

Report on Limited Peer Review of the Institute of Statistics of Albania

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List of abbreviations

ASS	Albanian Statistical System
BoA	Bank of Albania
BR	Business Register
COICOP	Classification of individual consumption by purpose
CoP	European statistics Code of Practice
CPI	Consumer Price Index
DPA	Department of Public Administration
EDP	Excessive Deficit Procedure
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy
ESA	European System of Accounts
ESMS	Euro SDMX Metadata Structure
ESQRS	ESS Standard Quality Reporting Structure
ESS	European Statistical System
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GSBPM	Generic Statistical Business Process Model
GVA	Gross Value Added
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INSTAT	Institute of Statistics
IPA	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance
ISCO	International Standard Classification of Occupations
LCS	Labour Cost Survey
LFS	Labour Force Survey
LPR	Light/Limited Peer Review
LSMS	Living Standards Measurement Survey
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NA	National Accounts
NACE	General Industrial Classification of Economic Activities within the European Communities
NSI	National Statistical Institute
NSS	National Statistical System
OCR	Optical Character Recognition

ONA	Other National Authority (for statistical production)
PDF	Portable Document Format
PHC	Population and Housing Census
PPI	Production Price Index
PX	PC-Axis
SAS	Statistical Analysis System
SBS	Structural Business Statistics
SDMX	Statistical Data and Metadata eXchange
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
SIMS	Single Integrated Metadata structure
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
STS	Short-Term Statistics
VAT	Value Added Tax
WP	Work Programme

Preface

At the time of the latest light peer review of the Albanian statistical system (ASS) in September 2013 a new statistical law had recently been adopted (early 2013) and the previous General Director of INSTAT re-appointed on the basis of this law, a couple of weeks after elections which brought a different government to power.

While the peer review took place in September 2013, changes were already forthcoming in terms of the top management of the Institute of Statistics of Albania (INSTAT), management in Ministries, and the enactment of a new civil service law – all of which have affected the management and functioning of INSTAT. These changes are not reflected in the peer review report of September 2013 in a comprehensive way and hence the report is partly outdated for some of the principles of the European statistics Code of Practice and also for the elements of the report about the coordination of the ASS.

Accordingly it was considered appropriate to undertake a renewed but lighter review of the ASS limiting the review to the principles of the CoP that are most affected by the changes since 2013.

The limited peer review (LPR) was undertaken in the framework of the Eurostat funded project “*Assessment of statistical systems and selected areas for enlargement and ENP countries*”. ICON-INSTITUT in consortium with DevStat, contracted by Eurostat (no. 14472.2013.002-2013.694), organised all activities and tasks related to the LPR. Eurostat initiated the LPR following a request by INSTAT.

This review of the ASS focused on the following different dimensions:

- a) Thorough review of:
 - principle 1 of the CoP on the professional independence of the statistical office
 - principle 3 of the CoP on the adequacy of resources
 - principle 4 of the CoP on quality management
 - principle 8 on appropriate statistical procedures
 - the coordination of the ASS.
- b) Light update of the other principles of the CoP with a clear focus on the changes since the last peer review in September 2013.

The LPR was conducted by the two experts Mr Richard Laux who was the leading expert and Ms Hilka Vihavainen who was nominated as supporting expert. The review mission took place from 13 to 16 July 2015. Besides the two experts, Mr Torbiörn Carlquist (from Eurostat) participated in this mission. Written material was made available by INSTAT in advance and during the assessment mission. The LPR mission was also informed by replies to the self-assessment questionnaires sent out in advance to INSTAT and two other national authorities (ONA) – the Bank of Albania, and the Ministry of Finance.

The peer review team very much appreciated the well-prepared meetings and the openness of the communication both with the staff of INSTAT and with representatives from partner and stakeholder organisations. It is hoped that the review will be of benefit to the further development of INSTAT.

Executive summary

1. This report presents the views of the peer review team which visited Albania in July 2015, building upon the Light Peer Review undertaken in 2013 and, as the Preface notes, taking account of recent changes in terms of their impact on compliance with the European statistics Code of Practice. While the main focus of the Limited Peer Review is on principles 1, 3, 4 and 8, all principles as well as coordination issues have been considered. For other principles, compliance with most – but not all – indicators has been described
2. INSTAT is increasingly recognised by its users for its professional independence, and for improvements to the range and quality of the statistics it publishes. Staff at all levels in INSTAT are proud of their work, and display strong positive commitment. But at the same time they recognise that INSTAT faces substantial challenges. Whilst INSTAT needs to work on enhancing its compliance with all Principles of the European statistics Code of Practice – and in many cases has work in hand, or project plans developed – three sets of challenges are substantial and can only be addressed by the Albanian Government. Two of these are interrelated – the unintended consequences of a law intended to professionalise the working of the civil service, and the under-resourcing of INSTAT to meet the standards of the Code – and are described under Principles 1 and 3, below. The third challenge relates to ongoing problems that INSTAT (and the two other national authorities – the Bank of Albania and the Ministry of Finance) – experience in accessing (including sharing) administrative data.
3. Although the concept of an Albanian Statistical System (ASS) is recognised in law, in practice the ASS does not operate as a system. This report presents some initial observations on the steps required by INSTAT to develop a well-coordinated national statistical system.

1 Findings per Principle

1.1.1 Principle 1: Professional Independence

4. **Overall Assessment.** INSTAT is increasingly well-regarded for its professional independence. The Statistical Council meets regularly, although the peer review team felt that it might be more effective if it included more senior representatives of its constituent organisations. The peer review team discussed whether, in the interests of equity the General Director of INSTAT should be a full, voting, member. However, the team concluded that this would not be appropriate for two reasons: first, part of the mandate of the Statistical Council is to oversee the functions of INSTAT; and second, the Council has had/should have a role in proposing the candidate for the nomination of the DG. The review team concluded that in general the role of the Council should be advisory as regards overseeing the activities of INSTAT and giving advice to the Government or the Prime Minister about nomination issues, as it now gives its opinion in the statistical programme before approval by the Parliament.
5. Some strengthening of the statistical law to clarify that the head of INSTAT and other statistical authorities have sole responsibility for decisions on methods and dissemination would enhance compliance with the Code of Practice. Overall the peer review team concluded that the extent of compliance with Principle 1 has deteriorated a little since the 2013 Light Peer Review, as a consequence of legislation which supersedes the statistical law and which allows for the appointment of a head of INSTAT who does not have expertise in statistics or a related discipline. The peer review team felt that the

institutional position of INSTAT within the Albanian government was insufficient to enable it to readily comply fully and authoritatively with the European statistics Code of Practice.

1.1.2 Indicator 1.1: The independence of the NSIs and Eurostat from political and other external interference in developing, producing and disseminating statistics is specified in law and assured for other statistical authorities.

6. Article 4c of the Law “On Official Statistics” requires that the organisation and implementation of the five-year statistical Work Programme should be guided by (inter alia) the principle of professional independence – specifically that “when implementing the Programme, staff of INSTAT or the other statistical agencies are not allowed to seek nor to take instructions from Government, other State authorities, political parties or other interest groups, notably in the selection of data sources, statistical methods and procedures, in the contents, form and time of dissemination, and in the application of statistical confidentiality”. Stakeholders who the peer review team met confirmed that INSTAT not only operated in a professionally independent manner, but that perceptions of INSTAT’s professional independence had strengthened in recent years.
7. In Albania there are two categories of independent institutions: constitutional institutions such as the Parliament, the Ombudsman and the Central Elections Commission, and independent public institutions, such as the Competition Authority and the Albanian Financial Supervisory Authority (which are under the Parliament and report to its commissions). INSTAT is not a constitutional institution or an independent public institution. The peer review team was told that the Albanian Government is proposing to place INSTAT under the subordination of Parliament; the team considers that this would strengthen compliance with the European statistics Code of Practice, and encourages INSTAT to work with its stakeholders to manage the potential risk that a position outside government might lead to a loss of influence.

1.1.3 Indicator 1.2: The heads of the National Statistical Institutes and of Eurostat and, where appropriate, the heads of other statistical authorities have sufficiently high hierarchical standing to ensure senior level access to policy authorities and administrative public bodies. They are of the highest professional calibre.

8. Article 9(3) of the Law “On Official Statistics” requires that the head – General Director – of INSTAT should have relevant professional qualifications, have completed post-graduate studies, have experience in management functions for a period of not less than five years, be known for their reputation and competence in the field of statistics, and have managerial and communication skills”. Stakeholders who the peer review team spoke to confirmed the General Director’s professional calibre. However, the peer review team concluded that in the Albanian public sector, which is strongly hierarchical in nature and in operation, the rank of General Director is sometimes insufficiently senior to enable him ready access to senior officials in Ministerial departments and the Bank of Albania, for example in relation to accessing administrative data sources. While the current General Director appears to make effective use of his network of professional contacts to enable him to fulfil his remit, serious consideration should be given to enhancing the legal and practical powers of the General Director to strengthen his co-ordination and influence across the Albanian Statistical System.
9. The heads of the two main other statistical authorities do not currently have the sufficiently high hierarchical standing that would ensure senior level access to other public bodies. In the Bank of Albania, the reorganisation two years ago resulted in a

weakened position of the post where responsibility for statistics is exercised. In the Ministry of Finance, the statistical activities are decentralised and there is no common head for the statistics unit, department or similar entity. As noted later in this report, the reviewers recommend that INSTAT should initiate discussions with the Ministry about structuring its statistical activities by creating a single statistical unit, sector, cell or similar entity within the Ministry of Finance.

1.1.4 Indicator 1.3: The heads of the National Statistical Institutes and of Eurostat and, where appropriate, the heads of other statistical authorities have responsibility for ensuring that statistics are developed, produced and disseminated in an independent manner.

10. Article 4 of the Law “On Official Statistics” requires INSTAT and other statistical agencies to “be guided by the principles of the European statistics Code of Practice”. In addition article 7 of the same law states that statistics in the Programme are collected, processed, disseminated and stored using best professional practice, including scientific principles and professional ethics, and that statistics in the Programme are developed, produced and disseminated in line with principles which include impartiality and professional independence. The peer review team concluded that these principles can be clearly seen in the way INSTAT is working in practice.

1.1.5 Indicator 1.4: The heads of the National Statistical Institutes and of Eurostat and, where appropriate, the heads of other statistical authorities have the sole responsibility for deciding on statistical methods, standards and procedures, and on the content and timing of statistical releases.

11. Although there is no explicit reference in Law to the head of INSTAT having *sole responsibility*, the peer review team concluded that the General Director does, in practice, currently exercise sole responsibility in relation to methods, standards and procedures, and the content and timing of statistical releases.
12. Article 8 of the Law “On Official Statistics” requires INSTAT to issue guidelines on professional standards to all statistical agencies, and to examine their procedures for the production of official statistics. However, there is no statutory responsibility that the heads of statistical authorities have sole responsibility in relation to methods, standards and procedures, and the content and timing of statistical releases. Given that a recent re-organisation of the Bank of Albania’s statistical unit has led to its head of statistics being subordinated to a Director responsible for financial stability, and that the statistical activity of the Ministry of Finance is rather piecemeal and fragmented, the peer review team concluded that the statistical law should be strengthened to require the head of statistics in each “other national authority” – and at the same time, the head of INSTAT – to have sole responsibility in relation to methods, standards and procedures, and the content and timing of statistical releases.

1.1.6 Indicator 1.5: The statistical work programmes are published and periodic reports describe progress made.

13. Article 8 of the Law “On Official Statistics” requires INSTAT to prepare a draft five year Programme (and a draft one year operational plan), and a draft annual report on INSTAT’s performance. Four-monthly reports on progress against the Programme are to be provided to the Statistical Council. Article 6 of the Law states that the Programme should be published, following approval by Parliament. The peer review team also confirmed that work is currently underway on the preparation of the 2016 operational

plan, and the draft 2017-2021 Programme; the peer review team was told that this Programme might usefully include the activity of a range of other policy ministries - such as social issues, environment, agriculture, telecommunication – whose information is needed for INSTAT's statistics indicators.

14. The peer review team confirmed that the Statistical Council is currently reviewing the annual report for 2014, with a view to its publication later in 2015, and that INSTAT is developing a template which will be used for future annual reports. The Bank of Albania's Annual Report includes information about its statistical activity. The peer review team was told that there will be discussion at the next meeting of the Statistical Council about the approval of a reporting template of an Annual Report for the Albanian Statistical System.

1.1.7 Indicator 1.6: Statistical releases are clearly distinguished and issued separately from political / policy statements.

15. The peer review team confirmed – by observation of selected statistical releases and in discussion with stakeholders – that statistical releases are clearly distinguished and are issued separately from political statements.

1.1.8 Indicator 1.7: The NSI and Eurostat and, where appropriate, other statistical authorities, comment publicly on statistical issues, including criticisms and misuses of statistics as far as considered suitable.

16. Article 7 (para 2d) of the Law “On Official Statistics” requires INSTAT to facilitate “a correct interpretation of data in official statistics”. Whilst INSTAT does not have a formal policy about commenting on criticism and misuse of official statistics, the peer review team was satisfied that such comment is, in practice, made on a case-by-case basis.

1.1.9 Indicator 1.8: The appointment of the heads of the National Statistical Institutes and Eurostat and, where appropriate, of other statistical authorities, is based on professional competence only. The reasons on the basis of which the incumbency can be terminated are specified in the legal framework. These cannot include reasons compromising professional or scientific independence.

17. Article 9 of the Law “On Official Statistics” describes the appointment procedures of the General Director of INSTAT – that, following an open competition, the Statistical Council proposes nominees to the Prime Minister, who then makes the appointment. As referred to above, the selection criteria are consistent with “professional competence”. The General Director is appointed for a five year term, renewable once. Dismissal criteria, specified in Law, are consistent with the Code of Practice. The peer review team was told that when the most recent appointment was made under the Law “On Official Statistics”, the Statistical Council proposed three candidates to the Prime Minister; the team felt that this represented a lost opportunity for the Council to support the concept of political independence.
18. However, article 9 of the Law “On Official Statistics” has (according to a decision of the Constitutional Court) been superseded by a 2013 Law “On Civil Servants”. This has the effect of repealing the relevant provisions of the statistical law, and replacing the role of the Statistical Council and the Prime Minister in the General Director's appointment procedure by a National Selection Committee (whose representation is specified in law, and a majority of whom are nominated by the Council of Ministers) responsible for the appointment of top-level civil servants based on a testing process. These new

arrangements make the appointment of the General Director more independent of Government than under the provisions of the statistical law. But an unfortunate consequence of the new arrangements is that the selection of the General Director of INSTAT is no longer explicitly based on ‘reputation and competence in the field of statistics’: candidates are evaluated using an identical approach and questions (and there is no fixed period of appointment). The peer review team felt that while it could see the merits of standardised processes for the appointment of top level civil servant, the position of the head of a National Statistical Institute differs in practice from that of heads of the civil service in, for example, Ministries, because of the nature of an NSI’s tasks and the provisions of the European statistics Code of Practice. The peer review team concluded that the Law “On Civil Servants” is inconsistent with Indicator 1.8 of the European statistics Code of Practice.

19. The peer review team has considered a range of possible appointment procedures for the General Director, and the potential roles of the Statistical Council, the National Selection Committee, the Prime Minister, the President, and Parliament. Ultimately, of course, someone has to appoint the General Director, and the appointment process has to ensure a suitably qualified candidate, demonstrably capable of operating in accordance with the Law “On Official Statistics”, and having credibility with political authorities and Albanian society. The peer review team envisages that the role of the Statistical Council in the appointment of the General Director should be to advertise the post, to interview candidates, and then to publicly nominate its favoured candidate to the Prime Minister; if the Prime Minister does not accept the nomination he should be required to explain his reasons publicly.

1.2 Principle 2: Mandate for data collection

20. **Overall Assessment.** The legal basis for data collection remains the same as when the Light Peer Review was conducted in 2013.
21. The peer review team concluded that while INSTAT has access to some administrative data, it is hampered in implementing the Work Programme by its inability to access key data sets either in their entirety, or in the detail or format that INSTAT requires. This is partly because the legal framework relating to some other organisations is inconsistent with the statistical law. The peer review team was also told that the Bank of Albania was unable to access certain administrative data that would support its statistical activity.
22. INSTAT has worked with its partners in the development and implementation of data access agreements, though the peer review team felt that a stronger senior management input to such activity would help drive the necessary improvements. Statutory backing for detailed Memoranda of Understanding between data holders and INSTAT would also strengthen the data supply framework, and the Statistical Council might play a significant role in overcoming obstacles.
23. As the Albanian state and society develop, it is likely that new types of institution will emerge, holding data which has potential statistical value. For example, the peer review team was told that car registration is undertaken by a private company on behalf of government. It is important that INSTAT is able to make arrangements to access such data.
24. INSTAT receives enterprise level data from the Taxation Authority including the NACE classification of each enterprise. In many cases INSTAT has to correct these, using its own information. While INSTAT would find it helpful to pass the information it holds back to the Taxation Authority to enable it to improve the data, INSTAT is not permitted

by the Law to supply identifiable microdata from its business register (names, addresses and NACE codes) to other state agencies.

25. INSTAT has made good progress in its use of technology (including tablets, web-based questionnaires, and OCR), and expects to launch its Data Warehouse project in September 2015 once it receives IPA funding.
26. Because response rates are relatively high – for example, 77.5% for the 2013 Structural Business Survey – INSTAT has not tended to prosecute non-respondents. The peer review team understood this position, but felt that INSTAT should monitor the situation carefully as online data collection becomes more established; at the same time it would be helpful to allow INSTAT to retain any such income from penalties for non-response: as such revenue would currently pass to the Ministry of Finance, INSTAT is, in effect, disincentivised from invoking its statutory rights.

1.3 Principle 3: Adequacy of resources

27. **Overall Assessment.** INSTAT’s budget is insufficient to be able to deliver the statistical acquis over the coming years. Government rules have the unintended consequences of stimulating INSTAT’s staff to leave for better paid jobs elsewhere in the civil service and of not allowing temporary replacements – which, given that statistical work is ongoing to meet stipulated quality levels – increases workloads on the remaining INSTAT staff to levels which will become, in the view of the peer review team, unsustainable in themselves and act as a further stimulus for staff to leave.

1.3.1 Indicator 3.1: Staff, financial and computer resources, adequate both in magnitude and in quality, are available to meet current statistical needs.

28. The considerable financial pressures facing the Republic of Albania apply also to INSTAT. Nevertheless INSTAT’s budget has increased in recent years:

2012	443.9 million leks	3.170 million Euros
2013	466.6 million leks	3.333 million Euros
2014	469.4 million leks	3.353 million Euros
2015	485.4 million leks	3.467 million Euros

29. These increases are consistent with the increasing number of posts in INSTAT – up from 200 in 2012 to 235 in 2013. At the beginning of 2015, the Albanian Government approved the allocation of 20 persons to MARDWA, reducing the number of staff in INSTAT from 235 to 216. The reduced number of INSTAT’s staff came into force from September 2015. (In the Albanian civil service each organisation’s structure and staffing profile is determined by government, offering little flexibility – so, for example, the General Director of INSTAT has no dedicated administrative support other than a junior secretary).
30. However the headline figures mask a situation which leaves INSTAT with significant staff shortages, for two reasons, compounded by a third factor. First, the salary structure of staff in the public sector in Albania is specified by government, and provides for different monthly salaries for different categories of institutions. At most levels salaries in INSTAT are lower than those in Ministries. Furthermore, the peer review team was told that the grading of INSTAT’s civil servants was decided upon in 2004 when INSTAT’s staff became civil servants, and has not been revisited despite INSTAT’s work having changed considerably during that period. Second, the Law “On Civil Servants” (referred to under Principle 1 above) enables staff at any level to take standard tests: if successful

then they can wait until a suitable post arises and then take it. The peer review team was told that these factors have resulted in several of INSTAT's staff (including some who have received internships abroad) leaving to take up better paid jobs elsewhere. The compounding factor is that INSTAT is not allowed to recruit temporary staff to backfill for those who leave. The net consequence of this situation is that INSTAT has a growing number of vacant posts:

	Posts	Employees	Vacancies	Vacancies (as a % of posts)
2012 (end year)	200	187	13	6.5
2013 (end year)	235	216	19	8.1
2014 (end year)	235	212	23	9.8
2015 (mid year)	216	202	14	6.4

31. The peer review team was told that INSTAT is unable to use all of the money from international organisations for projects which it undertakes – for example, it retains funding for interviewers, but not for the headquarters staff who process surveys and produce outputs for such organisations.
32. Stakeholders with whom the peer review team discussed this issue – including the Statistical Council, Ministerial producers in Other National Authorities, and Ministerial users of INSTAT's statistics – recognised that INSTAT's budget and staffing levels, and IT infrastructure, were insufficient to enable it to fully implement the Work Programme and to meet the standards of the European statistics Code of Practice.
33. Since a reorganisation in 2013 INSTAT has employed fewer staff in its (twelve) regional offices – the number of posts has fallen from 72 to 49. The peer review team was told that regional office staff are responsible for some aspects of data collection, and concluded that at some point in the next five years there would be merit in reviewing the role of regional offices.

1.3.2 Indicator 3.2: The scope, detail and cost of statistics are commensurate with needs.

34. INSTAT is progressively moving towards the production of a wide range of European statistics, and has recently, for example, published National Accounts on an ESA 2010 basis. Further progress is envisaged in the context of the 2017-2021 Work Programme.

1.3.3 Indicator 3.3: Procedures exist to assess and justify demands for new statistics against their cost.

35. Prioritisation is managed in the context of the five year Work Programmes, and the annual operational plans. Some surveys are conducted less frequently than some users might prefer – for example, the Living Standards Measurement Survey (LSMS) is conducted once every 3-4 years (LSMS is a World Bank survey with similarities to the EU Survey of Income and Living Conditions, which is itself annual). The National Accounts user group provides a mechanism for users to influence INSTAT on questions such as periodicity.

1.3.4 Indicator 3.4: Procedures exist to assess the continuing need for all statistics, to see if any can be discontinued or curtailed to free up resources.

36. INSTAT is currently in a period of growing its statistical portfolio: whilst it has the ability to identify negative priorities and, indeed, to operationalise these, the issue of ceasing statistical activity has not yet arisen.

1.4 Principle 4: Commitment to quality

37. **Overall Assessment.** Article 4/1 of the Law “On Official Statistics” requires compliance in statistical production with a set of quality criteria which correspond to the European standards. INSTAT staff seems to be quite well aware of the importance of the quality aspects of statistical products, although an over-arching quality management policy is still lacking and the co-ordination of quality work is still under consideration. Quality assurance is undertaken during statistical processing by the line departments. Quality indicators are produced internally and public quality reporting takes place in some statistical areas. New user groups have been set up for some statistical domains. The standardisation of tools and procedures has only started recently, and should be continued. More work should be devoted to overall frameworks and guidelines and quality reviews of statistical domains. Regular communication about the level of quality in all areas of statistics should be enforced. As part of INSTAT’s co-ordination role, there is need to strengthen awareness about quality among other important producers of official statistics.

1.4.1 Indicator 4.1: Quality policy is defined and made available to the public. An organisational structure and tools are in place to deal with quality management.

38. Quality in INSTAT is implemented in a piecemeal, rather than a holistic manner – it is seen as being related to the various aspects of statistical products, rather than as a guiding philosophy for the whole organisation. The quality dimensions of statistical products are widely recognised among the staff of INSTAT. Indicators relating to statistical quality are produced and monitored internally; some of these indicators are included in the quality reports provided to Eurostat. Although INSTAT has clearly increased the information on the web site about the methods underpinning different statistics, hardly any information is published describing quality from a user-perspective. Responsibility for statistical quality is given to various departments. Since there is no unit or person responsible for the overall co-ordination of quality matters in the organisation, there are only a few overall guidelines for handling quality. The peer review team was told that during the autumn of 2015 a co-ordinator on quality matters will be nominated.
39. The LPR2013 recommended INSTAT to follow international best practice by making reference to the principles and commitments related to quality in its Mission/Vision Statement and by introducing a publically available Quality Policy/Commitment Statement. The peer review team was told that the quality commitment of the organisation is part of internal guidelines. It is, however, not enough. The recommendation by the LPR2013 should be put in place in the preparation of the next five-year statistical programme. The new statistical programme gives an ideal opportunity for INSTAT to involve those at all levels of the organisation, and particularly some of its young staff, in drafting a user-oriented quality strategy as part of the statistical programme.
40. The new co-ordinator or quality manager needs to have strong support both from top management and from a horizontal quality committee, on which representatives from

statistical domains should be included. As the first priority the committee should review the state-of-play to get a clear picture of where the organisation stands in quality matters. The development of quality guidelines, or a plan to implement quality matters, should be based on the review of the current situation. As was indicated in LPR2013, the guidelines on how to implement quality management within the statistical production process are important tools for assuring the consistently high quality of statistical products. Such quality guidelines would facilitate the work of the line departments and would improve the efficiency of statistical processes. These guidelines would help the implementation of quality management within the statistical production processes based on the Generic Statistical Business Process Model (GSBPM), a modified version of which is adopted by INSTAT. In terms of guidelines the quality committee should seek opportunities to learn more about the experiences of other countries and Eurostat.

41. It is also recommended that INSTAT's training programme should offer relevant courses on quality issues, including on the quality guidelines. This should be done for both newcomers and for more experienced staff. INSTAT should also offer training courses to the staff of other statistical agencies as a part of its role as the NSS coordinator.

1.4.2 Indicator 4.2: Procedures are in place to plan and monitor the quality of the statistical production process.

42. The LPR2013 recommended that for the assurance of quality a specific plan should be prepared. That recommendation is still valid. As mentioned above, each line department is responsible for monitoring and assuring the quality of its own statistical processes with support from the methodological and IT departments. It was recommended that the support to the line departments be formalised in a Quality Assurance Plan, describing working standards, formal obligations such as laws and internal rules, and a set of quality control actions to prevent and monitor errors, to evaluate quality indicators, and to control relevant points at all stages of the statistical process in a harmonised way.

1.4.3 Indicator 4.3: Product quality is regularly monitored, assessed with regard to possible trade-offs, and reported according to the quality criteria for European Statistics.

43. The INSTAT website includes conceptual and methodological information for each statistical theme, helping users to understand and assess the quality of the statistics. Some quality indicators (like coefficients of variation, variance, standard errors, non-sampling errors, and imputations) are compiled for internal use and are made available to the public for a few surveys (Labour Market 2014, Labour Cost Survey 2012). The Quality Report of the Population and Housing Census 2011 has been published and made available on INSTAT's website. Other quality reports (SBS, BR) have also been drafted but more work should be done in this direction. No user satisfaction surveys have been implemented so far. The peer review team was told that a user satisfaction survey is planned in the near future as part of the implementation of the IPA 2013 programme.
44. The LPR2013 recommended that methodological information on the website should be extended into user-oriented quality reports. These should follow a uniform and standardised format for all statistics and provide users with all relevant metadata and quality indicators. This would help the media and the general public to understand the published statistical figures.
45. It is expected that comprehensive producer-oriented quality reports will be developed and made available for all statistical products. The process is a part of the large metadata project assisted by Sida. Metadata descriptions and quality reporting will follow the

European SIMS (the Single Integrated Metadata structure, which ties together ESMS and ESQRS) standard.

46. The monitoring of quality indicators should be used as the basis for the improvement of the statistical products. It should cover all European statistics that are produced within the NSS.

1.4.4 Indicator 4.4: There is a regular and thorough review of the key statistical outputs using also external experts where appropriate.

47. The assessment of the quality of its statistical output is a core element of quality management of an NSI. INSTAT has consulted users on several occasions, for example in the context of the population census 2011. Two regular user groups have been established – one for the National Accounts and the other for media relations. There are also groups for agricultural statistics and gender statistics. Such user groups are an excellent instrument for collecting user feedback on statistical products. The peer review team recommends that user groups should also be established for social statistics and business statistics. Such user groups can serve additional purposes: they are for example a good place to discuss the format and the content of related user-oriented quality reports.
48. The peer review team was told that in the statistical programme 2017-2021 quality reviews of key statistical outputs are planned. The reviews belong also to the mandate of the Statistical Council. The efforts of the Statistical Council and INSTAT should be integrated. It is recommended that a plan for systematic and regular quality reviews be prepared, with a focus on the statistical programmes for the coming years. In the longer run these reviews have to cover all statistics produced by the NSS. Internal auditors should be trained in auditing techniques and self-assessments; this will support the quality review programme and ensure its effectiveness and sustainability.
49. INSTAT benefits from various internationally funded initiatives. In addition to capacity building projects within EU programmes and adherence to IMF dissemination standards, other projects focus directly on improving statistical processes and products.
50. Benchmarking with partner producers of statistics is taking place both in Eurostat working groups and within technical assistance projects. Statistics Sweden has been a major partner since 2002 through the project funded by Sida. In November 2014 INSTAT and Sida signed an agreement for the next three years. The programme will cover support for management, ICT infrastructure and metadata, economic statistics, social statistics, agriculture and environment, training and research infrastructure. In June 2015 INSTAT signed a twinning agreement with the Irish Central Statistical Office which will present good opportunities to benchmark the procedures and quality measures in place in both organisations. Through IPA 2013, INSTAT will redesign the existing IT architecture based on a data warehouse, will increase its internal capacity in the dissemination and communication of statistics, and the advanced analysis of labour market data, and will improve its agriculture statistics production.

1.5 Principle 5: Statistical confidentiality

51. **Overall Assessment.** INSTAT has enhanced its confidentiality protection in recent years, and the proposed Data Warehouse will provide additional technological strengthening. Some further documentation could be developed and published on INSTAT's website, though the peer review team concluded that this was relatively low priority.

1.5.1 Indicator 5.2: Staff sign legal confidentiality commitments on appointment

52. Since 2014 newly appointed staff have been required to sign confidentiality commitments as they join; staff in post have also signed such commitments. The peer review team was told that ‘confidentiality’ is a topic of frequent discussion within INSTAT, and that awareness is high.

1.5.2 Indicator 5.3: Penalties are prescribed for any wilful breaches of statistical confidentiality.

53. The peer review team was told that INSTAT will seek to increase penalties for breaches of confidentiality when the statistical law is reviewed (to make it consistent with, for example, the Law “On Civil Servants”).

1.5.3 Indicator 5.5: Physical, technological and organisational provisions are in place to protect the security and integrity of statistical databases.

54. Since the 2013 LPR, the peer review team was told that all statistical databases are now managed centrally by INSTAT’s IT unit. The proposed Data Warehouse, funded by IPA 2013 and in cooperation with the Sida project, will provide a unified framework to enhance access controls.

1.5.4 Indicator 5.6: Strict protocols apply to external user accessing statistical microdata for research purposes.

55. The peer review team was told that INSTAT has not yet published details of the arrangements for accessing microdata, although INSTAT’s website includes an email facility for people to ask for help (which would include asking for information about microdata access). Although researchers sign data confidentiality agreements (for example, covering the purpose of the microdata access, and the deletion of the data on conclusion of the research), INSTAT does not check that these arrangements are implemented. With the support of Sida’s Project within INSTAT’s premises a training centre will be set up, equipped also with facilities dedicated to accessing statistical microdata for research purposes. However, the peer review team accepts that in practice the Albanian research community is relatively small and well known to INSTAT, and that the risks arising from the lack of monitoring are reasonably low.

1.6 Principle 6: Impartiality and objectivity

56. **Overall Assessment.** Article 4 of the Law “On Official Statistics” explicitly identifies ‘impartiality’ as a guiding principle for the organisation and implementation of the Statistical Programme. The peer review team concluded that INSTAT complies well with this principle of the European statistics Code of Practice, though it could enhance compliance readily by developing and implementing a wide-ranging dissemination strategy covering the national statistical system (see Principle 15).

1.6.1 Indicator 6.3: Errors discovered in published statistics are corrected at the earliest possible data and publicised.

57. Minor errors are corrected on the relevant database and reflected in the next publication; major errors are brought to the attention of users. INSTAT told the peer review team that these procedures would be documented as part of the forthcoming IPA project. INSTAT told the peer review team that there are no arrangements to systematically identify “lessons learnt” from the causes of different errors.

1.6.2 Indicator 6.4: Information on the methods and procedures used is publicly available.

58. The peer review team was told that the previous month (June 2015) a sectoral peer review of INSTAT's business statistics had reviewed draft quality reports relating to structural business statistics, short term statistics, producer price indices, and the business register. Quality reports for the population census, Labour Force Survey and Labour Cost Survey are published on INSTAT's website; INSTAT told the peer review team that these are not fully standardised, but that further progress will be made with the intended publication of the Household Budget Survey quality report in September.

1.6.3 Indicator 6.5: Statistical release dates and times are pre-announced.

59. INSTAT pre-announces the date of its statistical releases, and the peer review team was told that INSTAT meets all of these. It does not yet have a standard release time, although in practice it aims at 11.00, and achieves this in 80% of cases: a typical cause of missing the release time is the late supply of data from another institution. The position in the Other National Authorities is more fluid. Although the Bank of Albania releases its data at certain date, it does not have any fixed timing of release. The Ministry of Finance has internal publication schedules, but these are not published. INSTAT told us that the development of a coordinated release calendar is still under discussion (see Principle 15).

1.6.4 Indicator 6.6: Advance notice is given on major revisions or changes in methodologies.

60. Revisions are managed by individual business areas in INSTAT – for example the National Accounts team explains the reasons for revisions and indicates, for example, breaks in time series. INSTAT, the Bank of Albania and the Ministry of Finance do not have revisions policies or guidelines. Both INSTAT and the Bank of Albania informed the peer review team that they will prepare their revisions policies and publish them in the near future.

1.6.5 Indicator 6.8: Statistical releases and statements made in press conferences are objective and non-partisan.

61. The General Director of INSTAT makes regular appearances in the media, to explain the work of INSTAT and the meaning of new sets of statistics. INSTAT has established a "media user group", and this provides an opportunity to explain changes in publications or methods before the relevant statistics are released – INSTAT told the peer review team that recent reporting of the quarterly National Accounts based on (for the first time) NACE Rev. 2 was good. INSTAT plans to develop a dissemination strategy as part of the forthcoming IPA project, which is currently being tendered (see Principle 15).

1.7 Principle 7: Sound methodology

62. **Overall Assessment.** INSTAT closely follows international standards, guidelines and good practices. A continuous staff training programme is needed, and INSTAT should start to offer training to other producers of statistics. A good start is the establishment of the training school with the support of Sida project. INSTAT is proposing to develop a training plan for the staff, and a training curriculum for the training school is intended to be developed for internal needs as well as for other stakeholders.
63. Two separate methodological units support statistics production: one for social and the other for economic statistics. They cooperate closely with the production units which are responsible for providing statistical indicators in each area. In the case of new surveys or

variables, the relevant production unit makes proposals for different aspects of methodology. The approaches, definitions, statistical methods, validation of results, and so on are agreed between the production units and methodological units. From the efficiency perspective it might be worth considering integrating the two methodological units.

64. The LPR2013 recommended that a strategy and a master plan should be developed for the future use of administrative data sources and registers in the NSS, in discussion with the relevant shareholders. The LPR2015 team considers that the implementation of this action is more closely related to principle 8 and should be part of the next five year statistical programme.
65. INSTAT staff actively participate in international training opportunities arising from different funding arrangements. Many young staff members have attended quality training. Courses are offered to different staff members on request, although there are financial constraints in increasing participation. INSTAT does not have a long-term training programme based on the strategic needs of the organisation. The peer review team was told that a new “research and training centre” will be established in the near future. It will provide a good opportunity to offer continuous training not only for INSTAT staff but also to other producers of statistics. In order to get the maximum benefit from the facility, a long-term training programme covering both needs and supply possibilities should be developed.
66. Co-operation with the scientific community is still rather limited despite INSTAT’s efforts. INSTAT arranges occasional workshops, seminars and other events to meet researchers. Researchers use some microdata files both from the INSTAT website and directly from INSTAT. As part of the project funded by Sida an on-site laboratory for the use of microdata will be available in the coming years. The peer review team recommends that INSTAT should start promotional activities relating to the on-site use of data and in that way attract more interest from the research community. INSTAT also has a couple of formal agreements with universities about traineeships in INSTAT. The system was said to work well. Annually around 35 students take three months of traineeships at INSTAT.

1.8 Principle 8: Appropriate statistical procedures

67. **Overall Assessment.** INSTAT uses appropriate methods in data collection and validation. When new surveys are established, the questionnaires are tested. New tools, like electronic questionnaires for short-term business statistics, are currently being tested. Sampling and imputation procedures largely follow internationally recognised methods. Interviewers are trained for data collection, although their work is monitored irregularly, mostly because of the lack of resources.
68. Administrative data are used for comparison and to improve the accuracy of survey-based estimates. In addition INSTAT has set a target to increase the use of administrative data to replace variables in its surveys. The Law “On Official Statistics” gives INSTAT the right to require administrative data from government institutions for statistical purposes. Despite this, there are many issues which still prevent the full use of administrative data in statistical production. INSTAT would like to formalise co-operation with other institutions which hold administrative data in order to support its statistical activity, as well as to be able to share its own data with other statistics producers. However, contrasting sectoral legislation hinders the proper use of administrative data. The formats and concepts of the data can be completely different from the needs of INSTAT. INSTAT

has high expectations of the data warehouse project (financed partly from the IPA programme) which is planned to start during the autumn 2015. The project is strongly supported by the LPR team.

1.8.1 Indicator 8.1: When European Statistics are based on administrative data, the definitions and concepts used for administrative purposes are a good approximation to those required for statistical purposes.

69. According to the statistical legislation INSTAT can have access to administrative registers for statistical purposes. In most cases working arrangements with different authorities are functioning well. Administrative data are currently mostly used either for checking or improving the accuracy of data. The data are also used to update the business register. Until now no administrative data have been used to replace survey data. INSTAT is working with around 30 administrative data sources. Differences in concepts and definitions are studied in the case of each administrative data file and, after consideration, a decision is taken as to whether the data can be used for statistical purposes. One recent example relates to the investigation of differences in labour market indicators from the labour force survey and from administrative data sources. The conclusion was that the data are of good quality and could be used to improve understanding of how the Albanian labour market is functioning.
70. There still seem to be obstacles to the smooth use of data. INSTAT would like to institutionalise the co-operation about the use of administrative data as well as sharing its own data with other statistics producers. The peer review team was told that negotiations with various administrative authorities are slow and bureaucratic. In some cases sectoral legislation hinders the use of administrative data for statistical purposes; these legislative inconsistencies with the statistics law should be removed. As recommended by the LPR2013, INSTAT should develop, in cooperation with other agents within the NSS, appropriate statistical procedures for other producers of official statistics. A first step in this action is the establishment of a programme that comprehensively addresses the needs of all statistical agencies of the NSS. Further the peer review team recommends that INSTAT should develop a plan for the further use of administrative data together with relevant authorities, and gradually replace survey data by administrative data where it is feasible.
71. The data warehouse project financed partly from the IPA 2013 programme will be a great opportunity for INSTAT to work together with administrative authorities and to solve some of the prevailing problems.

1.8.2 Indicator 8.2: In the case of statistical surveys, questionnaires are systematically tested prior to the data collection.

72. The statistical production activity of INSTAT is based mainly either on survey data or on aggregated administrative data. When a new survey is being planned, or substantial changes have to be made to existing surveys, a working group or a steering committee is established. Such groups mainly comprise INSTAT staff in the relevant fields, representatives of interest groups (governmental and other international organisations) and experts in the subject matter from outside INSTAT. The groups are responsible for the development and validation of the questionnaire or the major changes in it. Questionnaires are always tested before the survey takes place so that both respondents and interviewers understand the meaning of the questions, and to check the length of the interviews. However, the procedures and results are not fully documented. The peer review team recommends that the procedures should be fully documented.

1.8.3 Indicator 8.3: Survey designs, sample selections and estimation methods are well based and regularly reviewed and revised as required.

73. The peer review team considers that INSTAT ensures the right processing of statistics production in every phase. The processes are very much dependent on each survey since there are no general guidelines or recommendations in the organisation. In order to ensure a degree of consistency in the design of the surveys, methodology units follow and implement the European recommendations and statistical legislation for sample survey design or estimation requirements – for example, relating to the degree of accuracy required.
74. There are expectations that the data warehouse project will enable more standardised ways of working. In addition, the consistent management of administrative data will require more internal co-ordination and standardised procedures.

1.8.4 Indicator 8.4: Data collection, data entry, and coding are routinely monitored and revised as required.

75. Data collection, data entry and coding are performed according to international recommendations. In INSTAT there are separate teams / sectors responsible for the methodology, data entry and data coding. These teams collaborate closely with each other since survey activities are interlinked. The subject-matter units prepare work plans in which deadlines are defined for each activity. The work plans are shared and agreed with other relevant teams.
76. The logical controls are implemented directly during data entry. These controls reduce non-sampling errors (for example, filter questions are skipped automatically and not manually as happens in paper questionnaires). Web form STS questionnaires are being tested currently with big enterprises.
77. Respondents are provided with all necessary documents (leaflets, letters, and guidelines which are regularly updated and reviewed). All surveys are controlled periodically in the field. The controls consist of monitoring how the data collection is proceeding, monitoring the presence of the enumerator (interviewer) in the survey unit, and so on.
78. Interviewers and other supporting staff are trained for each survey. In addition each interviewer is given an interviewer's manual. This contains detailed information about the survey process and guidance for dealing with respondent behaviour. Interviewers are advised to collect information about non-responding cases, which are addressed through imputation or re-weighting processes according to the survey methodology.
79. Data coding is done centrally in INSTAT. The coding is done in full accordance with the international classifications (for example, ISCO, NACE, and COICOP).

1.8.5 Indicator 8.5: Appropriate editing and imputation methods are used and regularly reviewed, revised or updated as required.

80. There are no office-wide guidelines for editing and imputation in INSTAT. The overall procedure for editing and imputation for non-response is designed to take into account the following issues: survey characteristics; amount and type of data to be checked; data timeliness; available methods, auxiliary information and resources. Editing and imputing are done in collaboration with the subject-matter specialist and the relevant methodologist. The technical rules are specific for each survey. These techniques are documented internally but not in standardised formats.

1.8.6 Indicator 8.6: Revisions follow standard, well-established and transparent procedures.

81. No organisation-wide revisions policy exists in INSTAT. Revisions of statistics currently take place in the National Accounts and in business statistics. National Accounts revisions follow a schedule which is made known to users. The reasons for revisions are explained to some key users, such as media representatives. The recommendation of the LPR 2013 to put in place a revision policy has been implemented in the area of National Accounts. Breaks in time series are explained in footnotes to tables. The review team recommends that a more general, office-wide revision policy should now be formulated and implemented by INSTAT. INSTAT explained that it has not done so yet mainly because so far there have only been two multi-annual work programmes and INSTAT has limited experience of issues such as a revision policy.

1.8.7 Indicator 8.7: Statistical authorities are involved in the design of administrative data in order to make administrative data more suitable for statistical purposes.

82. INSTAT is not involved in the design of administrative data. According to the Law “On Official Statistics”, article 7, INSTAT has the responsibility to collaborate with all administrative data providers and has the authority to define standards for the method of data gathering. Based on the Law INSTAT should clearly have a stronger role when administrations are designing their databases. The peer review team was told that the fore-mentioned legal requirement is currently not well known in the administration. The proper implementation of the task might require further clarifications in the statistical legislation. At the moment the formats and data structures of the administrative data can be completely different from the needs of INSTAT. Different institutions like the Tax Authority and the General Registration Authority and INSTAT undertake a great deal of duplicative work with data entry, since the data are not entered once into electronic databases and are not in the format which could be useable for various authorities. The peer review team strongly recommends that INSTAT should work with other authorities to ensure that data needed both for administrative and statistical purposes are entered into computer-readable format at one point only in order to avoid duplication of work. Data entry should be done at an early stage in the process that leads to statistical production and should preferably be linked to activities for the digitalisation of economy and society.

1.8.8 Indicator 8.8: Agreements are made with owners of administrative data which set out their shared commitment to the use of these data for statistical purposes.

83. INSTAT has a target to institutionalise its contacts with administrative authorities by signing memoranda of understanding (MoU) or framework agreements with various administrative authorities to guarantee the data delivery needed for statistical production. In March 2015 a MoU was signed with the Tax Authority. INSTAT has signed also earlier MoUs with the Bank of Albania, the Ministry of Finance, the General Directorate of Customs, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Consumer Protection, and the Ministry of Education.
84. The current process of establishing a MoU is rather cumbersome; it takes a long time and requires protracted negotiations. The peer review team was also told that the formal MoUs regarding the formats and frequencies for data transmission to INSTAT for statistical purposes have turned out to be too rigid to enable the acquisition of new and emerging data. The peer review team recommends that the process be streamlined: at the highest level of the organisation there should simply be a framework agreement; the technical part (an annex) of the agreement should be developed by subject-matter experts.

The technical annex could then be updated annually to cover any changes that are required.

1.8.9 Indicator 8.9: Statistical authorities co-operate with owners of administrative data in assuring data quality.

85. Administrative data owners are kept informed about the statistical use of their data through technical working meetings; the main data producing agencies are also invited to participate in INSTAT seminars, workshops and training events.
86. In the long term INSTAT should have a system for informing the authorities of the quality and potential deficiencies of the aggregated data.

1.9 Principle 9: Non-Excessive burden on respondents

87. **Overall Assessment.** INSTAT does not regularly measure the reporting burden associated with its business surveys. Although there is no factual information about response burdens INSTAT aims to reduce them by increasing the use of administrative data and by implementing web-based questionnaires.
88. In addition to the recommendations of the LPR2013, the peer review team recommends that INSTAT set numerical targets for the reduction of response burden in the next five year statistical programme. In order to monitor progress against the target, it will be necessary to start the regular measurement of response burden of business surveys. The first survey could be the STS, which will have an option of providing data via the web. When the web application is implemented in the STS at the end of 2015, it is recommended that INSTAT organises a publicity campaign to help promote web data collection.

1.10 Principle 10: Cost effectiveness

89. **Overall Assessment.** INSTAT has improved its planning of activities and the preparation of the annual and five year statistical programme. Information about the planned costs of various activities is collected. However, there is no system of recording the working time spent on the various stages of statistical production, which means that it is difficult to estimate properly the effectiveness of the resources used. Developments such as the greater use of administrative data and web-based data collection will improve the efficiency of statistical production in the long term. INSTAT is planning a re-organisation to enable it to enhance the standardisation of its statistical production. All these efforts may lead to further consideration of the value added by its regional offices, which are currently responsible for data collection. There is a need to review the production and publication of government finance statistics in order to be consistent with good European practice.

1.11 Principle 11: Relevance

90. **Overall Assessment.** The Light Peer Review that was conducted in 2013 recommended conducting a user satisfaction survey, with an original deadline before the current peer review. As the user satisfaction survey has not yet been conducted, but the deadline has been carried forward during the monitoring exercises, the review team endorses the recommendations from LPR 2013. There are overlaps with recommendations relating to other principles.

1.11.1 Indicator 11.1: Processes are in place to consult users, monitor the relevance and utility of existing statistics in meeting their needs, and consider their emerging needs and priorities.

91. Users are consulted and informed by INSTAT about new developments in statistics, such as revisions and changes in methodology. Bespoke seminars are arranged for specific groups of users. INSTAT has prepared a power-point presentation with explanations of those statistical issues that they are aware that users often do not understand. INSTAT keeps track of the users of its statistics mainly by analysing downloads from the web site; INSTAT does not have a list of users or any segmentation profile. The unmet needs of users are not analysed, but requests from users are recorded. The review team found that the statistical work programme is not discussed with users in the drafting stage.

1.11.2 Indicator 11.2: Priority needs are being met and reflected in the work programme.

92. Prioritisation of user needs is done in the annual work programme after meetings with users. Negative priorities are evaluated annually in the work programme. The review team did not see any examples of what was actually done after negative priorities were defined in 2014. The five-year statistical programme is currently being prepared and INSTAT has developed a matrix to structure what has been done under the current five-year programme and future needs.

1.11.3 Indicator 11.3: User satisfaction is monitored on a regular basis and is systematically followed up.

93. User satisfaction is not monitored and the deadline for the recommendation in the LPR 2013 has been put forward until well after the current review. The opinions of users are collected by INSTAT in the user groups, which exist for National Accounts, Gender statistics, Agriculture statistics, and the media.

1.12 Principle 12: Accuracy and reliability

94. **Overall Assessment.** There were a few recommendations under principle 12 when the Light Peer Review was conducted in 2013. One of those has been reformulated by the review team in 2015.

1.12.1 Indicator 12.1: Source data, intermediate results and statistical outputs are regularly assessed and validated.

95. Source data are assessed by INSTAT. In the case of a database of company accounts that is delivered by the Tax Authority, INSTAT explained that it has to spend its own resources in rearranging the information in a format that is suitable for statistical production. A corresponding recommendation is under principle 8.
96. Intermediate results and statistical outputs are assessed and validated by comparison with previous results or with other sources of data held by INSTAT. Imputations are made, for instance to rectify non-response in the SBS.
97. Procedures are in place for data quality assessment (examples: STS, SBS, household surveys).

1.12.2 Indicator 12.2: Sampling errors and non-sampling errors are measured and systematically documented according to the European standards.

98. Procedures are available for preparing technical documentation and metadata for the sample surveys. While this documentation has started in some surveys, such as the Labour Cost Survey, it is not clear that these procedures are applied to all statistical surveys. Technical documentation is kept internal at INSTAT in a number of surveys, business statistics for instance.
99. Manuals for questionnaire design and interviewers manuals are in place for each survey carried out by INSTAT. The quantification of processing errors is done in some of the surveys.
100. Further work is needed to increase the number of quality indicators as well as the documentation.

1.13 Principle 13: Timeliness and punctuality

1.13.1 Indicator 13.1: Timeliness meets European and other international release standards.

101. Some of the releases are fully compliant with EU standards regarding timeliness (such as quarterly LFS, CPI, external trade, quarterly GVA). A publication calendar is published on the INSTAT website. Divergences from European and international timelines targets are identified and monitored. There is no action plan about what to do in the event that targets are not met.

1.13.2 Indicator 13.2: A standard daily time for the release of statistics is made public.

102. A release policy is not defined or published by INSTAT, although in most cases (around 80%) statistical releases are published at the same time, namely at 11 am.

1.13.3 Indicator 13.3: The periodicity of statistics takes into account user requirements as much as possible.

103. Users are not consulted on the periodicity of statistics. INSTAT explained that this would be difficult to manage.

1.13.4 Indicator 13.4: Divergence from the dissemination time schedule is publicised in advance, explained and a new release date set.

104. The release calendar is published annually; the calendar for 2015 was published at the end of 2014.
105. Any divergences are published in advance in a dedicated area of the website. The reasons are explained, and a new release day is announced.

1.13.5 Indicator 13.5: Preliminary results of acceptable aggregate accuracy can be released when considered useful.

106. The possibility of disseminating preliminary results from the SBS is reviewed taking into account data accuracy; usually there are no differences between preliminary and final results. In the national accounts there are some, though rather insignificant, differences between preliminary and final results. Preliminary results of the agriculture census have been published and the peer review team was told that it was widely understood by users that these results were provisional in their nature. Similarly, first results from the population and housing census, mainly the result of aggregating the

forms delivered by enumerators, were published as preliminary – and as the nature of these results was explained, it was understood by the public. The final population and housing census data have since been published without any discussion about the difference from the provisional data.

1.14 Principle 14: Coherence and comparability

107. **Overall assessment:** There were no recommendations under this principle when the Light Peer Review was conducted in 2013. The peer review team recommends establishing a quality unit at INSTAT.

1.14.1 Indicator 14.1: Statistics are internally coherent and consistent (i.e. arithmetic and accounting identities observed).

108. INSTAT analyses the coherence and consistency of statistical indicators – for example between Business Statistics and National Accounts there might be minor discrepancies at activity level but the overall results are coherent.

109. The size of the balancing item in national accounts has been significant and erratic, reflecting the continuing improvements in the data sources. GDP estimates at current price, volume measures, and deflators are all consistent within the “value=volume x price” framework, and the totals are the sum of the components.

110. The quarterly and the annual GDP estimates are consistent with each other from a conceptual point of view; however, discrepancies exist in the growth rates for selected activities.

1.14.2 Indicator 14.2: Statistics are comparable over a reasonable period of time.

111. Statistics are comparable over a reasonable period of time. When changes in methods and classifications occur, INSTAT provides the necessary information and publishes back-cast series (STS, PPI, annual GDP).

112. Changes in methods are identified and breaks in time series – for example, due to the introduction of NACE Rev. 2 – are explained.

1.14.3 Indicator 14.3: Statistics are compiled on the basis of common standards with respect to scope, definitions, units and classifications in the different surveys and sources.

113. Statistics are partly compiled on the basis of common standards. INSTAT is the coordinator of the economic activity classification and its codes are used by all the official statistical providers and administrations. In the case of NACE Rev. 2, there was a period of one year when SBS was published in the new version of the activity classification (in 2013), while National Accounts data were still published in the old version and switched to the new version of NACE only in 2014. The statistical business register held codes in both the old and new version of NACE in parallel for several years. Internally, both SBS and NA were compiled in both NACE versions for testing purposes.

114. INSTAT has carried out self-assessments with standards on definitions, units and classifications in some activities.

115. Quality reports have been prepared for statistical domains. Some quality reports are published while others are internal to INSTAT.

1.14.4 Indicator 14.4: Statistics from the different sources and of different periodicity are compared and reconciled.

116. INSTAT compares statistical outputs with other statistical or administrative data wherever possible. The divergences from different sources are identified, such as VAT data compared with SBS/STS results, administrative employment data with the LFS results, and so on. Reasons for divergences are explained and made public. Statistical outputs are reconciled whenever possible, e.g. SBS/STS with VAT reconciliation at individual level for internal use.
117. Labour market statistics are drawn from two sources, the labour force survey and the register of employed and unemployed. INSTAT has started to publish labour market data from both sources on the same day, with a double set of press releases and data disseminated in distinct places on the web site of INSTAT. This practice has reduced the intensity of the debate about the differences between the two sources.

1.14.5 Indicator 14.5: Cross-national comparability of the data is ensured within the European Statistical System through periodical exchanges between the European Statistical System and other statistical systems.

118. Methodological studies are carried out in close co-operation between some Member States (such as Italy, Greece and Austria) and Eurostat.
119. An assessment of comparability with the ESS is not institutionalised.
120. Discrepancies in mirror statistics are identified and efforts still need to be made to make corrections. Mirror analysis of external trade data have been carried out against four main trading partners of Albania: Greece, Italy, Kosovo¹ and Turkey.

1.15 Principle 15: Accessibility and clarity

121. **Overall assessment:** A rather long list of recommendations is the result of the need to structure and formalise dissemination and related procedures. The review team has also formulated recommendations to involve the whole NSS in a common dissemination portal.

1.15.1 Indicator 15.1: Statistics and the corresponding metadata are presented, and archived, in a form that facilitates proper interpretation and meaningful comparisons.

122. Dissemination practices are in place but are not consolidated in a dissemination policy. The peer review team was told that a communication and dissemination policy will be developed in the near future with support from an IPA programme.
123. On the web site, all information is available in English and Albanian.
124. There are no procedures in place to review the standards for the dissemination of statistical results.
125. INSTAT has arranged special meetings with media representatives to explain how to interpret its statistics.
126. During the last two years, there have been no training courses delivered to those INSTAT staff who prepare press releases.

¹ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence

127. An IT-related back-up strategy for data exists, but there is no policy for archiving statistics or metadata.

1.15.2 Indicator 15.2: Dissemination services use modern information and communication technology and, if appropriate, traditional hard copy.

128. Dissemination services use modern information and communication technology but, at the same time, still rely on printing statistical publications. The peer review team was told that in 2015 the number of printed publications will be reduced and it was noted that the contract for printing is still in the tendering phase, in the middle of the year. One reason for maintaining printed dissemination is that libraries and embassies request printed publications.

129. All statistical results are disseminated using formats which make it easy for the media to re-disseminate. Excel and pdf are the main formats in which INSTAT disseminates statistics. The availability of metadata is a weakness in the dissemination services because INSTAT does not have a standardised metadata system yet.

130. The web tool PX Web – based on PC Axis – enables self-tabulation from the dissemination database on the web site; outputs can be created in several common file formats.

1.15.3 Indicator 15.3: Custom-designed analyses are provided when feasible and the public is informed.

131. For custom-designed outputs and analyses requested by users, INSTAT is not allowed to charge any payment. An email service exists for requests for custom-designed analyses. Custom-designed analyses are not made public.

1.15.4 Indicator 15.4: Access to micro-data is allowed for research purposes and is subject to specific rules or protocols.

132. Access to confidential data for scientific and research projects may be granted by the General Director of INSTAT for a limited period, provided that the data concerned do not allow direct identification of individuals or companies. The recipient must sign a contract with INSTAT. The IT unit is responsible for providing (in a separate room) the equipment needed for micro-data access.

133. Regarding remote access, INSTAT has provided anonymous micro data on the INSTAT website in SPSS format for LSMS, LFS, PHC 2011, return migration and re-integration survey. This decision was made based on the increase of research requests to work with these data.

134. A 3% of sample of the individual data from the 2011 Population and Housing census is available on the website for research purposes.

1.15.5 Indicator 15.5: Metadata are documented according to standardised metadata systems.

135. Methodologies and classifications are presented in the website for each statistical activity as part of the metadata. All statistical results are disseminated alongside the respective methodology as a part of the metadata. There is a need for INSTAT to extend and improve this part of its publications. INSTAT has implemented METAPLUS which documents structure metadata. Some statistical domains are already documented (administrative data and enterprises census). European standards for metadata are not implemented. Generally metadata are updated following changes of statistical activities.

136. Training courses on metadata are provided for the staff in the context of EU training events, depending on assistance.
137. The review team noted that INSTAT needs to focus more on its work on metadata and provide sufficient resources and make sure that metadata are updated in connection with the regular statistical production.

1.15.6 Indicator 15.6: Users are kept informed about the methodology of statistical processes including the use of administrative data.

138. Users are only partly informed about the methodology of statistical processes including the use of administrative data. Some quality reports (such as Labour Market, LCS and PHC 2011) are prepared and made available to users via the website. Some other quality reports (such as business register, SBS and STS) are produced for internal use. Users are informed about changes – in the methodology framework, classifications, and data sources – via the website or user groups.

1.15.7 Indicator 15.7: Users are kept informed about the quality of statistical outputs with respect to the quality criteria for European Statistics.

139. Users are only partly informed about the quality of statistical outputs with respect to the quality criteria for European Statistics

2 Coordination role of the National Statistical Institute

140. **Overall assessment:** The coordination of the National Statistical System was not assessed in the LPR 2013. The amendment of the statistics law in 2013 gave INSTAT the role of coordinator of the NSS, although INSTAT has not yet taken on this role fully. The peer review team was told that because of other factors, such as the general perception in Albania about the ranking of institutions and of officials working in institutions, it is difficult for INSTAT to assert its role as the coordinator of the NSS where powerful actors such as Ministries are members.
141. The reviewers have formulated recommendations – see section 4.16 below – involving all members of the NSS; these recommendations are addressed to INSTAT, which should take responsibility for their implementation as part of its role as coordinator of the statistical system, but their implementation will require other organisations to support INSTAT actively.

2.1 Statistics Council

142. Only two of the seven members of the Statistics Council were present in the peer review: the chairman and the representative of the Bank of Albania.
143. The Council has a fairly complicated history. After the amended Statistics Law entered into effect in February 2013, the Council was still operative in May-June 2013. The Council was revoked by Government Decision at the end of September 2013, and the next incarnation of the Council was appointed in February 2014 (with 2 of the 7 members carried over from the old Council). Therefore, between October 2013 and February 2014 there was no Statistics Council.
144. There are potentially some issues related to the composition of the Council. On one hand, there is an issue about the relationship between civil servant and non-civil servant members of the council. On the other hand, two statistical producers each have a seat in the Council, while INSTAT is not a full member of the Council. One argument is that

all statistical producers should be treated equally vis-a-vis the Statistics Council. However it is also possible to argue that given the Council's oversight of INSTAT, there is no conflict of interest with the current representation.

145. Minutes of the meetings of the Statistics Council are kept and documented for internal purposes but not published.
146. The Statistics Council has oversight of INSTAT and it approves the formal report on the statistical programme – but, only of those tasks that are carried out by INSTAT. The formal report should ideally cover the tasks of the whole statistical work programme, in other words including the tasks carried out by the ONAs. The report for 2014 has been completed but not yet published, so it could still be possible to include the information about the ONAs. The Bank of Albania publishes its own report, including a report on its statistical activities.
147. The review team found that the Statistics Council is reluctant to include opinions in its annual report, for instance on how the law on civil servants affects INSTAT. The Statistics Council did not seem fully aware of INSTAT's difficulties in recruiting staff and the increasing number of vacancies that has resulted from the new civil servants law.
148. The reviewers clarified the role the Statistics Council played in proposing a candidate for the vacant post as General Director of INSTAT to the government. In 2013-14, there were two cases of the appointment of a General Director of INSTAT. In the first case, the council proposed the names of all three applicants to the Prime Minister, who then chose one name and appointed this person as General Director. In the second case, the General Director was first appointed by the Prime Minister as DG of INSTAT ad-interim (October 2013). In February 2014 the new Civil Servant Law entered into force. At the beginning of 2015, the DG of INSTAT was appointed by DPA under the new Civil Servant law; moreover, the Statistics Council was not operative (see above) during the period when the first appointment was made. When the composition of the current Statistics Council was decided by the government in February 2014, the new General Director of INSTAT had already been appointed ad-interim. In this sense, the civil servant law takes precedence over the statistical law on the recruitment procedures for the DG and there was no way to apply the rules of the statistics law in the second case of the appointment of a General Director of INSTAT in 2015.

2.2 National Statistical System

149. According to INSTAT, the concept of a National Statistical System (NSS) in Albania is not understood well. The public generally equates "statistics" with INSTAT; further work is needed to promote and implement the concept of an NSS in Albania. As a first step, the reviewers recommend drawing up a list of members of the NSS in the widest sense (including formal ONAs, other suppliers of European data to Eurostat and providers of data for statistical production by INSTAT). The promotion of an NSS may include common symbols such as a logo for the NSS and, in future, a common web portal for the dissemination of all statistics included in the statistical work programme (currently each statistical producer disseminates its statistical data on its own web site and through its own series of publications).
150. INSTAT has proposed that each ministry (not only the Ministry of Finance) should have a statistical unit. In discussions about the multi-annual work programme, it would help INSTAT if there was a single contact person covering each ministry (including subordinated institutes, agencies and similar bodies under that ministry).

151. Currently, there is no coordinator within INSTAT responsible for maintaining relationships within the statistical system; instead the General Director of INSTAT takes on the role as coordinator. INSTAT is proposing to create a post of NSS coordinator; the review team strongly supports this proposal. As part of the same proposal, INSTAT is keen to create a post of quality manager for INSTAT. Again the review team strongly supports this proposal, and recommends that the new quality manager should have a remit to cover quality issues across the NSS.
152. In the discussions with the ONAs, the Bank of Albania clearly acknowledged the role of INSTAT as the coordinator of the NSS. The Bank of Albania suggested that INSTAT should be more active in its coordination role and set priorities for the NSS and how each member of the NSS should achieve the priorities of the common statistical work programme. The Bank of Albania mentioned the development of financial accounts in Albania as an example of where coordination could have been stronger.
153. Both ONAs considered that a common web portal for the dissemination of statistics would be difficult to implement and that it would be difficult for the users as both the Bank of Albania and the Ministry of Finance would contribute large volumes of data to the common web portal.

2.3 Regarding the Ministry of Finance

154. During the peer review the Ministry of Finance (as a statistical producer) was represented by five persons, working in four different sectors within the Ministry. The reviewers recommend that INSTAT should initiate discussions with the Ministry about structuring its statistical activities by creating a single statistical unit, sector, cell or similar entity within the Ministry of Finance. The resource situation for statistics in the Ministry of Finance appears to be unfavourable, so INSTAT should support efforts to strengthen it.
155. The justification for such a recommendation is to increase the compliance with the European statistics Code of Practice in Albania.

2.4 Regarding the Bank of Albania

156. About two years ago the statistical activities within the Bank of Albania were integrated with the Financial Stability department. The director of the new department is the former director of the Financial Stability Department, whereas the deputy director in charge of the statistical function of the department is the former director of the (former) Statistics Department. The reviewers recommend that INSTAT should initiate discussions with the Bank of Albania about the creation of a separate Statistics Department within the Bank, in order to ensure that the principles of the code of practice regarding professional independence are met. The size of such a statistics department would be reasonably large and is expected to grow further in future, if demands for official statistics produced within the competence of the National Bank are increasing.
157. In the production of statistical publications, the Bank of Albania applies manual entry in tables – a method prone to errors. It is recommended that the production of publications from the statistical databases be automated
158. If the Bank of Albania receives requests for micro-data, these data are provided and confidentiality is respected. However there are very few such requests. INSTAT should

support the Bank of Albania in introducing a standardised procedure for giving access to micro-data.

159. The justification for such recommendations is to increase the compliance with the European statistics Code of Practice in Albania

3 Good practices to be highlighted

160. It would be premature to conclude that INSTAT is yet in a position to be demonstrating genuinely innovative good practices, although it is clearly implementing some good practices (such as online questionnaires, the use of tablets in survey data collection, the web-GIS application, and the availability of micro data online) demonstrated within the ESS.

4 List of improvement actions by principle of the code

161. The material presented below relates both to new Improvement Actions identified during the course of the 2015 LPR and to the Improvement Actions identified as part of the 2013 LPR. The 2013 Improvement Actions have revised deadlines as indicated in the annual monitoring reports. The column “Current timetable” indicates the deadline as of the 2015 monitoring report for the LPR 2013 in Albania. In a few cases, Improvement Actions have been finalised and closed and these are indicated as such in the last column.

4.1 Improvement Actions Principle 1: Professional independence

Improvement actions	Original timetable	Current timetable
INSTAT shall promote amendments to the Statistics Law including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the definition of an independent appointment procedure of the INSTAT Director General to enhance the public perception of institutional independence, both nationally and internationally. - provisions for the INSTAT Director General to have the necessary authority to carry out their professional responsibilities. - provisions for the INSTAT Director General to have the responsibility for ensuring that statistics are developed, produced and disseminated in an independent manner. - provisions for INSTAT to have sole responsibility for deciding on statistical methods, standards and procedures, and on the content and timing of statistical releases. 	4Q2017	4Q2017

Improvement actions	Original timetable	Current timetable
<p>As a priority, INSTAT in collaboration with the Council of Statistics should propose to the Government a revision to the Statistics Law and if applicable, other relevant laws, which would have the following characteristics:</p> <p>a. The head of INSTAT should hold a higher rank, equivalent to the head of an independent institution reporting to the Parliament.</p> <p>b. A revised Statistical Council – role, appointment procedures, membership and operational arrangements – in light of experience and consistent with the current LPR report.</p> <p>c. Revised appointment arrangements for the head of INSTAT – specifically that:</p> <p>i. Appointment is based solely on professional competence; and</p> <p>ii. Selection is undertaken by the Statistical Council and the nomination of the preferred candidate is made in public to the Prime Minister; should the Prime Minister disagree with the nomination, he should be required to explain his reasons publicly.</p> <p>d. Full budgetary and managerial autonomy for the head of INSTAT, subject only to advisory oversight by a Statistical Council and appropriate scrutiny by politicians.</p> <p>e. Alignment with Regulation 223 (European Statistical Law).</p>	new	4Q2017
<p>INSTAT shall do its utmost to improve its public image in order to build trust and to raise the public's perception of its professional independence. An important element of this recommendation should be for INSTAT to improve its working relationship with the media.</p> <p>a. Establish special website pages for media</p> <p>b. Development of a communication strategy with media</p>	<p>4Q2013</p> <p>2Q2014</p>	<p>4Q2014 completed</p> <p>4Q2016</p>
<p>INSTAT shall create a separate unit to handle the coordination of the NSS. This unit should report directly to the Director General.</p>	2Q2014	3Q2015
<p>The agencies of the NSS shall, in accordance with the Statistics Law, enhance and support the role of their statistical units as members of the NSS under the coordination of INSTAT. In particular starting with 2015, a common statistical programme of the NSS shall be published. The common statistical portal shall give access to the statistical products of all agencies.</p>	1Q2015	1Q2016
<p>INSTAT shall implement all outstanding elements of the current Statistics Law which have not yet been actioned. These include:</p> <p>a. the adoption of detailed rules of procedure and general functioning of the Statistical Council;</p> <p>b. the setting up of the Statistical Advisory Board; and</p> <p>c. establishing the coordinating activities of INSTAT within the Albanian NSS.</p>	1Q2014	1Q2017

Improvement actions	Original timetable	Current timetable
<p>INSTAT, in collaboration with the Statistical Council, shall</p> <p>a. produce publicly available Annual Reports about the fulfilment of the statistical programme in line with international standard practice, and</p> <p>b. shall honour the other reporting obligations specified in the Statistics Law.</p>	1Q2014	1Q2015
<p>INSTAT should discuss with the Statistical Council and the Bank of Albania the scope to classify ‘statistics’ as a primary function, as part of the forthcoming change to Bank’s law, and to make consequent changes to strengthen the professional independence of the Bank’s head of statistics.</p>	new	4Q2017
<p>INSTAT should discuss with the Statistical Council and the Ministry of Finance about structuring its statistical activities by creating a single statistical unit or sector within the Ministry.</p>	new	4Q2015

4.2 Improvement Actions Principle 2: Mandate for data collection

Improvement actions	Original timetable	Current timetable
<p>INSTAT shall raise the level of the financial penalties associated with businesses and households failure to respond to mandatory data requests.</p>	2Q2014	4Q2017
<p>INSTAT shall achieve agreements with data custodians on the procedures for access to administrative data and to influence the future development of administrative registers to facilitate better statistical use.</p>	4Q2015	4Q2017
<p>INSTAT shall improve data sharing practices through the implementation of two-way exchanges of data between INSTAT and other national authorities implemented through.</p> <p>a) agreements about definitions and formats,</p> <p>b) establishing a repository of available data,</p> <p>c) enabling web services, and</p> <p>d) creating common databases.</p>	2Q2016	4Q2017
<p>INSTAT should propose to the Government the introduction of legislation which:</p> <p>a. Requires other state agencies to provide INSTAT with administrative and register data required to implement the 2017-21 Work Programme, making consequent changes to other agencies’ legislation where necessary.</p> <p>b. Enables INSTAT to receive data from non-state agencies, for statistical purposes.</p> <p>c. Enables INSTAT to supply identifiable business register data to other state agencies for the sole purpose of improving the quality of other agencies’ registers.</p>	new	3Q2016

Improvement actions	Original timetable	Current timetable
d. makes provision for Memoranda of Understanding to address operational issues		
INSTAT should discuss with the Statistical Council and the Bank of Albania the scope to enable the Bank to access administrative data for statistical purposes, as part of the forthcoming change to Bank's law.	new	3Q2016
A memorandum on data exchange between INSTAT, the Bank of Albania and the Ministry of Finance should be signed by the three statistical producers. This memorandum should specify data sources of common interest and the responsibility of each producer towards the other two.	new	4Q2017

4.3 Improvement Actions Principle 3: Adequacy of resources

Improvement actions	Original timetable	Current timetable
INSTAT shall give a report to the Statistical Council which compares the 5-year programme and the requirements to achieve full adherence to European statistics regulations. This report shall also give an estimate of the additional budgetary means necessary to close the gaps.	2Q2014	2Q2017
INSTAT, in its coordination role in collaboration with the Statistical Council in its supervisory role, shall help other statistical agencies to identify the additional resources required to meet European statistical regulations.	2Q2014	2Q2016
INSTAT shall establish a comprehensive training plan as part of the human resource policy. Continuous vocational training of staff shall help to update skills and special training shall service the rapid growth in numbers of junior staff. Participation in training shall be valued in the career plan.	2Q2014	2Q2016
INSTAT should play a stronger role in the coordinating activities related to the funding by international organisations. To this purpose, INSTAT shall establish a list of potential projects and assign priorities taking into account urgency and potential efficiency gains. This list shall be communicated to the international donors.	2Q2014	completed
As a priority INSTAT should propose to the Government that it be authorised to be able to appoint temporary staff, subject to not exceeding the agreed number of posts in INSTAT.	new	4Q2017
INSTAT in cooperation with Statistical Council should propose to the Government to: a. Review and increase INSTAT's budget to cover the costs of: i. An increase in INSTAT (and regional office) staff salaries in line with levels for corresponding civil service grades in	new	3Q2016

Improvement actions	Original timetable	Current timetable
<p>Ministries; and</p> <p>ii. The costs of implementing the 2017-2021 Work – including modernising INSTAT’s IT infrastructure.</p> <p>b. Increase penalties for non-compliance with surveys and censuses, and for breaches of confidentiality, to comparable regional levels; and enabling INSTAT to retain the income from any such penalties.</p> <p>c. Ensure that INSTAT is able to receive income from its work in support of international projects.</p>		
<p>INSTAT should review the scope for reducing the administrative burden on the head of INSTAT by streamlining processes, or by delegation, or, if necessary, by seeking the necessary approval to create an appropriate post</p>	new	IQ2016

4.4 Improvement Actions Principle 4: Quality commitment

Improvement actions	Original timetable	Current timetable
<p>A reference to the principles and commitments related to quality shall be given in the Mission Statement of INSTAT and a formal Quality Commitment Statement should be shown on a prominent place of the INSTAT website.</p>	2Q2014	4Q2015
<p>Involve relevant staff at all levels in the development and implementation of a user-oriented quality management strategy</p>	new	4Q2015
<p>A clear organisational structure shall be established for managing quality, in particular a centralised unit with the head of the unit acting as the quality manager and a quality committee which discusses regularly quality issues.</p> <p>As a priority the quality committee should prepare a plan to develop quality management guidelines and further steps (like training staff and other national producers about statistical quality) to improve awareness on quality issues. In a few years the committee should be expanded to include a couple of members of other national authorities.</p>	1Q2014 new	3Q2015 1Q2016
<p>User groups shall systematically be established for all relevant topics as a basis for informing users and getting their feedback.</p> <p>User groups should be established for business and social statistics.</p>	2Q2014 new	1Q2015 4Q2016
<p>Quality guidelines describing in detail the implementation of quality management within the statistical production processes based on the Generic Statistical Business Process Model (GSBPM) or another equivalent process representation shall be developed. These guidelines have to take the situation of other producers within the NSS into account.</p>	2Q2016	4Q2017

Improvement actions	Original timetable	Current timetable
A quality assurance plan shall be developed, describing working standards, formal obligations such as laws and internal rules, and a set of quality control actions covering all stages of the statistical processes.	4Q2014	4Q2017
<p>Standard metadata reports (ESMS or similar) should be designed and produced. Ultimately, these should include quality indicators for all statistical products.</p> <p>a. The format of standard metadata reports and the schedule for the production of the reports shall be set up.</p> <p>b. The metadata reports shall be produced for all statistical products.</p>	<p>4Q2014</p> <p>2Q2016</p>	<p>4Q2017</p> <p>4Q2017</p>
Quality reports containing all relevant metadata and quality indicators shall be produced for all statistical products and made publicly available on the website.	2Q2016	4Q2017
<p>Systematic and regular quality reviews shall be planned and shall have a place in the statistical programmes for the coming years. The schedule for this action shall be set up.</p> <p>Work by INSTAT and the Statistical Council on quality reviews should be integrated.</p>	<p>2Q2014</p> <p>new</p>	<p>4Q2017</p> <p>4Q2017</p>
INSTAT's quality committee should set clear overall guidelines about how the documentation of various stages of statistical production should be prepared, and monitor the quality of documentation for further improvements. In terms of guidelines the committee should explore the possibility of learning more about the experiences of other countries and Eurostat.	new	2Q2016

4.5 Improvement Actions Principle 5: Statistical confidentiality

Improvement actions	Original timetable	Current timetable
All staff members shall sign a commitment to confidentiality, including a declaration on non-disclosure of individual data, when recruited.	4Q2013	completed
A system shall be established to monitor the respect of guidelines and instructions on the protection of statistical confidentiality by researchers who are allowed to work with micro-data.	4Q2014	4Q2017
INSTAT shall raise the level of penalties for staff and researchers for breaches of confidentiality.	3Q2014	4Q2017
An IT-tool for monitoring the access to all databases, also in SAS, SPSS, MS Access and similar applications, shall be established.	3Q2014	4Q2017
Documentation on access rights should be created.	3Q2014	4Q2017
It is recommended that Article 58.2 is removed from the Law on BoA. While this recommendation is directed to the BoA, INSTAT, being the coordinator of the NSS, shall initiate the necessary actions.	3Q2014	4Q2016

4.6 Improvement Actions Principle 6: Impartiality and objectivity

Improvement actions	Original timetable	Current timetable
A revision policy shall be developed and made public, describing principles and guidelines for the producers.	4Q2014	3Q2016
The policy on error treatment should be formalised and communicated.		3Q2016
The advance release calendar shall contain the release dates of all statistical products, including press releases, of the NSS for at least the coming three months. The release time should be the same for all releases, and should only exceptionally be disrespected.	4Q2014	1Q2017
Guidelines for the conduct of press releases and press conferences shall be developed.	4Q2014	2Q2017

4.7 Improvement Actions Principle 7: Sound methodology

Improvement actions	Original timetable	Current timetable
A strategy and a master plan shall be developed for the future use of administrative data sources and registers in the NSS in dialog with the relevant shareholders	4Q2015	2Q2016

Improvement actions	Original timetable	Current timetable
INSTAT shall develop and document a strategy for improving the statistical methodology used by other producers of official statistics within the NSS	4Q2014	4Q2016
In line with the proposal to establish a Training School, INSTAT should develop and implement a comprehensive training plan, aimed at: a. Staff in INSTAT and other producers of official statistics with different levels of experience, and including both technical (statistical, IT) skills and non-technical skills (communication, management, etc.); and b. Data providers and users (about issues such as the use of standard classifications, and how to access and interpret INSTAT's statistics and how to use microdata in the on-site laboratory)	new	2Q2016
INSTAT shall co-operate closer with the scientific community through regular contacts, workshops, etc. to discuss methodological, IT, and innovation developments. A corresponding supplement to the statistical programme shall be established	4Q2014	2Q2016

4.8 Improvement Actions Principle 8: Appropriate statistical procedures

Improvement actions	Original timetable	Current timetable
INSTAT shall develop, in cooperation with other agents within the NSS, appropriate statistical procedures for other producers of official statistics. A first step in this action is the establishment of a programme that comprehensively covers the needs of all statistical agencies of the NSS.	4Q2014	3Q2016
INSTAT should develop a plan for the further use of administrative data together with relevant authorities, and gradually replace survey data by administrative data where it is feasible. The limitations of sectoral legislations should be eliminated.	new	2Q2016
INSTAT should lead a review to streamline the use of formal MoUs regarding the formats and frequencies for data transmission to INSTAT for statistical purposes.	new	3Q2016
An office-wide revision policy should be formulated and implemented by INSTAT	Re-formulated	4Q2016
INSTAT should work with other authorities to ensure that data needed both for administrative and statistical purposes are entered into computer-readable format at one point only in order to avoid duplication of work.	new	2Q2016

4.9 Improvement Actions Principle 9: Non-excessive burden on respondents

Improvement actions	Original timetable	Current timetable
The response burden shall be reduced by all means available by cooperating with businesses, by exploring and using administrative data. The development of a web form questionnaire is welcomed. First actions:		
a. Implementation of a device for response burden measurement	4Q2014	4Q2017
b. Routine wise application of the web form questionnaire	4Q2015	4Q2017
Further to this, INSTAT should:		
c. Set a numerical target for the reduction of response burdens in the next five year programme	new	2Q2016
d. Regularly measure the response burden of business surveys	new	4Q2016
e. Organise a publicity campaign for the promotion of web data collection	new	4Q2016

4.10 Improvement Actions Principle 10: Cost effectiveness

Improvement actions	Original timetable	Current timetable
Standardised programmes and procedures for statistical processes shall be implemented. The development of a data warehouse is an important step in this direction and welcomed.		4Q2017
Implementation of data warehouse	4Q2015	
INSTAT should implement a working time recording system to enable the estimation of time spent at each stage of statistics production, and should use this information in its monitoring and planning activities.	new	4Q2017
INSTAT should consider conducting a review of the value for money of the regional offices, with a view to eliminating duplication of activity and increasing cost-effectiveness.	new	2Q2018
Review whether INSTAT should assume responsibility for the publication of Government Finance Statistics based on data to be provided by the Ministry of Finance.	new	4Q2016

4.11 Improvement Actions Principle 11: Relevance

Improvement actions	Original timetable	Current timetable
User groups shall be consulted for understanding user needs in detail and getting their feedback about potential improvements of statistical products. - Establishment of five major user groups	4Q2014	2Q2016
User satisfaction shall be measured regularly in a standardised way in order to be able to monitor its evolution over time. Implement regular user satisfaction surveys	4Q2014	4Q2017
Implement a user engagement action plan based on the results of user satisfaction surveys.	new	4Q2017
Start an exercise to formulate negative priorities with a time line linked to the work on the next 5-year programme for statistics	new	2Q2016

4.12 Improvement Actions Principle 12: Accuracy and reliability

Improvement actions	Original timetable	Current timetable
Numerical indicators of quality such as sampling and non-sampling errors shall be integrated in the standard metadata report	4Q2014	4Q2017
A procedure shall be put in place for regular and standardised analyses of revisions in key statistical domains, notably national accounts	2Q2014	2Q2014

4.13 Improvement Actions Principle 13: Timeliness and punctuality

Improvement actions	Original timetable	Current timetable
A system for monitoring actual timing of releases compared to the release calendar shall be established. Statistics on delays shall be prepared and published in regular short reports, to be discussed by the board of INSTAT for potential corrections or adjustments of the statistical production processes. - First report on monitoring actual timing of releases	4Q2013	1Q2016

4.14 Improvement Actions Principle 14: Coherence and comparability

Improvement actions	Original timetable	Current timetable
INSTAT should establish dedicated teams responsible for statistical quality and for the coordination of the NSS.	new	4Q2015

4.15 Improvement Actions Principle 15: Accessibility and clarity

Improvement actions	Original timetable	Current timetable
The website of INSTAT shall be a national portal of official statistics with links to other producers of official statistics such as the BoA.	4Q2014	Completed
The advance release calendar has to cover the dissemination times of all producers of official statistics.	4Q2014	4Q2017
A dissemination policy shall be developed in agreement with all producers of official statistics.	2Q2015	4Q2017
The website shall have special pages and services for important user groups such as the media and the scientific community.	4Q2015	Completed
INSTAT shall improve the contacts and communication with the media, by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Organising special seminars for media b. Providing them with specific services c. Staff members who work together with media people should receive training on writing press-releases or on dealing with representatives of media. 	2Q2014	1Q2016
Information on the procedure of ordering custom-designed analyses, including prices, shall be offered on the INSTAT website.	4Q2014	4Q2014
INSTAT shall develop training courses on metadata like those organised by Eurostat.	4Q2014	4Q2015
Assign dedicated human resources to work on metadata.	new	4Q2015
Develop, publish and implement a dissemination strategy that addresses, inter alia: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. User engagement – including sectoral or domain specific user groups covering a wide range of users and potential users – supported by user satisfaction surveys b. Media engagement – including the provision of material about INSTAT and its statistical activity. Broaden the media engagement to wider circles of staff at INSTAT. c. The need to ensure clear communication (in statistical releases and supporting material on the website) of complex or high-profile statistical issues. d. A release calendar that is fully consistent with the European statistics Code of Practice for all releases of statistics included in the 2017-21 Work Programme, including specifying a standard release time. e. A web portal enabling straightforward access to all releases of 	new	3Q2017

Improvement actions	Original timetable	Current timetable
<p>statistics covered by the 2017-2021 Work Programme.</p> <p>f. A transition to web-only publishing.</p> <p>g. Responding to public criticism of INSTAT and its statistics.</p> <p>h. Making the results of meeting tailor-made requests publicly available</p> <p>i. Publishing rules and guidelines for access to INSTAT's statistical microdata; monitoring their implementation; and publishing information – relating to intended purpose, the datasets in question, confidentiality protection, and research findings – about each provision of microdata access.</p>		

4.16 Improvement Actions – Co-ordination

The implementation of many of the Improvement Actions listed above will strengthen INSTAT's coordination role, although their primary purpose is to enhance compliance with the European statistics Code of Practice. In addition to these, the peer review team has identified further Improvement Actions to further strengthen INSTAT's coordination of the Albanian Statistical System.

Improvement actions	Original timetable	Current timetable
INSTAT and the Statistics Council should consider a special logo for use by the NSS, and should discuss ways to promote the idea of a NSS.	new	4Q2015
INSTAT should establish working groups in selected statistical domains where continuous cooperation between stakeholders is necessary.	new	4Q2015
INSTAT should monitor all data transmissions of European statistics from Albania to Eurostat.	new	4Q2017
<p>In connection with the work on drafting the next 5-year work programme of the NSS, INSTAT should draw up a list of stakeholders in statistics and indicate the role that each should play:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Other National Authority for statistical production - Provider of administrative data for statistics with/without MoU 	new	4Q2015
INSTAT should encourage Ministries to set up statistical units or contact persons in order to support coordination across the Albanian Statistical System and within Ministries. This applies to other data-producing ministries as well as the Ministry of Finance.	new	4Q2017
INSTAT should support the Bank of Albania in introducing an automated process for producing statistical publications in such a way that data can be transferred from databases to manuscripts without manual intervention.	new	2Q2016

5 ANNEXES

5.1 Agenda of the LPR

Day 1, 13 July 2015		
09:30 – 10:45	Welcome and introductory meeting with the top management Introduction of the team and discussion on Agenda	Review team INSTAT top management team
<i>10:45 – 11:00 Coffee break</i>		
11:00 – 12:30	Review of principles 1, 3, 4 and 8	Review team INSTAT top management team
<i>12:30 – 14:00 Lunch break</i>		
14:00 – 15:30	Review of the other principles of the CoP with a clear focus on the changes since the last peer review in September 2013	Review team INSTAT top managements team
<i>15:30 – 15:45 Coffee break</i>		
15:45 – 17:00	Review of the other principles of the CoP with a clear focus on the changes since the last peer review in September 2013	Review team INSTAT top managements team

Day 2, 14 July 2015		
09:30 – 10:45	Meeting with members of the Council and review of the principles 1 and 3	Review team Members of the Council
<i>10:45 – 11:00 Coffee break</i>		
11:00 – 12:30	Review of the coordination of the statistical system and cooperation of integration	Review team INSTAT top management team
<i>12:30 – 14:00 Lunch break</i>		
14:00 – 15:30	Meeting with users from business associations, chamber of commerce, trade unions	Review team Members from business associations, chamber of commerce, trade unions
<i>15:30 – 15:45 Coffee break</i>		
15:45 – 17:00	Meeting with the staff of methods / quality unit	Review team Staff of methods / quality unit

Day 3, 15 July 2015		
09:30 – 10:45	Review of the questionnaire for Other National (Statistical) Authorities	Review team
<i>10:45 – 11:00 Coffee break</i>		
11:00 – 12.30	Meeting with the other producers of official statistics – (Ministries, Central Bank, other public agencies)	Review team Producers of official statistics
<i>12:30 – 14:00 Lunch break</i>		
14:00 – 15:30	Meeting with users from Ministries and other public bodies (in particular Ministries of Finance, Economic Affairs, Labour and Social Affairs, Agriculture; Central Bank)	Review team Representatives of Ministries and other institutions
<i>15:30 – 15:45 Coffee break</i>		
15:45 – 17:00	Review work Review team will meet separately for preparing overall conclusions and recommendations	Review team

Day 4, 16 July 2015		
09:30 – 10:45	Meeting with junior staff	Review team INSTAT's junior staff
<i>10:45 – 11:00 Coffee break</i>		
11:00 – 12.30	Meeting with top management: Conclusions and recommendations (including improvement actions)	Review team INSTAT top management team
<i>12:30 – 14:00 Lunch break</i>		
14:00 – 16:00	Views of the management on the recommendations	Review team
	Closing of the meeting	
	Administrative rounding off: afterwards, the review team will meet separately for collecting the list of participants (by day and topic), discussing and defining the next assessment steps, including the contents of the forthcoming summary report of findings. All collected material (institutional documents, reports, metadata, additional notes, etc.) will be ordered for following further in-depth analysis	

5.2 The Albanian Statistics Law