# IPA 2022

6-monthly Newsletter

Edition 03

## Multi-beneficiary Statistical Cooperation Programme

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## 1. Foreword

Welcome to the third edition of the IPA 2022 Newsletter, covering six months from May–October 2025. This period marked a dynamic phase of the contract, with partner countries advancing statistical capacities, strengthening institutional cooperation, and progressing toward EU accession benchmarks under Chapter 18 "Statistics."

The 24th Policy Group on Statistical Cooperation (PGSC) meeting, held in Ankara in September 2025, reinforced the importance of reliable statistics and addressed key challenges such as access to privately held data and the evolving role of national statistical offices. Preparations for the next round of Peer Reviews to assess compliance with the European Statistics Code of Practice were launched, underscoring the region's ongoing commitment to quality, transparency, and professional independence. The latest traineeship round continued to provide valuable learning opportunities for young statisticians, supporting capacity building and knowledge exchange across the region. Our country highlights showcase tangible progress — from pilot surveys and new data publications to advances in macroeconomic and environmental statistics — demonstrating how regional cooperation continues to deliver measurable results on the path toward EU alignment. Looking ahead, the programme will further strengthen collaboration and technical expertise to ensure sustained progress toward integration with the European Statistical System.

We invite you to explore these achievements and stories of cooperation — and wish you an inspiring read!

ICON IPA 2022 Team

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## 2. PGSC 2025 focussed on EU Accession

On 24 and 25 September 2025, the 24th meeting of the Policy Group on Statistical Cooperation (PGSC) took place in Ankara.

The aim of the PGSC is to exchange information, take up strategic issues from the European Statistical System and discuss statistical cooperation in the context of the EU enlargement process. This 24th edition of the annual PGSC meetings was organised by Eurostat and the statistical office of Türkiye (TurkStat) and gathered the senior managers and international cooperation officers from the NSIs of the EU enlargement countries, Eurostat, the EU delegation in Ankara, DG ENEST and EFTA.

With the planned EU accession for Montenegro and Albania, in 2028 respectively 2030, all the EU enlargement countries' preparations for readiness by their EU accession stood high on the agenda. The discussions therefore focus-

sed on meeting the closing benchmarks of Chapter 18 on statistics in the EU enlargement negotiations, and on the countries' plans to ensure compliance with the EU acquis in statistics by their accession.

Other relevant topics discussed were the implementation of the revised Regulation (EC) No 223/2009 including access to privately held data, statistics under development, and the role of a statistical office as a data steward in national data governance.

Furthermore, the delegates discussed the preparations and implementation of the current round of peer reviews and presented and discussed good practices in communication. Finally, statistical cooperation under the IPA and ENP East multi-beneficiary programmes were discussed, and the group exchanged first ideas on the structure and process for developing a statistical cooperation strategy 2028-2034.



Participants of the 2025 PGSC meeting held in Ankara, Türkiye

## 3. Preparing for the next round of Peer Reviews

Peer Reviews are independent assessments carried out to evaluate how well a country's statistical authorities comply with the European Statistics Code of Practice (CoP). This Code is the foundation of the quality framework of the European Statistical System and consists of 16 principles, divided across institutional environment, statistical processes, and statistical outputs.

In 2025–2027, all IPA 2022 partner countries will undergo a new round of Peer Reviews on the compliance with the CoP. This comes at a symbolic moment, as 2025 marks the 20th anniversary of the Code's adoption, reinforcing its continued importance for professional independence, data quality and public trust in statistics.

This new Peer Review cycle aims not only to assess compliance with the CoP but also to support partner countries in their EU integration process by identifying good practices, institutional gaps, and areas requiring further improvement.

Why are Peer Reviews essential?
Peer Reviews assess compliance with core CoP principles such as:

- Professional independence (Principle 1): Statistics are produced in an impartial and independent manner, free from any political or other external influence.
- Coordination and cooperation (Principle 1bis): NSIs coordinate the production of official statistics.
- Mandate for data collection and access to data (Principle 2): Statistical authorities have access to the data necessary to produce official statistics.
- Adequacy of resources (Principle 3): Human, financial and technical resources are sufficient to produce high quality official statistics.
- Commitment to quality (Principle 4): Statistical authorities regularly and systematically review their processes and the quality of their statistical products.
- Confidentiality & data protection (Principle 5): The privacy of data providers and the confidentiality of the information they provide is guaranteed by law.
- Impartiality and objectivity (Principle 6): Official statistics are developed, produced and published in a professional and transparent manner, treating all users fairly and equally.
- Sound methodology (Principle 7): Official statistics have a sound methodological basis and are in line with European and international standards.
- Appropriate statistical procedures (Principle 8): Statistical processes are routinely monitored and revised using well-established transparent procedures.
- Non-excessive burden on respondents (Principle 9): Statistical authorities request information from respondents only when it's necessary.

- Cost Effectiveness (Principle 10): Statistical authorities ensure that they use resources efficiently.
- Relevance (Principle 11): European Statistics are based on users' needs.
- Accuracy and Reliability (Principle 12): Official statistics accurately and reliably portray reality.
- Timeliness and Punctuality (Principle 13): Official statistics are released in a timely and punctual manner.
- Comparability and coherence (Principle 14): Official statistics are consistent and comparable between regions and countries over time.
- Accessibility and Clarity (Principle 15): Official statistics are published in a clear and easily accessible way.

For IPA partner countries, meeting these principles is important to increase trust in the statistics they produce and demonstrate to the users that the statistical systems are principle-based.

**What needs to be prepared by each country:**
National statistical offices (NSIs) are key to ensuring that peer reviews are well-prepared and effective. The main tool is the Self-Assessment Questionnaire (SAQ) for the NSI and the other producers of official statistics, which checks alignment with the CoP and helps to identify innovative practices and recommendations for improvement. The SAQ covers three main areas: Institutional Environment, Statistical Processes, and Statistical Output. Each principle is assessed through standard implementation questions, forward-looking questions, SWOT analysis, and a summary of progress and future plans.

NSIs must provide supporting evidence, including core documents, internal or public documentation (e.g., legal acts, methodologies, quality reports), as well as any additional documents that the peer review expert team may request to support the answers in the questionnaire, in English or in the form of a summary, one month before the visit.




*"EU peer reviews of the statistical systems in Western Balkan countries play a crucial role in strengthening the quality, reliability, and international comparability of their official statistics. By engaging with EU experts and institutions, these countries benefit from targeted recommendations and the adoption of best practices aligned with the European Statistics Code of Practice. Such reviews not only enhance the credibility of statistical data—vital for evidence-based policymaking and economic integration—but also foster regional cooperation and trust among stakeholders. Ultimately, robust statistical systems support the Western Balkans' process for EU accession."*



Jean-Michel Durr, Kosovo*
Peer Review expert chair

To ensure smooth coordination, NSIs should prepare a stakeholder list, designate a national contact point, and organize the logistics.

All SAQs and supporting materials should be submitted at least three months before the review. Materials remain confidential and are shared only with the peer review team and Eurostat. For countries outside the EU, "European statistics" refers to official national statistics.

**First Peer Review – Kosovo (10–14 November 2025)**
Kosovo will be the first IPA partner to be reviewed in this round. The mission will assess how Kosovo applies the CoP, focusing on horizontal and institutional aspects such as:

- Professional independence and institutional coordination
- Access to and use of administrative data
- Confidentiality and data protection
- Quality commitment and assurance of statistical processes
- Adequacy of resources and staff competence
- User engagement, communication, and public trust
- Transparency, accessibility, and clarity of statistical outputs

The resulting peer review report will provide recommendations and will set a reference model for next peer reviews: Albania, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2026, and in 2027 for North Macedonia, Serbia and Türkiye.

**This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence*

# 4. IPA 2022 2nd traineeship round

From 2 September until 28 November 2025, 16 motivated trainees have joined the ongoing 2nd round of IPA 2022 traineeships to gain practical experiences in various statistical areas. This time, six traineeship positions are offered within different Eurostat units, while 10 positions are located across EU and EFTA countries. Statistical domains covered range from social, business and economic statistics to environmental, transport and regional statistics. Trainees, who are often experienced professionals in their respective areas within the NSIs are gaining valuable insights into the European perspective on methodology, quality, and data management. Although the traineeships are still in progress, some of our participants have already shared their first impressions and experiences, which we are pleased to present in this section:

**Mr Dean Arezina (Bosnia and Herzegovina):**
Mr Arezina began his traineeship on 2 September 2025 at the Statistical Office of Krakow (Poland), within the Centre for Health and Health Care Statistics. The initial days were relatively light in terms of workload and scope, allowing him to become acquainted with the new environment. From the second week onwards, the scope of learning expanded significantly, providing valuable professional insights.



Trainee Dean Arezina from Bosnia and Herzegovina (third from right) with colleagues from Statistical office of Krakow

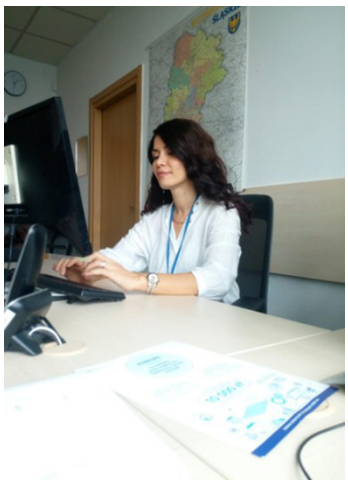
With the continuous support of the Head of the Centre, his mentor, and other colleagues, he consistently received timely information and constructive guidance. As a statistician, he considers timely, comprehensive, high-quality, and verified data to be of utmost importance, and this was precisely what he encountered during his traineeship. His colleagues at the Centre ensured that all relevant materials and datasets related to health and health statistics were made available to him.

He particularly appreciated their willingness to share both personal and professional knowledge, which greatly contributed to his learning experience over the two-month period. He became familiar with the methods and objectives of conducting regular, continuous, and planned as well as ad-hoc surveys.

Upon his arrival, the team had just started work on the European Health Interview Survey (EHIS), which is being implemented in Poland until the end of the year. Since this survey has not yet been fully implemented in Bosnia and Herzegovina, observing its preparation and execution was an unexpected and particularly valuable opportunity. This experience enabled him to gain practical understanding of the methodological and operational steps involved in such large-scale data collection. He intends to use this knowledge to support future preparations for health-related surveys in his home institution, contributing to the further alignment of national practices with EU standards.

**Ms Flutura Bracaj (Albania):**
Ms Bracaj is undertaking her traineeship at the Regional Statistical Office in Katowice, within the area of Statistical Analysis and Studies. During this period, she has the opportunity to explore the inner workings of the Silesian Centre for Survey Research and to gain insight into multiple aspects of statistical data provision; both for the public and institutional users.

Her activities include observing and supporting the processes of data collection, validation, drafting reports in English, as well as learning about the preparation, printing, and dissemination of statistical publications. This hands-on experience allows her to follow the entire production chain of statistical outputs within the Office.



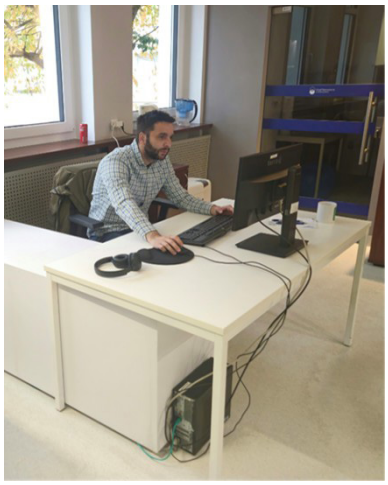
Trainee Flutura Bracaj from Albania

She highlights the friendly and supportive atmosphere at the Office, which has made her learning experience both productive and enjoyable. In addition to her main placement, she visited several other departments, gaining a broader understanding of their daily operations. While she recognised many similarities with INSTAT, she also noted some distinctive features of the Polish system, particularly the specialisation of Regional Statistical Offices across various domains.

Beyond professional development, she values the cultural experience of her stay in the Silesian region. Through professional interactions, informal exchanges with colleagues,

and her free-time exploration, she is also learning about Polish culture, history, economy, and demographics—making her traineeship both professionally enriching and personally rewarding.

**Mr Said Dalip (Serbia):** Mr Dalip began his traineeship on 2 September 2025 at the Statistical Office in Zielona Góra, in the area of Data Analysis, Publishing and Dissemination, with a particular focus on popularising the results of statistical research. Since the start of his traineeship, he has had the opportunity to work in a professional environment and gain valuable practical experience in transforming statistical data into clear and engaging visual information.


Trainee Said Dalip from Serbia

His tasks include preparing visual materials such as dashboards and monthly infographics designed to communicate statistical findings to a broad audience. Through this work, he is strengthening his analytical and creative skills, while learning the importance of precision, consistency, and clarity in statistical communication.

He emphasizes the supportive and collegial atmosphere at the Office, which has significantly contributed to his professional growth. Overall, he considers this traineeship a valuable opportunity to expand his knowledge in data analysis and dissemination, exchange experience with colleagues, and further develop his ability to present statistical information in an accessible and user-friendly way.

**Ms Melisa Mulikj (North Macedonia):**
Mr Mulikj is undertaking her traineeship at the Statistical Office in Rzeszów, in the area of Data Integration and Mathematical Programming. During this period, she has the opportunity to strengthen both her technical and analytical skills through practical, hands-on experience with real-world datasets.

A key part of her traineeship involves exploring how data visualization can transform complex information into clear and actionable insights, including the preparation of interactive dashboards. She is also deepening her understanding of data imputation techniques, which reinforces the importance of carefully handling missing data to ensure accuracy and reliability in analysis.

Through her work, she gains insight into how statistical methods and programming approaches come together to support evidence-based decision-making. She highlights the collaborative and supportive environment at the Office, which has made her learning experience particularly productive. Overall, the traineeship has been inspiring, expanding her technical toolkit and demonstrating how data-driven approaches can have a tangible impact in professional and research contexts.

**Mr Hydai Morina (Kosovo):**
Mr Morina is undertaking his traineeship at the National Statistical Institute of Bulgaria in Sofia, in the area of Statistics on Income and Living Conditions. During this period, he has the opportunity to gain in-depth knowledge of the EU-SILC process and related methodologies.
He is becoming familiar with EU-SILC guidelines, questionnaire design, data cleaning and coding, creation of target variables, data validation, and the calculation of indicators. Through close observation of the NSI team, he learns how experienced professionals address practical challenges and develop effective solutions.


Trainee Hydai Morina from Kosovo (second from right) with colleagues from NSI Bulgaria

This traineeship is enhancing his professional expertise, providing him with practical skills and new perspectives that he intends to apply in his own country. He values the hands-on experience and considers it an important step in further developing his competence in income and living conditions statistics.

**Ms Klevina Zhuri (Albania):**
Mr Zhuri is undertaking a traineeship at the Swiss Federal Statistical Office (FSO) in Neuchâtel, Switzerland, from 2 September to 28 November 2025, in the area of State-of-the-art Data Dissemination with the new Swiss Stats Explorer (.Stat). During this period, she is gaining hands-on experience in modern approaches to managing and disseminating statistical data.

She is becoming familiar with the office's internal documentation platforms, which are essential for organizing and tracking technical workflows, and is learning how international standards, such as SDMX, are applied to model statistical data and metadata for sharing through the .Stat platform.

She values the collaborative and supportive environment at FSO, which has made her learning experience both insightful and rewarding. Through this traineeship, she

is acquiring knowledge and skills that will strengthen her contribution to INSTAT's goals and enhance collaboration within the European Statistical System.

**Ms Aneta Kotevska (North Macedonia):**
Mr Kotevska is undertaking a traineeship at the Statistical Office of Bulgaria in the area of Quality Management. During this period, she is gaining practical experience in the implementation and monitoring of quality management systems based on ISO 9001 and ISO 27000 standards.

She is exploring how these standards are applied and integrated into the Office's processes, studying internal guidelines and documentation to gain insights into maintaining high standards and improving procedures. A particularly valuable aspect of her traineeship is the analysis of the 2022 Peer Review process in Bulgaria, which provides a clear understanding of how evaluation and continuous improvement are carried out in practice.

This traineeship is enhancing her professional knowledge and equipping her with skills and perspectives that will benefit her future work. She values the opportunity to learn from experienced colleagues and to observe quality management practices in an established statistical organization.

# 5. Partner country highlights

The third edition of the 6-monthly newsletter brings inspiring updates from our partner countries, who continue to make remarkable progress in strengthening their statistical systems and aligning with the EU acquis. Between May and October 2025, institutions across the Western Balkans and Türkiye, achieved major milestones under the IPA 2022 Multi-Beneficiary Statistical Cooperation Programme, demonstrating both their technical capacity and strong commitment to European integration. Below we bring you several successful stories, from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Serbia and Albania.

**Bosnia and Herzegovina – From methodology to modernisation**
Between May and October 2025, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) made notable progress across several statistical domains. Under the National Accounts' projects, the implementation of the new COICOP 2018 classification in the GDP by expenditure approach was successfully completed, aligning BiH with the latest international standards and providing more detailed insights into household consumption. Work is now ongoing to extend this methodology to quarterly GDP estimates, while continuous efforts are being made to strengthen data quality and consistency across related macroeconomic statistics. These advances mark an important step towards modernising the statistical system and ensuring compliance with European statistical standards.

**Kosovo – Data modernisation and digital transformation**
During the period from May to October 2025, the Kosovo Agency of Statistics (KAS) and the Central Bank of Kosovo (CBK) achieved significant progress in modernising statistical production and improving data processes. Under Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), all mandatory tables were successfully transmitted to Eurostat by the September 2025 deadline, validated on the first submission. In addition, a newly developed IT programme now automates data transformation for SDMX submissions, enhancing both efficiency and quality. These developments reflect Kosovo's ongoing commitment to digital transformation and the adoption of modern statistical tools in line with EU practices.

**North Macedonia – Building quality and consistency in National Accounts**
From May to October 2025, the State Statistical Office of North Macedonia (SSO) advanced its work on improving National Accounts methodology and strengthening compliance with ESA 2010 standards. A major milestone was the completion of the distribution of Gross Fixed Capital Formation in dwellings for 2002–2021, providing a key input for future estimates of imputed rents and capital stock. In parallel, SSO continued enhancing the ESA 2010 Transmission Programme and reviewing methodological documentation to ensure data quality and consistency. These efforts contribute to the further alignment of North Macedonia's National Accounts with international requirements.

**Serbia – Strengthening core macroeconomic foundations**
Between May and October 2025, the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORS) continued to consolidate its macroeconomic statistics and reporting frameworks. Under the ESA 2010 Transmission Programme, Serbia expanded the regular compilation of the Services Producer Price Index (SPPI) and, for the first time, transmitted annual employment data and output series fully consistent with Eurostat requirements. These achievements demon-

strate tangible progress in aligning Serbia's core macroeconomic statistics with EU standards and in strengthening the foundations for future statistical development.

**Albania – Advancing EU alignment through statistical reforms**

From May to October 2025, INSTAT strengthened its statistical capacities and advanced alignment with EU requirements under Chapter 18 "Statistics". Pilot activities and enhanced cooperation with European partners supported ongoing reforms, while a dedicated expert mission on Government Finance Statistics (GFS) and the Excessive Deficit Procedure (EDP) took place in Tirana in September 2025. This was complemented by a high-level coordination meeting with the Bank of Albania and the Ministry of Finance, reinforcing methodological consistency and improving reporting frameworks. These activities represent steady progress in Albania's path toward full compliance with European statistical standards.

## 6. Plans for the future

As this third edition of the newsletter ends, we look forward to the continued implementation of statistical projects across all partner countries. In the coming months, a variety of activities are planned, including expert meetings, both regular and additional missions, study visits, and workshops. ICON will also organize two training courses, while the third round of traineeships is scheduled to begin in February 2026.

A busy peer review period lies ahead, with upcoming reviews in Kosovo (November 2025), Albania (March 2026), Bosnia and Herzegovina (May 2026), and Montenegro (June 2026). We also anticipate active participation of partner country representatives in regular meetings at Eurostat, ensuring ongoing exchange of knowledge and best practices.
With these initiatives, the contract continues to strengthen statistical capacities, promote methodological alignment, and foster collaboration across the partner countries. We look forward to reporting on these developments in the next edition and to continuing the journey of enhancing high-quality, reliable, and comparable statistics across all participating countries.




From left to right: Ms Irena Lumi, Ms Majela Smakaj, Ms Argita Frasheri, Mr Deon Tanzer, Ms Elsa Dhuli, Ms Kesjana Halili and Ms Aurela Velo

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