ▶ What is a market price and how is it arrived at?
- ▶ Do statistical publications have copyright?
- ▶ Should there be price differentials for different user groups?
- ▶ Should information services always be free of charge?
- ▶ How much do custom-made services cost?

- ▶ How should receipts be settled and recorded in the accounts?

To answer these questions, the Federal Statistical Office convened a working party and attempted to systematise the various products and services. From this we were able to devise the basis for a coherent marketing and pricing policy.

For future dissemination policy we designed a marketing model that is now being used by other NSIs as the basis for statistical dissemination strategies. The Eurostat Working Party on Dissemination of Statistical Information first discussed the basic model in 1996, following a proposal from Mr Armin Grossenbacher of the Swiss Federal Statistical Office.

The model was or is being further developed in several Training of European Statisticians (TES) Institute seminars on marketing. And it has been incorporated in the recommendations of the Tacis Task Force on Dissemination Policy and Practice, presented in 1998 at the High-Level Conference in Kazakhstan.

The marketing model tailors itself to customer information requirements. It structures the demand for statistics on three levels (*see diagram, next page*):

- ▶ the basic information requirement of the general public, represented by the outer band
- ▶ the standard information requirement that can be attached to certain target groups, the middle band, and
- ▶ the customer-specific information requirement attached to special users: the core area.

Statistics for all

The basic information requirement is intended to meet the needs of the informed public: interested readers of newspapers, pupils wanting to know more, students writing dissertations etc. All citizens of a democracy have the right (and the obligation) to inform themselves neutrally and objectively. For example, policy-makers cannot be kept in check without relevant statistics.

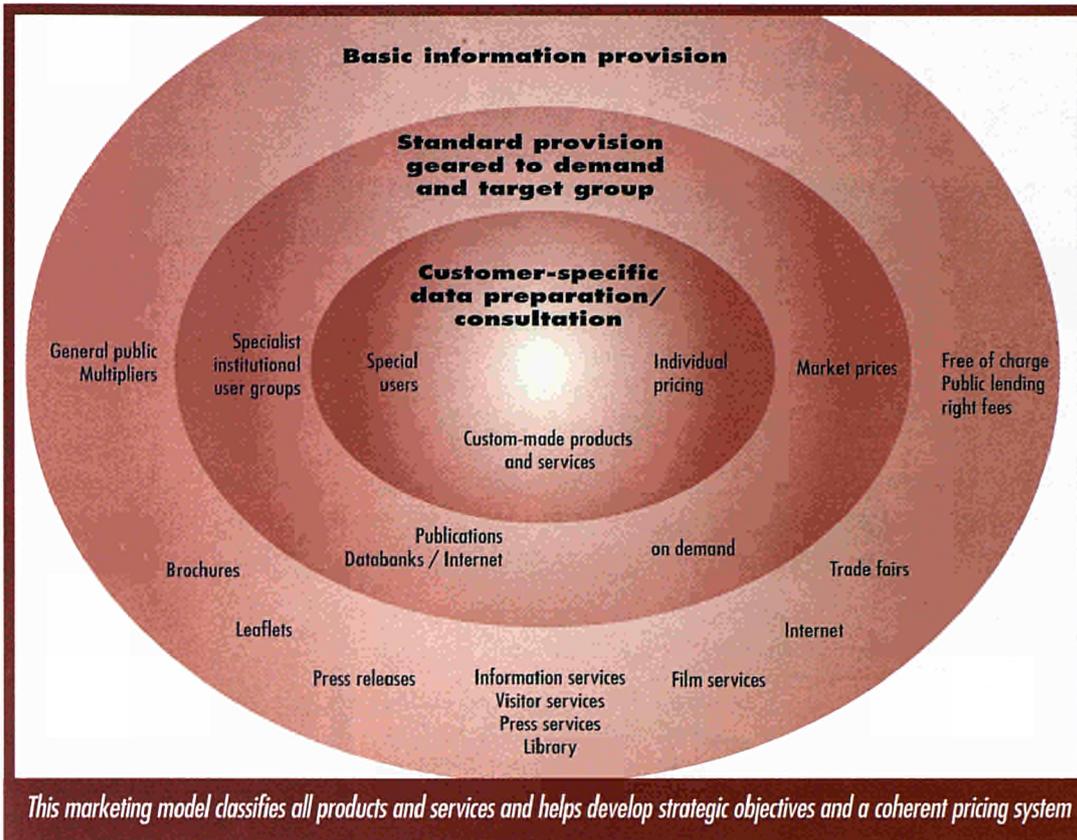
Citizens of other countries want information on their neighbours, either for general interest or trading purposes. This general-public information requirement lies at the heart of our task of producing statistics for all. Therefore, the primary goal of an NSI, as we understand it, is to provide basic information more or less as public property.

Like public roads, these figures are part of the State infrastructure and must be accessible to all.

This basic information includes press releases, leaflets, small brochures, replies to minor enquiries, statistical publications in libraries, at trade fairs and exhibitions, contributions to events and Internet dissemination.

Our conclusion is that **such basic information should, as a matter of principle, be free of charge.**

We intend to prepare such services in advance, making them available as exhaustively as possible in all areas of demand, and to use low-cost distribution. Since the aim is dissemination as widely as possible, the best approach is by using multipliers such as the media, international organisations, teachers, associations, banks etc.



Information as a commodity

The middle band represents all products and services that extend beyond the provision of basic statistics and meet standard and repeated user requirements. Because such requirements can be anticipated, these products and services can also be prepared in advance and sold on the information market. They include both printed publications and electronic products (CD-ROMs, floppy-discs or on-line services).

Rapid growth of this market has forced official statisticians to rethink their role of information-service providers. Information as a key production factor is bought and sold just like any other commodity, and NSIs are in competition with other providers. Statistical products will generate a demand if they meet the following criteria:

- ▶ relevance
- ▶ rapid availability

- ▶ price transparency
- ▶ supply transparency
- ▶ supply continuity
- ▶ efficient and exhaustive distribution, and
- ▶ user-friendliness.

These are the same requirements that apply to all marketable products, be they refrigerators, bicycles or statistics.

Standardised statistical products can be marketed at market prices.

There should be more pre-prepared products and services targeted at such customers as international companies, market researchers, banks, universities and libraries, and all available means of rationalised production should be used. Developments in this area should be based on market research, with sales trends monitored.

Cooperation with other information providers, including private companies, is possible with all

products in this band. Licences can also be issued and discounts granted on all products.

Tailor-made solutions

Information needs of clients who are looking for highly-specialised and often detailed compilations of data can be met neither by basic information provision nor standard products. They require **custom-made solutions**. This band includes complex enquiries addressed to statistical information services, specialised analyses of statistical material and consultancy work on projects or expert opinions.

Tailor-made services are rendered specially to individual customers, with NSIs acting as service contractors.

The costs of such work are calculated and invoiced to the customer.

The keynote of this core area is contact with the individual cus-

tomers. The demand is for the statisticians' specialist skills and know-how. It is well worth taking a customer-oriented approach. Customers will appreciate a rapid and high-quality solution. Quotations and deadlines must be met.

As a result of all this, we have developed a coherent pricing system founded on the three bands of the marketing model:

- ▶ outer band free of charge
- ▶ middle band at market prices
- ▶ core area individually priced.

Some elegant answers...

This marketing model provides answers to the fundamental questions listed at the beginning of this article:

▶ Are statistics public property or can they be sold commercially?

Statistics are public property and can be sold commercially. In a democracy, the door to official statistics must be open to all. That all concerned have access to the same basic information is a key principle of the democratic state.

Our basic information provision guarantees cost-free access to such data. If, in addition and at extra cost, we provide electronic or printed information for specific target groups or undertake customised work for individual people or institutions, we should be allowed to market these – and be entirely free to compete with other information providers. Such marketing relieves pressure on the budget, improves resource control and avoids the general public subsi-

dising certain users or user groups. A transparent marketing concept answers the frequently-asked question *Why do we have to pay for statistics when they are already paid for out of taxes?*

► **Which products and services should be marketed and at what prices?**

All products and services in the middle band are offered for sale at a market price.

► **What is a market price and how is it arrived at?**

A market price is what customers are prepared to pay for a product. As a rule it does not reflect the cost of production – it may be higher or lower. There is usually a correlation between the quantity of data and the price of the product. With printed publications, for example, the price in most countries is usually based on the number of pages. But increasing dissemination of the same data in different media (paper and electronic versions) has thrown doubt on this method.

Some countries base prices on the data's value. Others calculate the additional expense involved. But all agree that we need a fixed scale for calculating prices of new products. This calculation would be for internal use only. The customer would just be told the prices. Such market prices must be transparent for products sold on the open market.

► **Do statistical publications have copyright?**

In most countries the answer in recent years has been yes. A new EU Directive not only

designates statistical publications as work to be copyright protected, but also provides for strict copyright on information from NSIs' statistical databanks. It is therefore advisable for all statistical publications to be copyright protected. This would enable licensing agreements to be taken out with information providers and provide financial security in the event of redistribution.

► **Should there be price differentials for different user groups?**

Since only products in the middle band have fixed prices, only they can be subject to price differentials. Certain user groups, such as schools, universities and public libraries, may be allowed discounts.

There may also be free and exchange subscribers, such as parliaments, government departments, the media and international organisations. Free subscription should be monitored and restricted very precisely. For example, other NSIs may be exchange subscribers. Product prices themselves should not be differentiated, otherwise transparency is lost. Discounts should be fixed for each user group and should apply to all products in the middle band.

► **Should information services always be free of charge?**

Information should be free of charge only if it belongs to the outer band – is part of the basic provision. This type of information does not involve a great deal of processing. Much consists of telephone enquiries and requests for brochures, publications cata-

logues or small-scale photocopies to be sent by post.

Criteria for free information vary from one country to another, but time and material limits should be established: for example, up to an hour's work and/or ten photocopied pages. More substantial information must be costed – for example, by the hourly cost of employing one worker. Such prices, of course, must be agreed in advance with the customer.

If information is standard and on demand and therefore in the middle band, there should be a price list eg a price per table. However, all custom-made and labour-intensive information in the core area should be individually costed.

► **How much do custom-made services cost?**

First step with all custom-made products and services is to calculate what they actually cost in terms of staff and material. If the job is a large-scale special analysis with data transmission, the prices of the data themselves can be added to the bill. In some circumstances, it might be deliberately worth charging less for public relations reasons, because, for example, it enables the NSI to demonstrate its expertise. Prices of custom-made services are a matter for negotiation.

► **How should receipts be settled and recorded in the accounts?**

To help establish long-term customer relations, invoicing and payments should be dealt with by the department or agency marketing the products. This will enable any complaints to

New copyright of
Statistisches Bundesamt

Basic copyright

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Bundesamt,
Wiesbaden 19xx

All rights reserved

with different degrees of
freedom depending on the
marketing model...

Products in the outer band

Reprinting and dissemina-
tion allowed provided the
source acknowledged.

Products in the middle
band

Reprinting and dissemina-
tion allowed for non-com-
mercial purposes, provided
the source acknowledged.
Dissemination via electron-
ic systems subject to prior
authorisation.

Products in the core area
subject to restrictions that
may, where appropriate,
be relaxed by negotiation.

be dealt with flexibly, with customer interests in mind. In some NSIs, receipts go into a central account rather than being allocated to individual budget headings. In our experience, direct allocation of receipts motivates staff to market good products and services.

Thus our marketing model, we believe, provides some very elegant answers to what we always wanted to know about marketing. It can be a useful tool for our work. We eagerly await reactions....

New **HOME** for Eurostat



The new building is named after Joseph Bech, promoter of European integration. His son, Mr Charles Bech, and Mrs Bech (pictured left) were guests of honour at the inauguration. Next is Mr Jacques Santer, European Commission President, who opened the new building. Then – Eurostat Director-General Yves Franchet, Erkki Liikanen, Member of the Commission, and Robert Goebbels, Luxembourg Minister of Public Works. And finally... Mr Santer wishes the new headquarters a 'fair wind' to the applause of the invited audience.

At the end of 1998 Eurostat moved to a new location in the Bech Building on the Kirchberg Plateau, Luxembourg's European and banking centre.

The move involved 730 people (each with three to five packing cases), 800 workstations and 24 photocopiers. It meant setting up 22 new meeting rooms, two conference rooms (each for 95 people) and six interpreters' booths, plus two video-conference rooms – and the central library. Then there are 778 reserved parking spaces and a canteen for 250...

The move was planned a long time ago. It was necessary because the Jean Monnet Building, occupied by various Commission Directorates, is to be refurbished in the near future.

On 27 November the Bech Building was officially inaugurated as Eurostat's new headquarters in the presence of Jacques Santer, President of the

Commission, Erkki Liikanen, Commission Member responsible for personnel and administration, and Yves Thibault de Silguy, Commission Member responsible for Economic and Monetary Affairs, including Eurostat. Robert Goebbels, Minister of Public Works, attended the ceremony as an official representative of the Luxembourg Government.

The new location offers a separate office for every member of staff. Its mechanical air ventilation system guarantees relatively cool offices in summer – not the case in Jean Monnet, as many visitors might have experienced!

The new building also has an extremely powerful local computer network with a capacity of 10 megabits per second, which can be extended to 100 Mbit/sec for each individual connection.

The offices have less space for receiving visitors. This is why the new building has no fewer than

22 large, medium and small meeting rooms. As they are spread throughout the building, which is 500 metres long, this will make it impossible to scour all 22 rooms to find a free one, so an electronic booking system is being developed on *Cybernews*, the Eurostat Intranet server.

At Eurostat a team of five people organised the move. There was strict division of labour and responsibilities between Eurostat, in charge of planning, preparation and control, and the Commission's DG IX and the Informatics Directorate, which put the plans into action. Coordination came through the Bech Building working party, which included representatives of the building contractor as well as Commission staff and the Security Office.

The move itself was executed by an Italian firm that organised the move of Munich airport and has just received the contract to move the German Federal

Government from Bonn to Berlin.

But the move did not end with the official inauguration. Eurostat's move team expects a lot more work in reacting to criticisms and adapting systems, and moving and recommissioning the archives, computer equipment, telephone system, the statistical library, meeting rooms and so on.

One consolation after such an upheaval: the average useful life of such a building is estimated by the Commission to be 25 years!

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A statistical 'first' shows... How EU and Russia compare

Stark contrasts but also some strong similarities: this is the message from a new statistical publication' that compares the EU and its Member States with Russia.

The publication was produced jointly by Eurostat and Goskomstat, the statistical office of the Russian Federation. It is a tangible result of statistical cooperation between the EU and Russia that began in 1993 with the aim of harmonising Russian data with international and, in particular, Community standards and methods.

Published in both English and Russian, this study is the first of its kind. It is also the first time that Russian statistics have been disseminated so widely in Europe and, conversely, the first time that EU statistics have

received such widespread coverage in Russia. The publication is also a prerequisite and point of departure for regular exchanges of statistical data between Goskomstat and Eurostat.

Greater comparability

At a press conference at the European Commission delegation offices in Moscow, Mr A E Surinov, head of the Goskomstat department responsible for foreign statistics and international statistical cooperation, and Mr Photis Nanopoulos, Head of Eurostat Directorate A, whose responsibilities include technical cooperation with Phare and Tacis countries, presented the publication to Moscow journalists.

In particular, Mr Nanopoulos stated that its production was

made possible by Goskomstat's efforts to bring Russian statistics closer to international statistical standards. A high degree of comparability had already been achieved thanks to EU expertise in statistical methodology and compilation. In 1992 and 1993 the Russian statistical office replied to only 30-40% of questionnaires sent by international organisations. It was now in a position to complete over 80% of them.

Mr Surinov pointed out the major changes the Russian statistical office had made to its national accounting approach, moving from the Material Production System (MPS) to the United Nations' System of National Accounts (SNA). Russia's response to questionnaires from the IMF now matched that of most other countries.

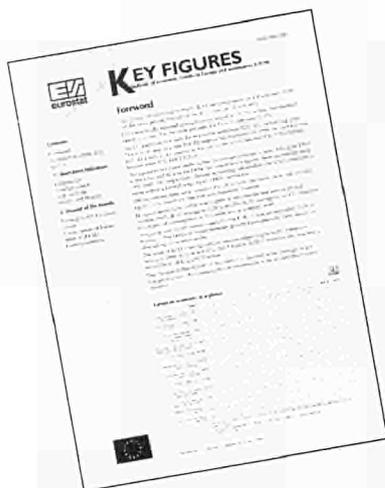


Russia will make further progress under its Statistical Programme for 1997/2000. As part of this and following a memorandum signed by Eurostat and Goskomstat, Russian data will be available on Eurostat's New Cronos database, and EU data will be available on Goskomstat's corresponding database.

For Mr Surinov the comparability of Russian data with international statistics remains Goskomstat's top priority and an essential requirement for greater understanding between Russia and its partners, particularly in the EU.

1 *Russia and the EU Member States, statistical comparison 1990-96*

Price ECU 15. Available from Eurostat Data Shops and European Commission sales agents (also available in Russian).



For those who need rapid information about European economic trends the Eurostat publication *Key figures* is ideal.

This has been recognised by no less than the Banque de Luxembourg, one of Luxembourg's biggest private banks, whose Director, Guy Wagner, signed a contract with Eurostat for sponsoring the

Bank endorses *Key figures*

bulletin. The Bank feels that *Key figures* contains information that is very relevant to many of its customers and is offering redistribution of around 500 copies of the bulletin as a special service.

Key figures is a monthly publication dedicated to presentation and analysis of latest EU economic and social data. Its short summaries, accompanied by tables, chart the latest trends in short-term indicators, such as...

- ▀ inflation
- ▀ unemployment
- ▀ external trade
- ▀ money and finance, and
- ▀ industrial production.

One table, *The European economy at a glance*, gives an overview of the latest available short-term indicators for EU15, EUR-11 and Member States:

- ▀ GDP
- ▀ gross fixed capital formation
- ▀ private final national consumption
- ▀ industrial production
- ▀ inflation
- ▀ the ECU conversion and US dollar exchange rates
- ▀ money supply
- ▀ yield on public sector long-term bonds
- ▀ unemployment, and
- ▀ extra- and intra-EU trade.

Dossier of the month examines specific topics in detail or gives the results of recent surveys in the economic and social sphere, highlighting the main points.

Key figures, 12 pages (price 11 ECU or annual subscription 102 ECU), is available in three languages – German, English and French – from Eurostat Data Shops or the Office for Official Publications of the European Communities and its sales points in Member States. Addresses available at: <http://europa.eu.int/eurostat.html>

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