



# Evaluation of the Commission Support for Statistics in Third Countries

Revised Final Report

Volume I – Main report

*15<sup>th</sup> February 2007*

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The author accepts sole responsibility for this report drawn up on behalf of the Commission of the European Communities. The report does not necessarily reflect the official views of the Commission.

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## List of acronyms

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<b>ACBF</b>	African Capacity Building Foundation
<b>ACP</b>	Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (countries)
<b>ADB</b>	African Development Bank
<b>AFRISTAT</b>	Observatoire Economique et Statistique d'Afrique Subsaharienne
<b>AFRITAC</b>	Africa Regional Technical Assistance Centre (IMF)
<b>AIDCO</b>	EuropeAid Co-operation Office
<b>ALA</b>	Asia and Latin America
<b>ARCS</b>	Appui au Renforcement des Capacités Statistiques (Burkina Faso)
<b>ASYCUDA</b>	Automated System for Customs Data
<b>BS</b>	Budget Support
<b>CAPMAS</b>	Central Agency for Public Mobilisation and Statistics (Egypt)
<b>CESD</b>	Centre Européen pour la Statistique et le Développement
<b>CILSS</b>	Comité Inter états pour la Lutte contre la Sécheresse au Sahel
<b>CIS</b>	Community of Independent States
<b>CODESA</b>	Conférence des Directeurs des Ecoles de Statistiques
<b>COMESA</b>	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
<b>COMSTAT</b>	Programme de Développement Statistique de l'UEMOA
<b>CPI</b>	Corruption Perception Index
<b>CSLP</b>	Cellule de Suivi de la Lutte contre la Pauvreté
<b>DAC</b>	Development Assistance Committee of the OECD
<b>DFID</b>	Department For International Development
<b>DG</b>	Directorate General
<b>DG ESTAT</b>	Directorate General for Statistics (= EUROSTAT)
<b>DG RELEX</b>	Directorate General for External Relations of the European Commission
<b>DIAPER</b>	Programme Régional « Amélioration des Instruments du Diagnostic Permanent pour la Sécurité Alimentaire Régionale » (Diagnostic Permanent)
<b>EASTC</b>	Eastern African Statistical Training Centre
<b>ECE</b>	Eastern and Central European Countries
<b>ECOSTAT</b>	Programme de Développement Régional de la Statistique de la CEDEAO
<b>ECOWAS</b>	Economic Community Of West African States
<b>EDF</b>	European Development Fund
<b>EEC</b>	European Economic Community
<b>ENP</b>	European Neighbourhood Policy
<b>EPA</b>	Etablissement Public Administratif
<b>EPA</b>	Economic Partnership Agreement

<b>EQ</b>	Evaluation Question
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>EUROSTAT</b>	The statistical office of the European Community (= ESTAT)
<b>FAO</b>	Food and Agriculture Organization
<b>GDDS</b>	General Data Dissemination System
<b>IHPC</b>	Indices Harmonisés des Prix à la Consommation
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organisation
<b>IMF</b>	International Monetary Fund
<b>INSD</b>	Institut National de la Statistique et de la Démographe (Burkina Faso)
<b>MDG</b>	Millennium Development Goals
<b>MEDA</b>	Euro-Mediterranean Partnership Programme; Mediterranean members of the partnership.
<b>MIS</b>	Management Information System
<b>MS</b>	Member States
<b>NAEMA</b>	Nomenclature d'Activités des Etats Membres d'Afristat
<b>NOPEMA</b>	Nomenclature de Produits des Etats Membres d'Afristat
<b>NSI</b>	National Statistics Institute
<b>NSO</b>	National Statistics Office
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>PARIS21</b>	Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century
<b>PARSTAT</b>	Programme d'Appui Régional à la Statistique
<b>PASISA</b>	Programme Action pour un Système d'Information sur la Sécurité Alimentaire
<b>PCA</b>	Partnership and Cooperation Agreement
<b>PRSP</b>	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
<b>RHCTSS</b>	Regional Harmonisation of Customs and Trade Statistics Systems (COMESA)
<b>RIO</b>	Regional Integration Organisation
<b>SDDS</b>	Special Data Dissemination Standard
<b>SNA</b>	System of National Accounts
<b>SPP</b>	Statistics Projects and Programmes
<b>SSCU</b>	State Statistical Committee of Ukraine
<b>STATCAP</b>	Statistical Capacity Building Programme (World Bank)
<b>TA</b>	Technical Assistance
<b>TACIS</b>	Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States; the beneficiary countries.
<b>TFSCB</b>	Trust Fund for Strengthening Statistical Capacity Building
<b>UEMOA</b>	Union Economique et Monétaire Ouest Africaine
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>USSR</b>	Union of Socialist Soviet Republics

# Executive Summary

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## Scope, objective and background of the evaluation (Sections 1 and 2.1)

This evaluation covers the European Commission's actions in the field of on going and completed Statistical Programmes and Projects (SPP) since 1996; it also covers those budgetary aid programmes in which a statistical component was included. The geographical areas concerned are the ACP, Mediterranean (MEDA), Asian and Latin American (ALA) and TACIS regions. The evaluation's main purpose is to analyse and assess the results delivered by the SPPs. It is a forward-looking evaluation and a major objective is to provide guidance for improving current practice in programming, designing and implementing SPP. It is also intended to contribute to the accountability of the external cooperation programmes.

The Commission's support for statistics in third countries dates back to the very early days of the European Communities and their cooperation with third countries. Under the Yaounde and subsequent Lomé and Cotonou Agreements, the Commission and its ACP country partners agreed on the importance of reliable statistical information for the formulation, implementation and monitoring of sustainable development policies. To this end the Commission Services responsible for external cooperation made use of the major internal statistical capacity developed by EUROSTAT. Statistical support also formed a component of the Commission's external economic and development cooperation in the non-ACP regions (TACIS, MEDA and ALA countries). Over the period covered by this evaluation, the Commission's statistical support is estimated to have been € 334 million distributed as follows: ACP 68%, MEDA 16%, Tacis and ALA 8% each. The support for statistics took different forms according to the region.

In the **ACP** region the SPP responded to statistical needs relating to the development priorities of the national and regional beneficiaries as defined in successive EDFs. The main foci were sustainable development, trade and regional integration and poverty reduction, support being provided through regional or bilateral programmes according to the type of problem being addressed. Over the years the development of budget support generated a demand for compilation of specific statistical data needed for formulation, monitoring and assessment of sector policies. An additional characteristic of the ACP programmes was the significant support provided to statistical schools and training centres and the substantial resources allocated to population censuses, generally in cooperation with other donors.

For the **MEDA** region the Commission designed two large multi-annual statistical programmes (MEDSTAT 1 and 2) in support of the objectives of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership; while for the **TACIS** region it designed a succession of annual programmes in the form of envelopes allocated by country in support of statistical priorities within the framework of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCAs). In the **ALA** region SPP were agreed within the context of each bilateral or regional cooperation strategy and were mainly targeted on harmonisation of statistics, regional integration and trade statistics.

The Commission is not a sole player in the area of statistics and the multilateral agencies, notably the United Nations, OECD, World Bank and IMF also have important activities in that field. Inter-agency coordination and a number of international initiatives in which the Commission and Member States play a part are also shaping the overall context in which provision of statistical support is taking place.

### The evaluation approach (Sections 2.2 and 2.3)

The evaluation was conducted in three phases. In the *first* phase the broad approach was set out, comprising an analysis of the context; reconstruction of the intervention logic; formulation of nine Evaluation Questions along with associated judgement criteria and indicators; and definition of the organisation (methods and instruments) required for collection of the facts needed to answer the Evaluation Questions. The **second phase** focused on fact-finding: it was centred on an analysis of a sample of 29 SPP agreed with the Steering Group, involving documentary analysis, interviews with resource persons in the Commission Services, and preparation and conduct of questionnaire surveys. It also included case studies in the form of field visits in French-speaking West Africa (Niger, Burkina-Faso, Mali), in Zambia (as partner country and seat of the COMESA), and in Morocco, Egypt and Ukraine. An additional case study on support to the French-speaking African statistical schools was also included. The *third phase* consisted of an analysis of the findings, their synthesis, and formulation of Conclusions and Recommendations.

### Findings supporting the answers to the Evaluation Questions (Section 3)

In terms of *relevance* of the SPP the main findings are:

- (i) SPP were chosen with a view to supporting the priority development objectives agreed with the partner. However, in many cases the linkage between the Commission's "cooperation strategy" agreed with the partner, on the one hand, and the "statistical strategy" associated with it, on the other, was unclear. As a result the statistical support offered, while valuable, did not necessarily address other Commission-backed priorities.
- (ii) SPP were not always identified and selected on the basis of a preliminary analysis of existing situations or of priority needs in

the field of statistics, the exception being purely statistical projects. Neither the coherence of national statistical systems nor the need for efficient "statistical coordination" was systematically taken into consideration, thereby placing in jeopardy the efficiency of the system as a whole.

In terms of *effectiveness* there are different categories of findings.

- (i) In relation to the strengthening of the *statistical system* of the partner and its *institutional capacity* in the field of statistics, there is evidence, confirmed by the beneficiaries, that the SPP significantly enhanced specific components of the statistical system, whether an institution or a category of statistics. Substantial outputs of good quality were delivered. Particular improvements could be observed in partners' capacity to collect and process data, in early warning indicators and regional trade data, in the conduct of surveys, and in a move towards adoption of internationally recommended practices. However, no SPP really addressed the design and functioning of the statistical system as a central coherent element of public administration; this resulted in more limited impact on the statistical systems as a whole, in particular the legal and regulatory frameworks and national capacities to coordinate the development, monitoring and quality control of official statistics.

- (ii) In relation to the collection, processing, quality, control and dissemination of data, the results of the SPP vary. Positive results were recorded to the extent that many SPP gave rise to increased quality and diversity of data produced and made accessible to users. In the provision of statistical assistance associated with budget support a commendable trend was observed, from a focus on specific indicators to development of comprehensive management information systems at sector level. Budget support was also a factor favouring better and more extensive linkages between SPP and the priority policies of the partner. On the other



hand the outcomes were less certain insofar as quality, timeliness and reliability remained major issues, even in areas where improvements were observed.

(iii) In relation to the demand for and use of statistics, it transpired that few specific activities and resources had been targeted on advocacy of statistics and on the level of awareness of their importance, and the extent of the move towards evidence-based decision-making remained worryingly limited. There has not been much evidence of increased use by partners of statistical information as a basis for decision-making, and in turn little motivation in favour of increased support for statistical institutions. However, PRSPs and their funding through budget support have favoured a trend, albeit still at an early stage, in favour of closer interaction between producers and users of data.

To assess *efficiency* the evaluation investigated whether implementation modalities contributed positively to the attainment of SPP objectives. The systematic recourse by the Commission to its technical DG, EUROSTAT, proved extremely positive in terms of technical content and quality of support. But there was also some evidence of statistical interventions being developed in parallel with other cooperation interventions, although in principle always within a policy framework agreed between the Commission and the partners and under the overall monitoring of DG RELEX and AIDCO. As a result improvements in statistics may have been generated in areas that were not national policy priorities while the information needs associated with major priorities, for instance in the focal sector of a Country Strategy, were addressed to a lesser extent. In terms of implementation, the better-suited aid instruments proved to be those selected after prior examination of the partner's need. Generic regional support, where applied, limited the scope for adaptation to national needs, resulting in some frustration on the part of the partners.

*Sustainability* proved, not surprisingly, the most difficult goal to achieve. Commission-supported SPP contributed to improving the technical capacities of the institutions and in particular the professional skills of their staff. The technical improvements generally survived the projects but the sustainability of progress achieved in maintaining the level of service was fragile and uncertain. The main explanatory factors were: (i) an absence of real demand for information by the decision-makers or of an awareness of the importance of evidence-based decisions; (ii) an absence of a clear partner country vision of the development of its statistical systems within the overall architecture of State functions; and (iii) a lack of financial resources, and consequently of human resources. The often low commitment of the partners to taking over the continued funding of statistical activities undertaken with Commission support is both a major explanation of the lack of sustainability, and a result of the first two factors just mentioned.

On the *3Cs* (coherence, coordination and complementarity) two main findings emerge. (i) Coordination with the partner institutions in identifying and implementing SPP has been effective. EUROSTAT and the Centre Européen pour la Statistique et le Développement (CESD) proved instrumental in organising effective cooperation between partners' and EU Member States' NSOs. Coordination with other donors was very weak and the experience of others has generally not been drawn upon. (ii) Where regional and bilateral programmes were provided simultaneously appropriate linkages were established, regional institutions playing an important role. But regional projects conducted under large partnerships (MEDA and TACIS) involved little coordination with other donors and tended to be conducted in relative isolation from the rest of the cooperation strategy.

Finally, the evaluation addressed *cross-cutting issues*. Three were selected: environment, gender and governance. Environment was a focus of SPP and

positive results were observed in terms of increased data production and sensitisation of the partners. Gender was not the focus of much SPP input but due attention was nonetheless paid to it, for example in implementation of training programmes and scholarships. Promotion of statistical governance in the sense of guaranteeing free access to statistical information to all citizens was not a major thrust of the SPP but progress was still observed, and most recent programmes have focused more on this issue.

#### Conclusions (Section 4)

Four groups of conclusions have been derived from the above findings:

**Conclusions 1 to 4** relate to the intervention logic and the intervention strategy in the field of statistics; they can be summarised as follows:

- Nearly all projects were relevant against the background of the intervention logic, but there was insufficient support in some areas: for example legal and regulatory frameworks, and advocacy.
- Insufficient account was taken of the systemic dimension of national statistical systems and their embodiment in public sector functions.
- There was a lack of activities addressing the complementarity and interdependence of statistical information and policy decision-making.
- Linkages between the objectives of the statistical support and those of the cooperation and development strategies agreed with each partner were variable and sometimes loose.

**Conclusions 5 to 7** relate to identification, programming and design of statistical interventions:

- The Commission used both regional and bilateral channels; the reasons for selecting one or the other were clear and justified; in general this approach resulted in economies of scale and good results in terms of harmonisation, comparability and exchange of methods and data. Two

factors were important for the success of regional programmes: the existence of a regional institution serving as a link between the donor and the member countries of the region; and the institutional and technical strengths of the member countries' NSOs.

- Monitoring of poverty reduction strategies and the more generalised use of budget support increased demand for statistics. Responses that focused only on specific indicators created a risk of fragmentation of the statistical system. This weakness persists despite the trend towards more comprehensive sector management information systems, as they remain insufficiently integrated into the overall national statistical systems.
- The magnitude of the share of resources devoted to SPP varied but was generally not commensurate with the stated objectives.

**Conclusions 8 and 9** relate to implementation modalities.

- The systematic recourse to the technical competence of EUROSTAT was very beneficial in terms of quality. But although SPP are designed and conducted within strategies and programmes agreed between the Commission and the partners, several large statistical programmes were in practice developed with only weak functional links to other cooperation activities.
- The full potential for coordination and complementarities, both between the various SPP and between SPP and other activities, has not been exploited.

**Conclusion 10** relates to **results**.

Substantial outputs and results were achieved, leading to capacity improvements, transfer of know-how and training. However, outcomes remained limited in terms of the information base used by decision-makers, and sustainability remains very weak. Advocacy for the use of statistics in decision-making was not the object of concrete support, which may have constituted a major missing link between results and outcomes.

## Recommendations (Section 5)

Three groups of general recommendations emerge from these conclusions. They are, in declining order of importance:

### 1. Recommendations addressing the weak links between the positive results of SPP and development of evidence-based decision-making.

**R1:** *Include systematically, in the design and implementation of SPP, activities promoting the emergence of a culture of evidence-based decision-making.*

**R2:** *In the design and implementation of SPP, ensure that the financial, technical and human resources committed are sufficient both to ensure smooth transition after completion and to maximise sustainability of the results achieved.*

**R3:** *Insist that identification of statistical projects be based on a triple assessment of (i) the statistical situation, (ii) the information needs linked to the cooperation objectives, and (iii) the components of the institutional statistical system needing strengthening, with a view to improving “evidence-based policy” in the various areas of cooperation.*

**R4:** *Maintain and develop the Commission’s fruitful regional approach, but the design of regional statistical interventions should be better adapted to the institutional framework of the partner region.*

**R5:** *Pursue and enhance the commendable efforts to accompany budget support with institutional building in the area of statistical information provision, with a view to strengthening the statistical system as a whole.*

**R6:** *In large projects and non-statistical sector programmes, systematically reserve a share of project resources for institutional development linked to collection and processing of statistical information and make sure it is used for monitoring the policy supported by the project or programme.*

**R7:** *Better articulate SPP and policies related to public administration reform and, where and when possible, include development of statistics in policies associated with budget support.*

### 2. Recommendations aimed at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of SPP.

**R8** *Prior to engaging in statistical interventions, conduct a thorough assessment of the country statistical situation, if not done already, and draw up with the partner a strategy for the development of statistics.*

**R9** *To assist the Commission Services in the dialogue they engage in with partners on preparation of statistical interventions, produce guidelines and checklists on how to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the statistical system in relation to the information needs of the priority policies.*

**R10** *In the design and implementation of SPP, strengthen those elements that the evaluation has shown to enhance the technical quality of the support provided.*

**R11** *Make better use of the competences and resources of those regional and sub-regional organizations with statistical responsibilities and better knowledge of local situations and capacities, by increasing their level of responsibility in the design and implementation of statistical projects; and where possible use contribution agreements.*

**R12** *Aim to enhance the potential gains in economies of scale and effectiveness through cooperation with other multilateral and bilateral agencies*

### 3. Recommendations aimed at improving information on Commission activities in support of statistics in third countries

**R13** *Improve information structures and flows on statistical projects and programmes.*

**R14** *Increase the level of basic statistical knowledge in the Delegations to help them better participate in preparation and implementation of SPP in the future.*

## Résumé

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### Portée, objectif et contexte de l'évaluation (sections 1 et 2.1)

Cette évaluation porte sur les actions de la Commission européenne menées depuis 1996 dans le domaine des Programmes et Projets Statistiques (PPS), qu'elles soient en cours ou terminés ; elle couvre également les programmes d'aide budgétaire dans lesquels était incluse une composante statistique. Les zones géographiques concernées sont les pays ACP, les pays méditerranéens (MEDA), les pays d'Asie et d'Amérique latine (ALA) et les pays TACIS. Le principal objectif de l'évaluation est d'analyser et d'évaluer les résultats fournis par les PPS. Il s'agit d'une évaluation prospective dont un des principaux objectifs est de tirer des leçons permettant d'améliorer la pratique actuelle en matière de programmation, de conception et de mise en œuvre des PPS. Cette évaluation s'inscrit dans le cadre plus large de rendre compte des programmes de coopération extérieure.

Le soutien de la Commission apporté aux statistiques dans les pays tiers date de la création des Communautés Européennes et du démarrage de leur coopération avec ces pays. Avec les Accords de Yaoundé, puis de Lomé et de Cotonou, la Commission et les pays ACP partenaires ont reconnu que des informations statistiques fiables étaient essentielles à l'élaboration, à l'exécution et au contrôle des politiques de développement durable. Dans ce but, les services de la Commission responsables de la coopération extérieure ont utilisé l'importante capacité statistique interne développée par EUROSTAT. L'assistance statistique a également été un élément de la coopération économique et de l'aide au développement offertes par la Commission dans les pays non ACP (pays TACIS, MEDA et ALA). Au cours de la période couverte par cette évaluation, le montant total du soutien statistique accordé par la Commission a été

estimé à € 334 millions répartis comme suit : ACP 68 %, MEDA 16 %, Tacis et ALA 8 % chacun. Cette aide à la statistique a pris différentes formes selon les régions.

Dans les pays **ACP**, les PPS ont répondu aux besoins statistiques liés aux priorités des bénéficiaires nationaux et régionaux en matière de développement, telles qu'elles ont été définies dans les FED successifs. Elles ont porté essentiellement sur le développement durable, l'intégration commerciale et régionale ainsi que la réduction de la pauvreté. L'aide a été apportée au moyen de programmes régionaux ou bilatéraux en fonction de la nature du problème abordé. Au fil des années, le développement de l'aide budgétaire a généré une demande en données statistiques spécifiques nécessaires à l'élaboration, au suivi et à l'évaluation des politiques sectorielles. Autre caractéristique des programmes ACP : le soutien significatif apporté aux écoles de statistiques et aux centres de formation ainsi que les ressources substantielles consacrées aux recensements de la population, généralement aux côtés d'autres bailleurs.

En ce qui concerne les pays **MEDA**, la Commission a conçu deux vastes programmes statistiques pluriannuels (MEDSTAT 1 et 2) afin de soutenir les objectifs du Partenariat Euro-Méditerranéen. Pour les pays **TACIS**, elle a mis au point une série de programmes annuels sous la forme d'enveloppes allouées à chaque pays en vue de soutenir les priorités statistiques dans le contexte des Accords de Partenariat et de Coopération (PCA). Dans les pays **ALA**, les PPS ont été conçus dans le cadre des stratégies de coopération bilatérale ou régionale. Ils avaient pour objectifs principaux l'harmonisation des statistiques, l'intégration régionale et les statistiques du commerce.

La Commission n'est pas le seul acteur dans le domaine de la coopération statistique. En effet, les organisations multilatérales, parmi lesquelles les Nations Unies, l'OCDE, la Banque mondiale et le FMI, mettent également en place des activités importantes dans ce domaine. La coordination entre ces organisations et un certain nombre d'initiatives internationales auxquelles participent la Commission et les Etats membres, constituent également le contexte global dans lequel s'exerce la coopération statistique.

### L'approche de l'évaluation (sections 2.2 et 2.3)

L'évaluation s'est déroulée en trois phases. Lors de la *première* phase, l'approche générale a été présentée. Elle a comporté une analyse du contexte, la reconstruction de la logique d'intervention, la formulation de neuf questions d'évaluation avec les critères de jugement et indicateurs associés et la définition de l'organisation (méthodes et instruments) nécessaire au recueil des faits indispensables pour répondre aux questions d'évaluation. La *deuxième phase* s'est concentrée sur la recherche des faits : elle s'est centrée sur l'analyse d'un échantillon de 29 PPS, retenus avec l'accord du Groupe de Référence, comprenant une analyse documentaire, des interviews avec des personnes ressources au sein des Services de la Commission ainsi que la préparation et la réalisation d'enquêtes par questionnaires. Cette phase a en outre inclus des études de cas sous la forme de visites de terrain dans des pays francophones d'Afrique de l'Ouest (Niger, Burkina-Faso, Mali), en Zambie (en tant que pays partenaire et siège du COMESA) ainsi qu'au Maroc, en Egypte et en Ukraine. De plus, une étude de cas supplémentaire a été menée sur le soutien accordé aux écoles de statistiques en Afrique francophone. La *troisième phase* a consisté en l'analyse des résultats, leur synthèse et l'élaboration des conclusions et des recommandations.

### Résultats en appui aux réponses apportées aux questions d'évaluation (section 3)

En ce qui concerne la *pertinence* (EQ 1) des PPS, les principaux résultats sont les suivants :

(i) les PPS ont été choisis en vue de promouvoir les objectifs prioritaires de développement définis avec le partenaire. Toutefois, dans de nombreux cas, le lien entre la « stratégie de coopération » de la Commission définie avec le partenaire d'une part, et la « stratégie statistique » qui y est associée d'autre part, n'était pas clair. Il en est résulté que le soutien statistique fourni, bien que précieux, ne répondait pas nécessairement aux autres priorités soutenues par la Commission.

(ii) Les PPS n'ont pas toujours été identifiés ni sélectionnés sur la base d'une analyse préliminaire des situations existantes ou des besoins prioritaires dans le domaine statistique, exception faite pour les projets purement statistiques. Ni la cohérence des systèmes statistiques nationaux, ni le besoin de « coordination statistique », n'ont été systématiquement pris en considération, mettant par-là en péril l'efficacité de l'ensemble du système.

En ce qui concerne l'*efficacité* (EQ 2, 3, 4 & 5), différents résultats ont été mis en évidence.

(i) En ce qui concerne le renforcement du *système statistique* du partenaire et sa *capacité institutionnelle* dans le domaine des statistiques (EQ 2 & 3), il est évident, et ceci est confirmé par les bénéficiaires, que les PPS ont amélioré de manière significative des composantes spécifiques du système statistique, qu'il s'agisse d'une institution ou d'une catégorie de statistiques. Des résultats convaincants, et de bonne qualité ont été obtenus. Des améliorations particulières ont pu être observées en ce qui concerne la capacité des partenaires à recueillir et à traiter des données, à élaborer des indicateurs

d'alerte précoce et des données sur le commerce régional, à réaliser des enquêtes et à adopter des pratiques recommandées au niveau international. Toutefois, aucun PPS n'a jamais réellement porté sur la conception et le fonctionnement du système statistique comme un élément cohérent central de l'administration publique ; ceci en a limité l'impact sur les systèmes statistiques dans leur globalité, et en particulier sur les cadres légaux et réglementaires ainsi que sur les capacités nationales à coordonner le développement, le monitoring et le contrôle de qualité des statistiques officielles.

(ii) En ce qui concerne la collecte, le traitement, la qualité, le contrôle et la diffusion des données (EQ4), les résultats des PPS ont été variables. Des résultats positifs ont été enregistrés, si bien que de nombreux PPS ont entraîné une hausse de la qualité et de la diversité des données produites ainsi qu'une meilleure accessibilité aux utilisateurs. Concernant l'appui statistique associé à l'aide budgétaire, une tendance certaine a été observée, allant d'un accent mis sur des indicateurs spécifiques au développement de vastes systèmes d'informations pour la gestion au niveau sectoriel. L'aide budgétaire a également renforcé les liens entre les PPS et les politiques prioritaires du partenaire. En revanche, les effets durables ont été plus modestes dans la mesure où la qualité, les délais de production et la fiabilité sont demeurés des problèmes majeurs, même là où des améliorations avaient été observées.

(iii) En ce qui concerne la demande et l'utilisation des statistiques (EQ 5), il est apparu que peu d'activités et de ressources spécifiques ont porté sur le "plaidoyer" en faveur des statistiques et de l'amélioration du niveau de prise de conscience de leur importance, et que l'adoption de méthodes de prises de décision basées sur des faits est resté malheureusement limitée. Il n'y a pas eu de la part des partenaires beaucoup de signes tangibles d'un recours accru à l'information statistique pour prendre leurs décisions tandis qu'un manque de motivation en faveur d'un accroissement du soutien aux institutions

statistiques a été noté. Toutefois, les PRSP et leur financement à travers l'aide budgétaire ont favorisé une interaction plus étroite entre les producteurs et les utilisateurs de données, bien que cette tendance soit encore très récente.

Afin d'apprécier l'*efficience*, cette évaluation a cherché à savoir si les modalités d'exécution des PPS avaient contribué positivement à la réalisation de leurs objectifs. Le recours systématique de la Commission à sa DG technique, EUROSTAT, s'est révélé extrêmement positif en ce qui concerne le contenu technique et la qualité de l'appui. Mais il est également apparu que des interventions statistiques avaient été développées parallèlement à d'autres interventions de coopération, bien qu'en principe elles le sont toujours au sein d'un cadre politique convenu entre la Commission et les partenaires et sous le contrôle global des DG RELEX et AIDCO. Des améliorations peuvent dès lors être apparues dans des domaines qui ne faisaient pas partie des priorités politiques nationales tandis que les besoins en informations associés à des priorités majeures telles que le secteur "focal" de la Stratégie Pays par exemple, n'ont été satisfaits que dans une moindre mesure. Pour ce qui est de la mise en œuvre, les instruments d'aide sélectionnés après l'examen préalable des besoins du partenaire se sont révélés plus appropriés. Là où il a été mis en application, le soutien proprement au niveau régional a limité la portée de l'adaptation aux besoins nationaux, ce qui a engendré quelques frustrations chez les partenaires.

Non sans surprise, la *durabilité* (EQ 7) s'est avérée être l'objectif le plus difficile à atteindre. Les PPS soutenus par la Commission ont contribué à l'amélioration des capacités techniques des institutions et plus particulièrement des compétences professionnelles de leur personnel. Les améliorations techniques ont généralement survécu aux projets. En revanche, la durabilité des progrès acquis dans le niveau du service rendu s'est avérée fragile et

incertaine. Les principaux facteurs explicatifs ont été : (i) absence d'une réelle demande d'information de la part des décideurs ou manque d'une prise de conscience de l'importance de fonder les décisions sur des faits ; (ii) absence d'une vision claire du pays partenaire pour le développement de son système statistique au sein de l'architecture globale des fonctions de l'Etat ; et (iii) manque de ressources financières et, par conséquent, de ressources humaines. L'engagement souvent limité des partenaires à poursuivre le financement des activités statistiques entreprises avec le soutien de la Commission est à la fois une des principales explications du manque de durabilité et le résultat des deux premiers facteurs mentionnés ci-dessus.

En ce qui concerne les « **3C** » (cohérence, coordination et complémentarité - EQ 8), deux faits apparaissent. (i) La coordination avec les institutions partenaires dans le cadre de l'identification et de l'exécution des PPS s'est révélée efficace. EUROSTAT et le Centre Européen pour la Statistique et le Développement (CESD) ont joué un rôle-clé dans l'organisation d'une coopération efficace entre les Instituts Nationaux de Statistique (INS) des pays partenaires et des Etats membres de l'UE. La coordination avec d'autres bailleurs a été très limitée et il n'a généralement pas été fait appel à l'expérience d'autres acteurs. (ii) Des liens appropriés ont été établis là où des programmes régionaux et bilatéraux étaient fournis simultanément, les institutions régionales jouant un rôle essentiel. Mais les projets régionaux menés sous un partenariat plus large (MEDA et TACIS) n'ont entraîné qu'une coordination limitée avec d'autres donateurs et ont eu tendance à se retrouver relativement isolés du reste de la stratégie de coopération.

Enfin, l'évaluation a abordé **des questions transversales** (EQ9). Trois d'entre elles ont été retenues : environnement, genre et gouvernance. Des PPS se sont focalisés sur l'environnement et des résultats positifs, tels que l'augmentation de la production de données et la sensibilisation des partenaires,

ont été observés. Par ailleurs, si les PPS se sont moins concentrés sur la question du genre, celle-ci s'est toutefois vu accorder l'attention qu'elle méritait comme en témoignent, par exemple la mise en place de programmes de formation et de bourses ciblées. La promotion de la gouvernance statistique en vue de garantir le libre accès aux informations statistiques à tous les citoyens n'était pas l'objectif central des PPS. Des progrès ont néanmoins été observés et la plupart des programmes récents se sont davantage concentrés sur ce problème.

#### Conclusions (section 4)

Ces résultats ont permis de tirer quatre groupes de conclusions :

**Les conclusions 1 à 4** sont liées à la logique et à la stratégie d'intervention dans le domaine statistique ; elles peuvent être résumées comme suit :

- La grande majorité des projets s'est avérée judicieuse dans le cadre de la logique d'intervention prévue, bien que certains domaines (cadres légaux et réglementaires ainsi que plaidoyer par exemples) n'aient pas été suffisamment appuyés.
- La dimension systémique des systèmes statistiques nationaux dans leur ensemble et leur place dans les fonctions du service public n'ont pas suffisamment été prises en compte.
- Un manque d'activités consacrées à la complémentarité et à l'interdépendance entre les informations statistiques et les décisions politiques a été noté.
- Les liens entre les objectifs de l'appui statistique et ceux des stratégies de coopération et de développement définies avec chaque partenaire ont été variables et sont parfois apparus comme ténus.

**Les conclusions 5 à 7** sont liées à l'identification, à la programmation et à la conception des interventions statistiques :

- La Commission a utilisé à la fois le canal régional et le canal bilatéral ; les raisons qui ont fait opter tantôt pour l'un tantôt pour l'autre ont été claires et justifiées ; en

général, cette approche a entraîné des économies d'échelle ainsi que de bons résultats en matière d'harmonisation, de comparabilité ainsi que d'échange de méthodes et de données. Deux facteurs ont réellement conditionné le succès des programmes régionaux : l'existence d'une institution régionale faisant office de lien entre le bailleur et les pays membres de la région d'une part, et les forces institutionnelles et techniques des INS des pays membres d'autre part.

- Le monitoring des stratégies de réduction de la pauvreté et l'usage plus généralisé de l'aide budgétaire ont renforcé la demande de statistiques. Les réponses uniquement concentrées sur des indicateurs spécifiques ont créé un risque de fragmentation du système statistique. Cette faiblesse persiste, bien que des systèmes d'informations plus vastes en vue de la gestion sectorielle aient tendance à être mis en place et ce, dans la mesure où ces derniers ne sont toujours pas suffisamment intégrés aux systèmes statistiques nationaux globaux.
- L'ampleur de la part des ressources consacrées aux PPS a été variable, mais n'a généralement pas été en rapport avec les objectifs visés.

**Les conclusions 8 et 9** sont liées aux modalités d'exécution :

- Le recours systématique aux compétences techniques d'EUROSTAT s'est révélé très bénéfique en termes de qualité. Toutefois, bien que les PPS soient conçus et menés dans le cadre de stratégies et de programmes définis entre la Commission et ses partenaires, plusieurs programmes statistiques importants ont été développés dans la pratique en ayant de faibles liens fonctionnels avec les autres activités de coopération.
- Le potentiel pour la coordination et les complémentarités entre les divers PPS et entre les PPS et d'autres activités n'a pas été pleinement exploité.

**La conclusion 10** est liée aux résultats :

Des résultats importants ont été atteints ouvrant ainsi la voie à une amélioration des

capacités, à un transfert de savoir-faire et à la formation. Les retombées restent néanmoins limitées en ce qui concerne les informations de base utilisées par les décideurs. La durabilité reste quant à elle très faible. Le plaidoyer en faveur de l'utilisation de statistiques lors de la prise de décision n'a pas fait l'objet d'un soutien concret, ce qui a probablement constitué un lien manquant majeur entre les résultats et les retombées.

## Recommandations (section 5)

Trois groupes de recommandations générales ont émergé de ces conclusions. Il s'agit des recommandations suivantes, classés par ordre d'importance :

### 1. Recommandations concernant les liens entre les résultats positifs des PPS et le développement d'un système de prise de décisions basées sur des faits.

**R1 :** Inclure systématiquement, dans la conception et la mise en œuvre des PPS, des activités qui encouragent l'émergence d'une culture de prise de décision fondée sur les faits.

**R2 :** Lors de la conception et de la mise en œuvre des PPS, veiller à ce que les ressources financières, techniques et humaines engagées soient suffisantes pour garantir une transition en douceur après leur exécution et pour optimiser ainsi la durabilité des résultats obtenus.

**R3 :** Insister pour que l'identification des projets statistiques soit basée sur une triple évaluation (i) de la situation statistique, (ii) des besoins d'informations liés aux objectifs de coopération et (iii) des éléments du système statistique institutionnel ayant besoin d'être renforcés, en vue d'améliorer la « politique fondée sur les faits » dans les différents domaines de coopération.

**R4 :** Préserver et développer l'approche régionale fructueuse de la Commission. Les interventions statistiques régionales doivent toutefois être mieux adaptées au cadre institutionnel de la région partenaire.

**R5 :** Poursuivre et améliorer les efforts faits pour accompagner l'aide budgétaire d'un renforcement institutionnel dans le domaine de l'apport d'informations statistiques et ce, avec l'objectif de renforcer l'ensemble du système statistique.



**R6:** Dans le cadre de grands projets et de programmes sectoriels non statistiques, réserver systématiquement une part des ressources des projets au développement institutionnel lié à la collecte et au traitement d'informations statistiques et veiller à ce qu'elle soit utilisée pour suivre la politique soutenue par le projet ou le programme.

**R7:** Mieux articuler les PPS et les politiques liées à la réforme de l'administration publique et, dans la mesure du possible, inclure le développement de statistiques dans des politiques associées à l'aide budgétaire.

## **2. Recommandations visant à améliorer l'efficacité et l'efficacités des PPS.**

**R8:** Avant de s'engager dans des interventions statistiques, procéder à une évaluation approfondie de la situation statistique du pays, si cela n'a pas encore été fait, et appuyer le partenaire dans l'élaboration d'une stratégie pour le développement de la statistique.

**R9:** Afin de soutenir les services de la Commission dans le dialogue qu'ils engagent avec les partenaires concernant la préparation des interventions statistiques, élaborer des lignes de conduite et des check-lists sur la manière d'évaluer les forces et les faiblesses du système statistique par rapport aux besoins d'informations des politiques prioritaires.

**R10:** Lors de l'élaboration et de l'exécution des PPS, renforcer les éléments qui, selon l'évaluation, devraient améliorer la qualité technique du soutien apporté.

**R11:** Exploiter à meilleur escient les compétences et les ressources des organisations régionales et sous-régionales dotées de responsabilités statistiques ainsi que d'une meilleure connaissance des situations et des capacités locales et ce, en augmentant leur niveau de responsabilité dans l'élaboration et l'exécution de projets statistiques; et utiliser, dans la mesure du possible, des "accords de contribution".

**R12:** Viser à améliorer les gains potentiels en économies d'échelle ainsi qu'en efficacité via la coopération avec d'autres organisations multilatérales et bilatérales.

## **3. Recommandations visant à améliorer les informations relatives aux activités de la Commission en faveur du développement de la statistique dans les pays tiers.**

**R13:** Améliorer la structure et le volume des informations sur les projets et programmes statistiques.

**R14:** Accroître le niveau de connaissances statistiques de base au sein des délégations afin de permettre à celles-ci, à l'avenir, de mieux participer à la préparation et l'exécution des PPS.

# 1. Introduction

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Evaluations of the European Commission's external cooperation programmes are the responsibility of the joint Evaluation Unit of the EuropeAid Cooperation Office and the Directorates-General for Development and for External Relations<sup>1</sup>. This evaluation study was requested by the Commission against the general background of the reforms introduced in both country and regional strategy programming and in aid delivery, and on the more specific grounds that the thematic area 'statistics' had never previously been globally evaluated.

This evaluation has been assigned to ADE within the framework of the "Service Contract to supply to the European Commission Services an independent expertise in the field of evaluation (sector and thematic) of programmes, strategies and policies in third countries relating to productive sectors, macro-economic and budgetary support" (Contract number EVA/79-280). Its main *purpose*<sup>2</sup> is to analyse the results obtained by the Statistics Projects/Programmes (SPP) compared with the general and specific objectives defined for the programme. It is a forward-looking evaluation and a major aim is to provide guidance for improving current practice in programming, designing and implementing SPP. It is also meant to contribute to the accountability of the external cooperation programmes.

The *central coverage* of the evaluation includes the Commission's actions in the field of on-going and completed SPP during the last ten years (1996-2006); it includes budgetary aid programmes where a statistical component is provided. The geographical areas concerned are the ACP, MEDA, ALA and TACIS regions.

This report presents the final synthesis of the evaluation and is organised as follows: chapter 2 presents the evaluation framework, i.e. the general context of the Commission support for statistics and the organisation and methodology of the evaluation. Chapter 3 presents the main findings and their analysis; chapter 4 draws out the major conclusions that emerge from the findings, and chapter 5 presents the operational recommendations derived from these conclusions. The report is completed by a series of documentary and technical annexes that support the analysis developed in the main text and they will be further referred to in due course.

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<sup>1</sup> The evaluation is part of the 2005 evaluation programme of the Evaluation Unit, available on the following site: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/europeaid/evaluation/intro\\_pages/work\\_programme.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/europeaid/evaluation/intro_pages/work_programme.htm)

<sup>2</sup> The Terms of Reference are in Annex 1.

## 2. Evaluation Framework

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### 2.1 Overall context of the Commission support for statistics in third countries

#### 2.1.1 Historical overview of the European Commission support for statistics in third countries

The Commission's support for statistics in third countries dates back to the very early days of the evolution of the European institutions. The 1957 Treaty establishing the European Economic Community (EEC) included under its article 131-136 provisions for association of non-European countries and territories with which EEC Member States had special relations.

In 1958 the statistical services of the Communities were regrouped under the name of the Statistical Office of the European Communities (called EUROSTAT), initially mainly to provide statistical information to other DGs of the European Commission. In this context, EUROSTAT has worked on methodologies and nomenclatures along with other international organisations such as the OECD for short-term economic statistics, the UN for classifications, the IMF and the UN for national accounts and balance of payments methodology (EUROSTAT was one of the members of the 'Inter-Secretariat' in charge of the preparation of the SNA 93), the ILO for employment statistics and the FAO for agricultural statistics. There was also fairly significant cooperation with the World Bank on programmes of technical assistance to developing and transition countries.

This important internal statistical capacity has also been used to support the various development and cooperation programmes of the Commission.

In the 1963 Yaounde Convention and the four succeeding Lome Conventions from 1975, the Commission agreed with other signatories that the production of relevant, timely and credible statistical data was one of the factors allowing sustainable development and that it was thus important to support third countries in the development of their statistical systems and the production of statistical information. EUROSTAT became particularly involved in the development of statistical cooperation activities as requested by the relevant Commission DGs (initially the DG for Associated Countries which would subsequently become the DG for Cooperation and finally the DG for Development).

The Statistical Office had developed its own instruments for statistical cooperation with third countries. One was the establishment in 1962, in Paris and in collaboration with the French cooperation service, of the European Training Centre for Economist-Statisticians from the Developing Countries, known by its French abbreviation, CESD. Then in 1972 a training centre was set up in Munich. In 1990, after other CESDs in Lisbon, Madrid and Rome had been set up, the Paris training centre became CESD-Paris and a CESD-Communautaire was created in Luxembourg. In the 1990s the CESD-Communautaire and, to some extent, some of the 'national' CESDs were the main executive agencies for the implementation of the statistical cooperation programmes of the Commission.

One of the most important direct involvements of EUROSTAT in cooperation work after 1965 was the annual secondment of some of its administrators to African countries for five or six months. EUROSTAT officials were to provide support for the students and to develop technical assistance programmes for the countries in question. This type of assistance continued until 1972 in various African countries.

Since the advent of the different regional Regulations/Declarations establishing the Commission's regional development and economic cooperation policies, statistical cooperation programmes have been implemented in line with regional objectives. After 1990, the countries of Eastern and Central Europe (ECE) asked EUROSTAT for help in adapting their statistical systems to the market economy and a democratic environment. Their accounting and computing knowledge were of a high technical level, but the main concepts for governing statistical activities were inherited from the central planned economy system and were not at all adapted to the new political and economic context. In the mid-1990s the Enlargement policy and the necessity for the candidate countries to adopt the *acquis communautaire* reinforced the challenge. The task was enormous and therefore a huge operation to coordinate the technical assistance was organised by EUROSTAT and all the National Statistical Offices of the EU Member States under the overall coordination of EUROSTAT. In 1992, with the collapse of the USSR and the creation of the New Independent States, the Commission set up the TACIS programme which included a strong statistical component. The challenge the CIS countries had to face was twofold: not only were the transition problems similar to those of the ECE countries, but they had to create national statistical systems from scratch.

Outside Africa, Europe and the CIS, a number of bilateral agreements were signed which frequently included a statistical chapter. One of the most important was that signed with China, which had requested EUROSTAT's assistance in reorganising its foreign trade and industrial statistics. Following the Barcelona Conference in 1995, cooperation agreements were signed with most of the countries bordering the Mediterranean. In this context, the Commission has organised, together with the EU statistical institutions, a major technical assistance programmes such as MEDSTAT I (launched in 1996) and MEDSTAT II (launched in 2003).

In 2002 new rules governing the executive agencies were adopted by the Commission. The network of CESDs, which at first were oriented mainly to training and subsequently to all statistical cooperation activities in Africa, Eastern and Central Europe, the CIS and the Mediterranean countries, had to cease their activities: the CESD-Communautaire was closed and the 'national' CESDs had to change their statutes and their missions. Their activities have been taken over by private firms and independent experts, responding to statistical cooperation calls for tender.

The European Commission is not a sole player in the area of statistics and the multilateral agencies, notably the United Nations, OECD, World Bank and IMF also have important activities in that field. Inter-agency coordination and a number of international initiatives of which the Commission is a part are also shaping the overall context in which provision of statistical support is taking place. Annex 8 gives an overview of these aspects.

### 2.1.2 The inventory of SPP supported by the Commission over the period 1996-2006

Annex 6 provides an overview of the SPP supported by the Commission in third countries and an analysis of the main trends and characteristics of the programmes and projects in the different regions of intervention. It is based on the inventory presented in annex 7.

The Commission supported 158 SPP over the period 1996-2006 for a total financial commitment of €334.5 million. 68% of this total has been committed to supporting SPP in the ACP region, 16% in the MEDA region, 8% in the TACIS region and 8% in the ALA region. Chart 1 presents the distribution of the commitments and the number of SPP by region of intervention.

**Chart 1 – Distribution of SPP by Region. 1996-2006**

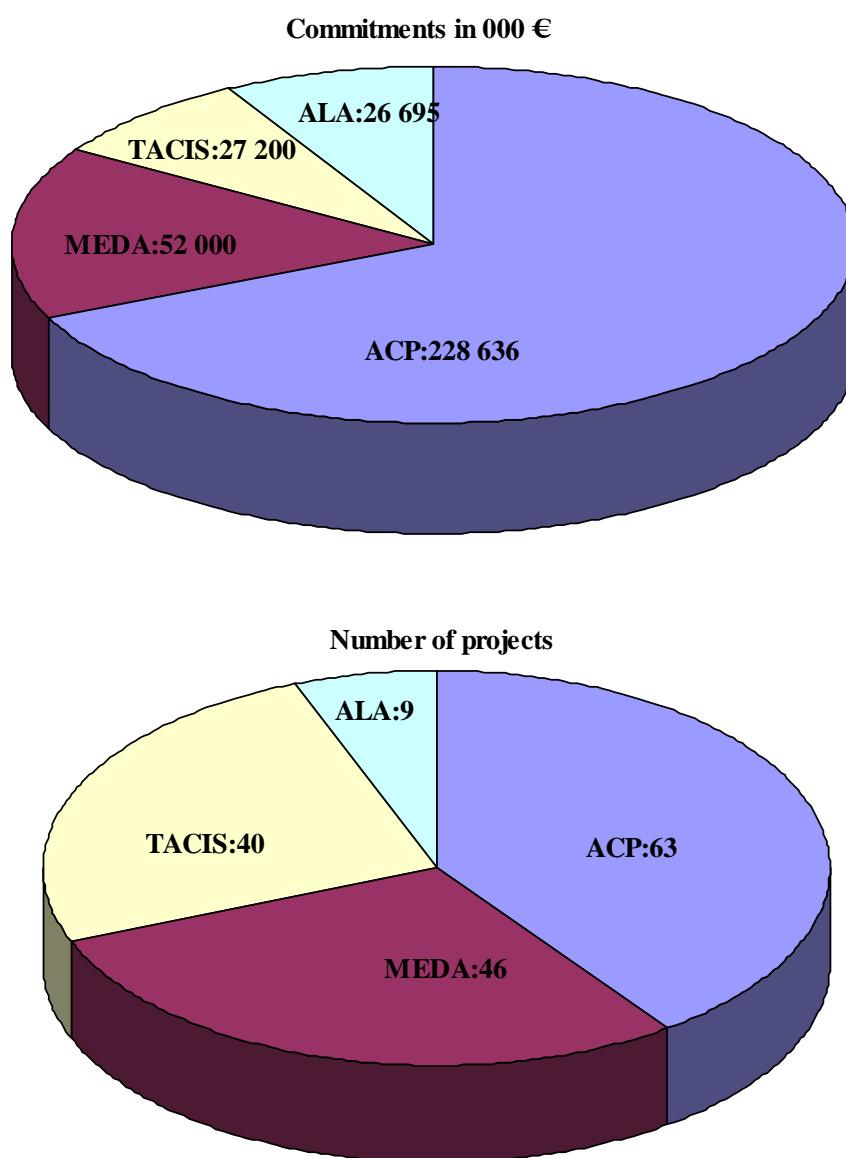
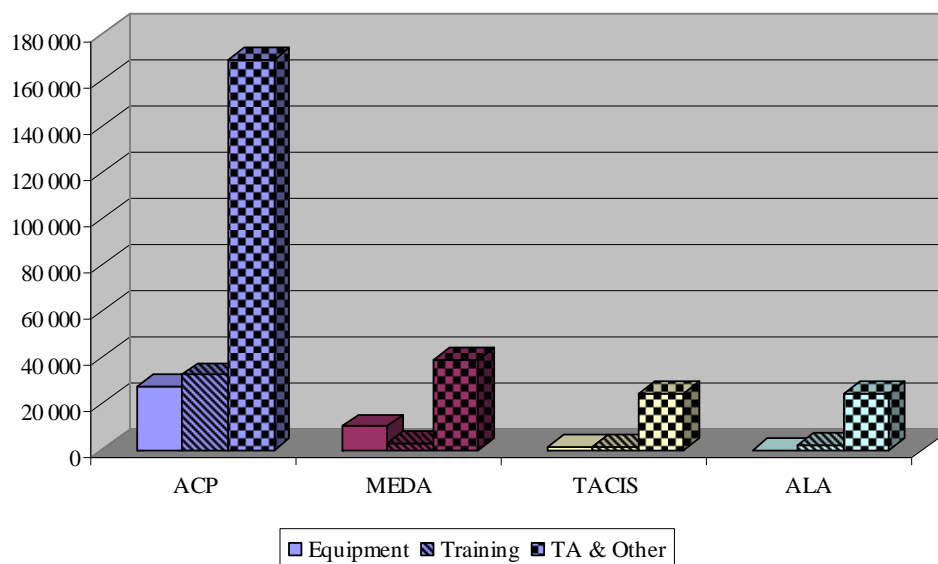


Chart 2 shows the distribution of commitments by region of intervention and type of input (Equipment, Training and TA & Other). In the four regions of intervention, the share of the commitments is larger for TA & Other<sup>3</sup> than for Equipment and Training.

**Chart 2 - Commitments (€in 000's) by region and by type of input. 1996-2006**



It did not prove possible to obtain figures for the Commission's total development aid support as a basis for comparison with the Commission's support for statistics.

The nature of the Commission's statistical support over the period 1996-2006 differed across the four regions of intervention (ACP, MEDA, TACIS, ALA). In the **ACP region** SPP were programmed and implemented in response to statistical needs related to the development priorities of the national and regional beneficiaries. There is no "master plan" for the whole region but, over the evaluation period, SPP followed the overall priorities of the successive EDFs with the main focus on sustainable development, trade and regional integration and poverty reduction. A trend can be observed over the evaluation period; the large size SPP centred on food security which dominated the early years progressively gave way to support for the compiling of the specific statistical data needed for formulation, monitoring and assessment of sector policies underpinned by budget support. The Commission has also supported large statistical training programmes in the ACP region aimed at stimulating the potential supply of trained statisticians in the region.

For the MEDA and TACIS regions the Commission has defined statistical programmes at the level of the whole region; but with a rather different approach in each region. In the **MEDA region** the statistical programmes MEDSTAT 1 and 2 are regional programmes designed and implemented to support the objectives pursued by the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. The support is supplied regionally and aims at providing relevant, appropriate and reliable macroeconomic information to enable investors and governments to define and adapt their policies. In the **TACIS region** the Commission provides a regional

<sup>3</sup> TA & Other represents all commitments identified as Technical Assistance and all commitments that could not be identified as either type of inputs because no budget breakdowns were found in the available documentation.

budgetary envelope for statistical programmes which is divided up by country. Each statistical programme is implemented in the framework of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreements between the European Union and the TACIS countries. Under each statistical programme (7 programmes over the evaluation period known as Statistics 2 to 8), national priorities are taken into account in the elaboration and implementation of specific projects in different statistical areas.

The programming of SPP in the **ALA region** takes place in the context of the cooperation strategies agreed between the Commission and each regional or bilateral partner and in response to requests from the partner. The objectives pursued are poverty reduction and economic cooperation, along with harmonisation of methodologies and classification and improvement of trade statistics.

### **2.1.3 Internal Commission organisation for the provision of statistical support**

The main actors in the statistical cooperation programmes are DG DEV, DG RELEX, DG AIDCO, DG ESTAT (since 1999, the internal acronym for EUROSTAT) and the Commission Delegations. Responsibilities are distributed as follows:

- DG DEV is responsible for regional strategic policies and the programming of projects in the ACP region;
- DG RELEX is responsible for regional strategic policies and for programming of projects for Asia and Latin America, ENP, Eastern Europe, Southern Caucasus, Central Asia, Middle East and South Mediterranean (ex-MEDA, ex-TACIS, ex-CARDS);
- DG AIDCO is responsible for programme and project implementation (including EDF-funded projects) for the financial management of projects. Its work is divided between different geographical areas, i.e. Europe, Southern Mediterranean, Middle East and related neighbourhood policy issues; Latin America; Sub-Saharan Africa, Caribbean, Pacific; Asia including central Asia; and between different sectors grouped in the Operations Quality Support Directorate, i.e. macro-economic support; business, trade and regional integration; social and human development; governance, human rights, democracy and gender; security and migration; natural resources; and infrastructure;
- DG ESTAT, through its statistical cooperation activities, supports the statistical systems of developing and transitional countries in line with the Commission's general external assistance strategy. It is involved in project programming and project implementation in a technical advisory role to the different DGs concerned and to the Commission Delegations as well as in the evaluation of projects. It takes the lead in collaboration with other actors in the international statistical community. It chose to concentrate its actions at regional level;

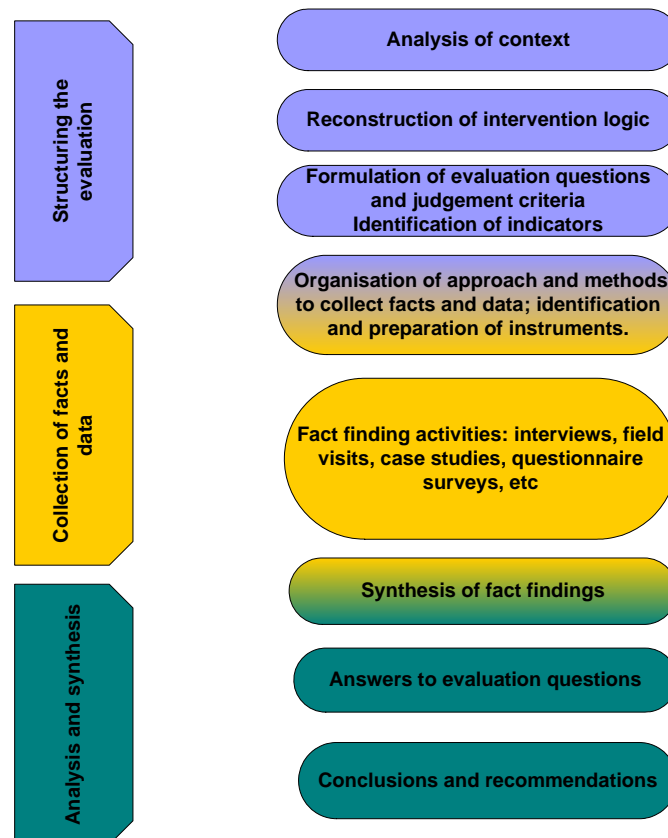
- The Commission Delegations have a decentralised role in the programming of interventions in close collaboration with DGs DEV and RELEX, and are responsible for their implementation and management.

The statistical cooperation activities are financed from the budget of the External Relations DGs or from EDF funds for ACP countries, with implementation (and budgetary) responsibility resting with AIDCO.

## 2.2 The evaluation approach

The evaluation was conducted in three consecutive phases involving different types of task, some over more than one phase. The following diagram illustrates this process. The first phase consisted of structuring the approach and elaborating the methodology; the second of collecting and compiling the facts needed to substantiate the evaluation and permit answering of the Evaluation Questions; and the third of analysis and formulation of the synthesis of the evaluation.

### ***The evaluation phases and corresponding activities and outputs***





### 2.2.1 First phase: Structuring the evaluation

The first phase involved several steps designed to prepare the building blocks for the evaluation.

#### *a) Analytical work to understand the context and the activities of the SPP*

This included documentary studies and interviews with resource persons with a view to understanding the historical and institutional context of the Commission support for statistics in third countries<sup>4</sup> as well as the roles and activities of the main multilateral donors<sup>5</sup>, and to compiling an inventory and thereby an overview of the Commission SPP.<sup>6</sup>

#### *b) Methodological approach: the intervention logic and the Evaluation Questions*

Reconstruction of the **intervention logic** is a prerequisite for the evaluation since it entails a clear understanding of the hierarchy of the objectives assigned to the SPP under evaluation and of how their effects are expected to lead to the materialisation of these intended objectives. The complete intervention logic is described in Annex 4 along with the standard diagram recommended for evaluating the Commission's activities.

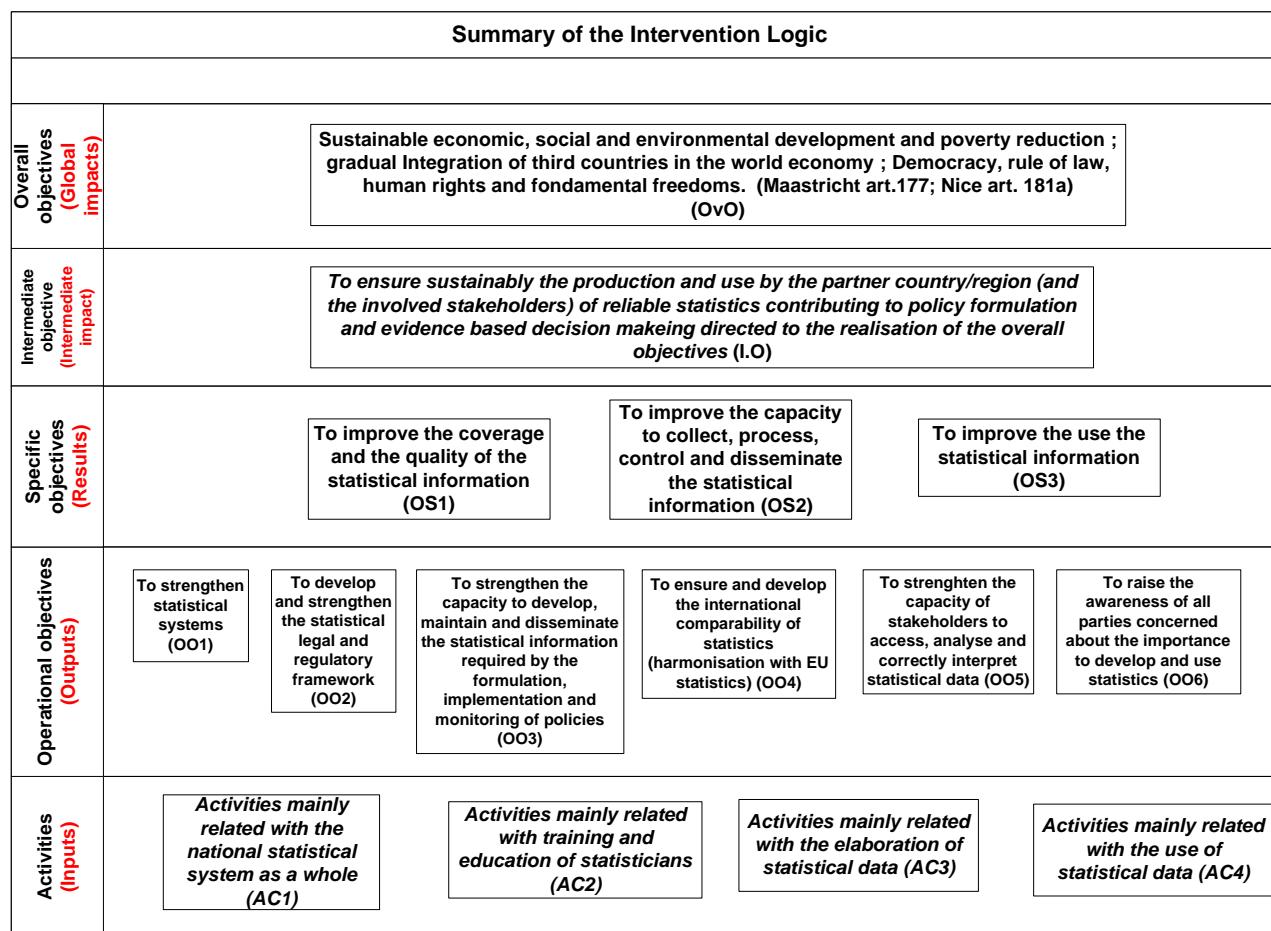
The diagram below is a reduced version representing the hierarchy of objectives and the main categories of activity:

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. Sections 2.1.1 and 2.1.3.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Annex 8.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Sections 2.1.2 and annexes 6 and 7.



There are no official documents setting out the Commission's strategy for supporting statistics in third countries. This confirms the general view that statistics have an *instrumental* rather than a policy dimension in the context of the Commission's development and economic cooperation with third countries. This intervention logic is therefore an "ex post reconstructed intervention logic" resulting from a consolidated analysis of documents revealing the Commission's cooperation objectives and the contribution of statistical support to their attainment.

The overall objectives (OvO) originate in the *Treaties establishing the European Union* (Maastricht, Amsterdam and Nice) and are the Commission's general development and cooperation objectives which can be broken down into regional foci (see Annex 4). The intermediate objective (IO) is the main objective of statistical cooperation but its formulation remains implicit as there is no policy document for statistical cooperation. The specific objectives (SO) are derived from the operational objectives (OO) which in turn are the results expected from the statistical cooperation activities, as set out in major programming documents. At the lowest level of the diagram, the main statistical cooperation activities are regrouped in four clusters (AC 1 to 4).

To permit delineation and focusing of the scope of the evaluation as well as to give a more concrete content to the evaluation criteria, nine **Evaluation Questions** were proposed:

#### **Relevance**

**EQ1** To what extent were the SPP supported by the European Commission in third countries/regions aimed at reinforcing and supporting the main priorities of the development/cooperation objectives agreed with the partner, and to what extent did they address the related statistical needs?

#### **Effectiveness**

**EQ2** To what extent did the Commission-supported SPP strengthen the statistical systems (including the statistical legal and regulatory framework) of the partner countries/regions?

**EQ3** To what extent did the Commission-supported SPP strengthen the capacity of the partner countries/regions to develop the statistical information (compliant with international standards when relevant) required for identification, implementation and monitoring of specific sector/thematic or national policies?

**EQ4** To what extent did the Commission-supported SPP improve the collection (coverage/frequency), processing, quality control and dissemination of the statistical information needed for the national/regional strategy of the partner country/region?

**EQ5** To what extent did the Commission-supported SPP improve the demand for and use of quality statistics to prepare decisions concerning national/regional strategies and/or specific sector/thematic policies, and to monitor the effects of their implementation, including the interpretation of statistical data.

#### **Efficiency**

**EQ6** To what extent did the implementing modalities of SPP contribute to the attainment of their operational objectives?

#### **Sustainability**

**EQ7** To what extent was sustainability realistically addressed in the programming of SPP and achieved after the end of the project?

#### **Coordination-complementarity**

**EQ8** To what extent were Commission-supported SPP coordinated with and complementary to partners' authorities/government strategies and other bilateral and multilateral interventions? And to what extent did the Commission-supported SPP help the partner country/region to improve its relations with the EU?

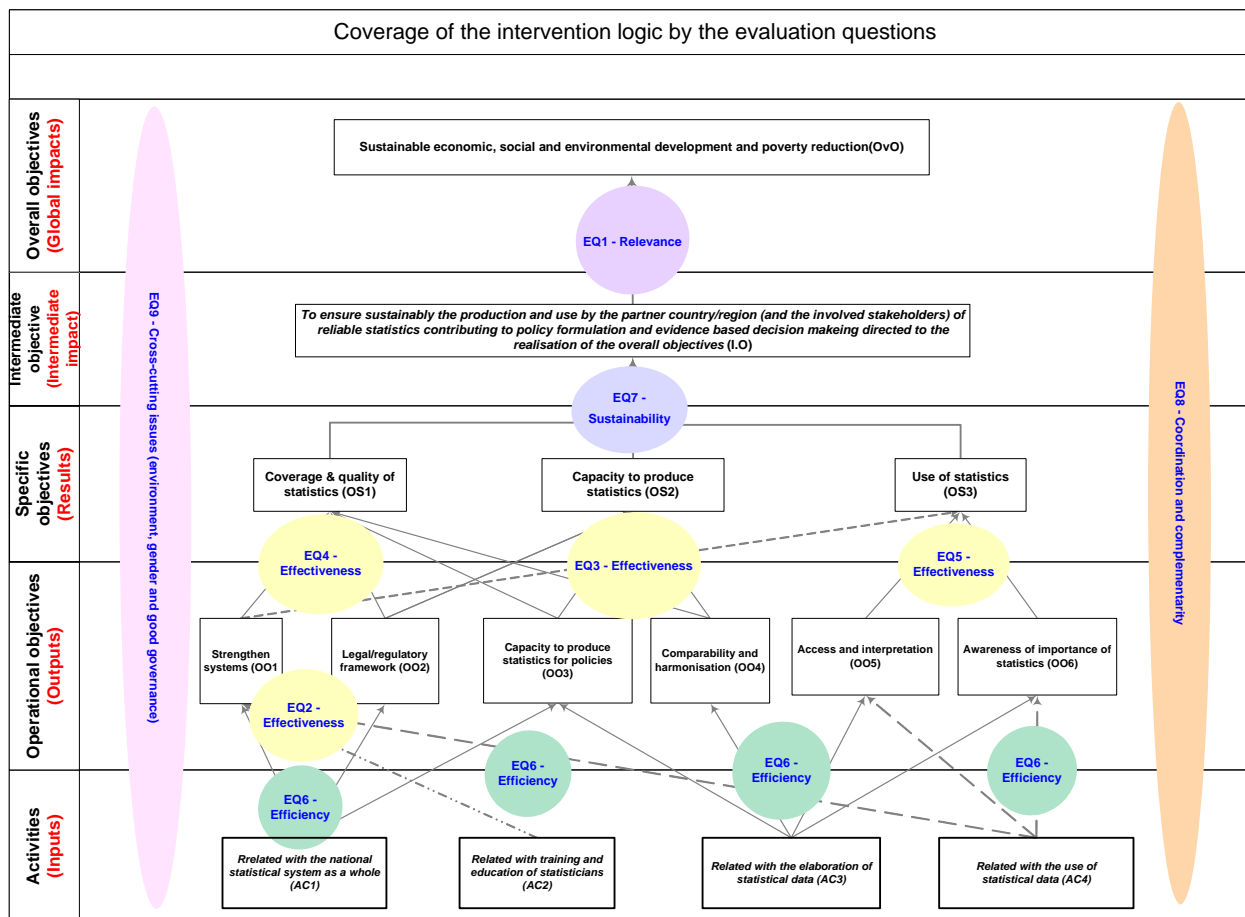
#### **Cross-cutting issues**

**EQ9** To what extent were cross-cutting issues (environment, gender and good governance) taken into account into the SPP and did this result in increased awareness and understanding of these issues by the stakeholders?

Associated with each Evaluation Question, one or more Judgement Criteria specify the basis for answering it. Each Judgement Criterion is validated on the basis of quantitative or qualitative Indicators. Annex 5 presents the complete battery of indicators and judgement criteria associated with each Evaluation Question.

The Evaluation Questions and are meant to verify the extent to which all that was implemented corresponded to the intervention logic and contributed to achieving the intended objectives. The following diagram illustrates the aspects of the intervention logic mainly addressed by a particular Evaluation Question.

To avoid excessive complexity that would make the following diagram too difficult to read, the Evaluation Questions are placed at the location which represents the most important aspect of their coverage: e.g. EQ1 is mostly a question of relevance, EQ8 and EQ9 cover all levels of the intervention logic.



However, neither the previous box presenting the Evaluation Questions nor the diagram give the complete relation between Evaluation Questions and the DAC Evaluation Criteria. The next figure does so and indicates for each DAC Criterion the Evaluation Questions which address it directly (black spot) or indirectly (grey spot).

*Correspondence between the Evaluation questions and the DAC criteria*

	Relevance	Effectiveness / Impact	Efficiency	Sustainability	Cross cutting	3C
EQ1	★				★	★
EQ2		★		★	★	★
EQ3		★		★	★	
EQ4		★		★	★	
EQ5		★		★	★	★
EQ6			★		★	
EQ7				★		
EQ8	★	★	★	★	★	★
EQ9	★	★			★	

c) *Development of the methods and tools to be used for collecting the information related to each indicator*

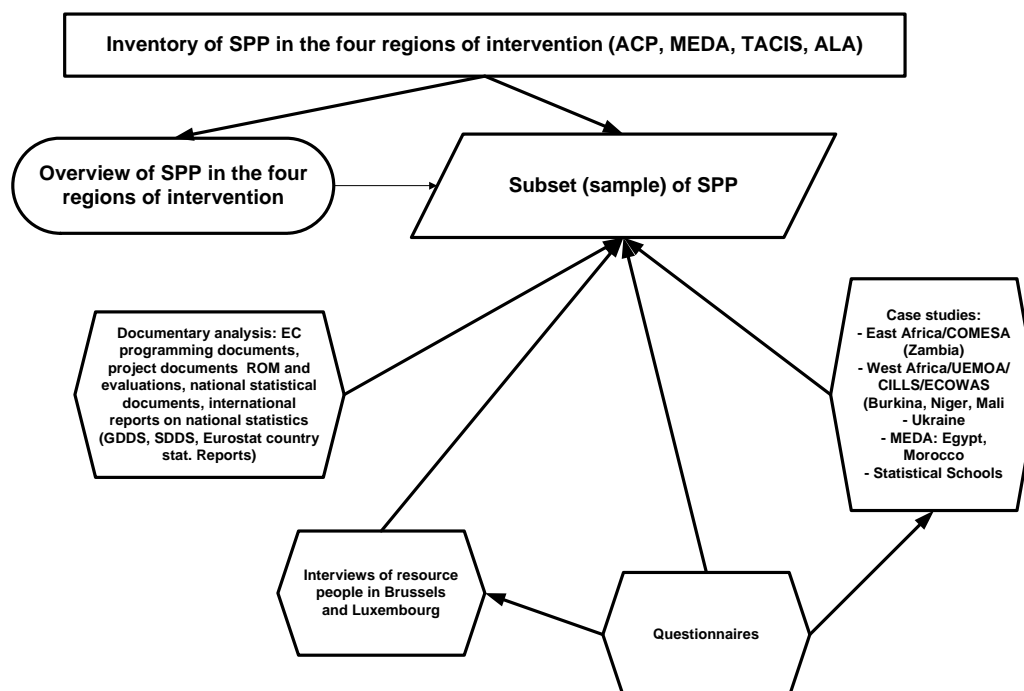
The following important activities were covered during the first two phases of the evaluation: further work on the dataset (inventory); additional documentary analysis and contacts; identification of countries to be visited; preparations of questionnaires and other tools; and preparation of the data collection phase.

During the first phase two reports were produced, presented to and approved by the Reference Group<sup>7</sup>.

## 2.2.2 Second phase: Facts findings

The methodology for the collection of data is illustrated in the following diagram.

<sup>7</sup> Revised Inception Note, 14<sup>th</sup> April 2006.  
Revised Desk Phase Report, 21<sup>st</sup> June 2006.



The starting point is the inventory of SPP. An overall analysis of the entire inventory was conducted<sup>8</sup>. Members of the Reference Group and their services played an important role during this stage and provided assistance in the mapping of projects, in the collection of project information (files from archive). Based on this overview and with the assistance of the Reference Group a sample of 29 projects was drawn up for submission to deeper investigation, including collection of the indicators and other analytical information necessary to validate the judgement criteria and contribute to answering the Evaluation Questions, viz.:

- Documentary analysis based on the strategic, programming and project documents as well as relevant studies<sup>9</sup>;
- Interviews and contacts with Commission Services in Luxembourg and Brussels in relation to the project sample;
- Preparation and conduct of a questionnaire survey<sup>10</sup>. Two categories of audience were targeted: the partner institutions involved in the SPP of the sample, and the Commission Services or regional organisations responsible for their management. The survey was designed to collect the views of these two categories of actors on the same topics. However, in view of the

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Synthesis tables of annex 6 and annex 7.

<sup>9</sup> Annex 10 presents the analytical fiches for the projects of the sample.

<sup>10</sup> Annex 9 explains the design of the questionnaires and modalities of the survey and provides the aggregated results. EUROSTAT provided constructive assistance in the design of the questionnaires.

special nature of the statistical school in French-speaking Africa, two *ad hoc* questionnaires, broadly similar in their objectives, were prepared for projects associated with the school;

- Case studies were also conducted in the form of field visits identified during consultation with the Reference Group<sup>11</sup>:
  - one circular mission to French-speaking West African countries: **Niger-Burkina Faso-Mali**;
  - one mission to an English-speaking country in the Eastern and Southern African Region: **Zambia** as seat of the COMESA;
  - one mission to a French-speaking Maghreb country: **Morocco**;
  - one mission to an English-speaking Mashreq country: **Egypt**;
  - one mission to a TACIS Country: **Ukraine**.

Four field mission reports were produced.

An additional case study on support to the French-speaking African statistical schools has been made and is included in annex 11.

To conduct the fact-finding analysis different instruments were prepared and used: open and structured interviews; analytical project reading grids; focus groups. The fact-finding phase concluded with a meeting to present the Reference Group with a synthesis of the main findings emerging from the data collection process. This work is further elaborated in section 3 of the present report and is the basis for the synthesis and analytical phase of the evaluation.

### 2.2.3 Analysis and synthesis

The third phase consisted of the *analysis* and *synthesis* of the findings and finally the formulation of *conclusions and recommendations*.

## 2.3 Limits and constraints of the evaluation

The evaluation faced a number of constraints and limitations.

- Although the inventory presented in annex 7 presents a fair view of what the Commission has and is currently supporting in the area of statistics, it is not an accurate and comprehensive mapping of statistical interventions. This point was developed in section 2.1.2<sup>12</sup>. In particular information is largely missing on the statistical components of non-statistical projects. Information on the statistical support associated with budget support interventions is also very limited, notwithstanding substantial assistance from members of the Reference Group.

<sup>11</sup> Annex 11 provides the synthesis of the case studies (field visits and meeting with the directors of the statistical schools).

<sup>12</sup> More detail on this can be found in section 4.1.1 of the Revised Desk Phase Report «Issues and limitations of the data collection and documentation process».

- The small number of field visits was not sufficient to capture the very wide variety of SPP in terms of activities, objectives and geographical distribution. This was all the more the case to the extent that SPP are usually only a minor component of assistance to a particular country, with the result that only a very limited aspect of this diversity could be captured in one visit. Under such conditions the data collection process is extremely expensive.
- The questionnaires proved a cost-effective instrument and the relatively high rate of response<sup>13</sup> enabled the team to cope with the previous constraint. However, the compensation was only partial as the rate of response to the questionnaires was much higher for projects covered by the case studies, of which the relevant stakeholders could be directly approached by the evaluation team and actively persuaded to respond.
- The evaluation did not – and probably could not – cover proposed statistics projects that were not carried out. This means that many issues such as the response of Commission services to insufficient institutional and governance environments, or numerous other reasons justifying the non inclusion of projects, could not fully be examined

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<sup>13</sup> See annex 9. Although the rate of response is fairly high on average (60% for Questionnaire 1 and 52% for Questionnaire 2, it is not uniform and for some segments of the survey it proved much lower (Questionnaire 2 in ALA, 25% and Questionnaire 1 in ACP, 43%).



## 3. Main Findings

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This chapter groups together the findings permitting substantiation of the indicators and validation or otherwise of the judgement criteria with a view to answering the Evaluation Questions. These findings were collected using the various instruments mentioned in section 2.1.2. The findings are structured by Evaluation Question and each section concludes with a synthesised answer to the Evaluation Question to which it relates.

### 3.1 Evaluation question n° 1: supporting cooperation objectives and needs

#### ***Evaluation question 1:***

*To what extent were the Commission-supported SPP in third countries/ regions aimed at reinforcing and supporting the main priorities of the development/ cooperation objectives agreed with the partner, and to what extent did they address the related statistical needs?*

#### ***Key findings:***

- Almost all SPP supported by the Commission were in line with the national or regional priorities of the partners. However, the links of SPP to the cooperation objectives varied according to their type.
- The rationale in the selection of the projects that benefited from European technical assistance was not always explicit.
- The projects developed to support a policy had very clear links with the development objectives of the partner countries, but central statistical offices were not systematically involved in their formulation.
- The objectives of the projects aimed at supporting regional integration were defined in very tight collaboration between the regional institutions and the Commission, including definition of priorities, but the member countries and *a fortiori* their national statistical institutes were less involved in the preparation of the projects which the Commission negotiated direct with the regional organisation concerned.
- MEDSTAT and PALOP are a specific case since they were designed and developed as common regional programmes when no regional institution existed to reflect the views of participating countries and the diversity of their respective needs, whether in defining the overall objectives of the programme or in their statistical consequences.
- In the case of statistical schools and training centres, the projects mainly supported the existing infrastructure but were not really a strategic intervention.

The purpose of the question is to assess the relevance of the SPP to the main priorities expressed by the partner (region or country) in relation to meeting its objectives for

development and related statistical needs. More specifically with respect to the intervention logic<sup>14</sup>, the question concerns the link between the intermediate and overall objectives (the two upper frames in diagram 1 of annex 4) and aims to verify (i) that the objectives assigned to the SPP were in line with the overall Commission development and cooperation objectives and (ii) that the SPP were identified and selected on the basis of a preliminary analysis of the existing situations and priority needs. Two judgement criteria are therefore used to verify the relevance of the SPP to these priorities.

***J.1.1. SPP were identified to support the priority development objectives agreed with the partner.***

Almost all SPP supported by the Commission were in line with the national or regional priorities of the partners. This is apparent from the very positive answers provided by the respondents (both partners and Commission Services) to the questionnaire<sup>15</sup>. The respondents to the questionnaires indicated by a large majority (93 %) that their institutions were involved in identification and preparation of the projects. A large majority considered that their positions were reasonably taken into account in the final terms of reference of the project (only 16 % of those that answered ‘yes’ thought that their positions were not considered or only partially taken into consideration).

However, the links between SPP and the cooperation objectives vary according to their type:

At national level:

1. Purely statistical projects, generally in support of the periodic Population censuses, Population and Dwelling censuses (Cabo Verde, Comoros, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Solomon islands, Togo, ...), or Agricultural censuses (Côte-d’Ivoire), or as timely support for a large number of NSIs (China, Lesotho, Madagascar, Rwanda, Ukraine and other CIS countries,...).
2. Projects supporting domestic policies evolved over the period 1995–2005 from specific activities related to structural adjustment policies (Madagascar, Mauritania,...) and the support to the planning cells in the line ministries towards supports concerning more systematically the strategic framework for poverty reduction (Angola, Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Gambia, Niger, ...) or follow-up of budget support policy (Burkina Faso, Mali, Madagascar, ...).

At regional level:

3. Statistical projects in support of a policy aimed at regional integration: UEMOA (project PARSTAT) and ECOWAS (project ECOSTAT), COMESA (external trade statistics), MERCOSUR, Andean Community; or projects meeting the political needs of a regional organisation: CILSS (project DIAPER).
4. Statistical projects provided in the context of regional partnership agreements: MEDSTAT, the statistical component of the programme MEDA launched after signature of the Barcelona Declaration in 1995.
5. Support for statistical schools and training centres.

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<sup>14</sup> See annex 4.

<sup>15</sup> Annex 9, Questionnaires Q1 & Q2, section 2.1

Projects of the first type were in response to a clear demand from the partner countries, with the close involvement of their statistical offices. But the rationale behind the selection of projects that benefited from European technical assistance was not always obvious. The projects developed to support a policy had very clear links with the development objectives of the partner countries. Their definition and selection were made in cooperation with the beneficiaries.

The objectives of the projects of the third type (support to regional integration) were generally defined in very tight collaboration with the regional institution concerned and corresponded to priorities fully agreed between the institution and the Commission. But the national statistical institutes were less involved in project preparation, a phase which the Commission handled direct with the regional organisations (where they existed) or with regional task forces which were generally convened after the inception of the project.

MEDSTAT and PALOP are a special case as it was designed and developed as a common regional programme when no regional institution existed to reflect the views of participating countries and the diversity of their respective needs, whether in defining the overall objectives of the programme or in determining their statistical implications. The design and objectives were decided by the Commission and consequently reflect its views but not necessarily those of the partner region (and *a fortiori* those of its member countries); this situation was partially improved after the inception of the programme by convening regional task forces in which some member states participated, but without really taking into consideration the extreme diversity of situations among the countries concerned.

In the case of statistical schools and training centres, the projects mainly supported the existing infrastructure (scholarships, pedagogical support, improvement of libraries etc.) but were not really strategic interventions; even so these projects were generally a response to demand from the schools and centres concerned.

### ***J.1.2 The SPP were identified and selected on the basis of a preliminary analysis of existing situations and priority needs in the field of statistics.***

Except for projects covered by the first and fifth cases (see the classifications proposed above in the discussion of the previous judgement criterion), which were purely statistical projects, the extent of preliminary consultation of statisticians and statistical offices in the identification and selection of projects varied.

For projects developed in support of a policy, central statistical offices were not systematically involved in their definition, either because the statistical component did not have a sufficiently important weight in the project, or because the main organisation responsible for the project was not the central statistical office. The preparation of projects of the third type (support to regional integration) involved the member States to a minor degree and *a fortiori* their national statistical institutes. The Commission handled that phase direct with the regional organisation concerned; however this situation sometimes improved after project inception with the establishment of regional task forces in which some member States – sometimes all – participated.

In many cases it is difficult to understand the relationship between the statistical interventions and the Commission's overall intervention strategy. SPP in support of specific policies wears clearly linked to the objectives of the national or regional programme (for instance, those associated with budget support or falling in the context of regional integration). Other SPP such as Censuses or the large regional programmes (MEDSTAT, TACIS Statistics) seem to have been developed in line with a specific intervention logic not necessarily derived from that of the regional or national indicative or action programme. In extreme cases (TACIS) the SPP were taken as exogenous inputs into the national programmes with the result that a "strategy of statistical intervention" could develop quite independently from the main cooperation strategy.

Generally, there was no systematic analysis of the existing statistical system and availability of the qualified human resources needed to achieve the objectives of the projects. Where there was such an analysis, it was more often undertaken after than before the inception of the project and the quality and intensity of the analysis varied. For projects developed to support a policy, the analysis of needs for statistical indicators was often made without the participation of statisticians and without systematic reference to existing data or verification of the capacity of the statistical system to produce such indicators. Even if statisticians were unaware of the needs of their users and thus unable to contribute directly to the analysis of needs, including statisticians in these discussions would in itself have helped bridge the gap between producers and users. The essential coherence between the different units of the national statistical system (central statistical institute and statistical services in the line ministries) and the equally important efficient coordination mechanisms were rarely present. The Burkina Faso ARCS (Appui au Renforcement des Capacités Statistiques) project was one of the exceptions found during the evaluation.

Support for statistical education was generally based on an overview of education statistics without preliminary analysis of the needs (quality and quantity) for trained statisticians or of the linkages with the education programmes.

### **Answer to Evaluation Question 1**

There is abundant evidence and acknowledgement by the beneficiaries that the SPP were identified to support the priority development objectives agreed with the partner. However, in many cases the linkage between the Commission's "cooperation strategy" with the partner, on the one hand, and the "statistical strategy" associated with it, on the other, was unclear. As a result the statistical support offered, while valuable, did not necessarily address the other Commission-backed priorities.

The involvement of the national statistical offices in project identification and preparation was very variable, particularly for regional projects.

SPP were not always identified and selected on the basis of a preliminary analysis of existing situations or of the priority needs in the field of statistics, the exception being purely statistical projects. Neither the coherence of national statistical systems nor the need for efficient "statistical coordination" were systematically taken into consideration, thereby placing the efficiency of the system as a whole in jeopardy.

### 3.2 Evaluation question n° 2: strengthening the statistical system of the partner

#### ***Evaluation question 2:***

*To what extent did the Commission-supported SPP strengthen the statistical systems (including the statistical legal and regulatory framework) of the partner countries/regions?*

#### ***Key findings:***

- With few exceptions the SPP supported by the Commission fundamentally addressed neither the issue of the legal and regulatory framework nor that of overall coordination of the statistical system at country level.
- The SPP improved awareness of the need for coordination and exchange of information between producers of statistics across the national institutional system and between national and regional institutions, and they have stimulated positive steps in that direction.
- The SPP contributed to strengthening the statistical systems of the partners through transfer of professional know-how supported by training, equipment and software. However certain factors, particularly in the area of training, limited the outcomes of these contributions.
- Everywhere improvements were observed with regard to dissemination and promotion of statistical information. The contribution of the SPP to this trend cannot be verified but they certainly raised awareness levels. The importance of this aspect is increasingly being taken into account in the design of new SPP.

The purpose of the question is to assess the effectiveness of the SPP in building up and strengthening partners' statistical systems in a comprehensive manner. More specifically with respect to the intervention logic<sup>16</sup>, the question verifies how far operational objectives 1 and 2 (OO1 and OO2 in diagram 1 of annex 4) were realised and whether the activities targeted on these objectives produced the intended results. Five judgement criteria are therefore used to verify the contribution of SPP to the strengthening of statistical systems.

#### ***J.2.1. SPP contributed to improving the legal, regulatory and managerial framework governing the production and distribution of statistics.***

Few project examined in this evaluation fundamentally addressed the core issue of the legal framework and reorganisation of the statistical system in the overall architecture of public administration; viz. statistical legislation and the administrative status and organisation of the national statistical institutes<sup>17</sup>. However, some training programmes included management training and therefore indirectly contributed to better organisation.

<sup>16</sup> See annex 4.

<sup>17</sup> This does not mean that the issue has been completely ignored. For instance, the SADC Regional Statistical Training project (which was not part of the sample analysed in annex 10) collected information on the legal structure and organisation of the statistical system.

Other donors tend to address more carefully this dimension, or even develop projects primarily aimed at the institutional strengthening of NSO. This is in particular the case of the World Bank and of the projects funded by the Trust Fund for Strengthening Statistical Capacities or by the STATCAP facility. The GDDS and SDDS of the IMF verify a number of conditions regarding the legal and regulatory framework. It must also be highlighted that some recent Commission projects address specifically the problem (for instance, the situational analysis conducted in the inception phase of MEDSTAT 2, or a recent tender for a project in Benin).

Statistical assistance for sector-wide budget support programmes tended to be specifically targeted on particular indicators or sector information systems. Over time there has been a perceptible trend towards interventions directed mainly to deriving monitoring and results indicators for an entire sector's management information systems. Even in the latter case (as can be verified in the Health and Education MIS currently in place in Zambia) the MIS tended to be viewed in isolation without consideration of their role in the global statistical system or reference to the application of statistical laws and regulations.

Nevertheless these issues were partially addressed in at least some projects. For instance, the Ukrainian statistical law of 1992 was revised in 2000. The revision benefited from inputs from the Statistics 2 and 4 programmes in Ukraine and the revision of the law was approved by the Statistics Departments of the IMF and EUROSTAT. In Ukraine, however, the SPP had no impact on the general organisation and management of the statistical system, the functioning of which differs little from that of the previous command economy system.

The SPP-supported Census in Nigeria was an example where attention was devoted to accurate design and very thorough development of the legal and regulatory framework of the operation. But this improvement remained circumscribed within the context of a particular project without necessarily benefiting the overall statistical system.

In several countries the Commission imposed changes on the administrative and legal status of statistical organisations as a condition for its assistance. For example in 1994 the Commission made it a prerequisite for its support for the government of Tanzania, which had taken over the EASTC (East African Statistical Training Centre), that the Centre be established under Tanzanian law as a national institution with a regional vocation; while in Niger the INS (Institut National de Statistiques) was transformed in the same year into an autonomous EPA (Etablissement Public Administratif). These preconditions, although generally well justified and commendable, were imposed to enhance the chances of success of individual projects, and were not part of comprehensive and integrated support to the statistical systems as key components of the overall architecture of the public services.

Whereas the Commission has not focused its interventions on integration of statistical systems into a wider whole, its SPP have contributed to improvements to the statistical systems and the services they render. This is apparent from the very positive answers provided by respondents (both partners and Commission Services) to the questionnaire<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> Annex 9, Questionnaires Q1 & Q2, section 2.4.

While this may seem to contradict what was said previously about the absence of an SPP focus on statistical systems as a whole, in reality SPP had a positive effect on the capacity of the institutions and the specific policies they targeted (also see EQ4). Questionnaire respondents tended to assess improvements to statistical systems from the standpoint of production of statistical information related to major policy processes. Responses to section 2.4 of questionnaires Q1 and Q2 indicate that the SPP contributed to the following improvements to statistical systems, in order of importance: improved information exchange between producers of statistics; enhanced capacity to follow-up the regional integration process; and enhanced capacity to follow up PRSPs and the MDGs.

***J.2.2 The SPP supported by the Commission have led to a better coordination between NSO and other empowered actors.***

As observed for the previous judgement criterion, overall coordination of the statistical system at country level (i.e. distribution of tasks and responsibilities between different parts of the system; and overall methodological and quality control of the decentralised aspects of production of statistics) was not addressed by the SPP. The only exception found during this evaluation was the ARCS (Appui au Renforcement des Capacités Statistiques) project in Burkina Faso that aimed precisely at ensuring such overall coordination.

In-country statistical coordination between statistical producers in a specific field (trade, health, education, etc.) was often mentioned in the SPP programming documents<sup>19</sup> but seldom realised. Recent projects developing sector MIS have tended to programme this aspect extremely carefully and accurately but are at too early a stage for any assessment of results to be possible. This is the case with the education and health MIS projects in Zambia, but the fact remains that these projects also ignore aspects of overall coordination across sectors and with the NSO. In the older projects the need for such coordination was always emphasised but often without identified activities to ensure it was achieved, and therefore it was seldom realised, either because of cultural factors or secretive departmental traditions (for example MEDSTAT in Egypt), or because the SPP related only to the NSO and not to other producers of primary or compiled data (for example Egypt and Ukraine).

Nevertheless, the interviews, field visits and questionnaires converge to indicate that SPP have increased awareness of the need for coordination and generally have stimulated an exchange of information between producers.

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<sup>19</sup> Coordination and cooperation between the statistical institutions and line ministries or non statistical institutions producers of statistics (for example the central banks, the revenue authorities) is always an issue but it is seldom addressed by the SPP, partly because many statistical projects tend to focus on the official statistical institutions as single interlocutor.

***J.2.3/4 The SPP supported by the Commission allowed improvements in the availability and the quality of human resources and equipment (including software) of the statistical institutions.***

***The SPP supported by the Commission allowed development of local know-how (namely concerning the work methods and the capacity to elaborate guidelines) in accordance with world standards.***

Interviews and questionnaires confirm that practically all SPP aimed at providing training and upgrading qualifications for statistical staff or provision of equipment and software. In most cases transfer of know-how and effective improvements in skills have occurred.

As far as *human resources* are concerned, the questionnaires<sup>20</sup> indicate that improvements in the professional skills of staff are regarded, by respondents on the partner side as well as on the Commission side, as a very significant contribution.

Interviews and questionnaires identified the following success factors:

- Short training sessions (in-country or organised on the occasion of workshops regrouping participants from different countries) proved useful especially for people already trained;
- Longer-term on-the-job training, as provided for instance under the PARSTAT, RHCTSS and the China statistical projects, permitted effective transfer of know-how;
- Training of trainers, where it took place, had a positive impact on sustainability (as in the case of RHCTSS).

Factors limiting achievements included:

- Insufficient training needs assessment;
- Insufficient training of trainers;
- A trend in SPP favouring short-term training over long-term on-the-job training, reflecting budgetary and project organisation constraints rather than needs assessments.

Regarding equipment, it is worth noting that acquisition and upgrading of equipment was regarded as an important positive contribution of SPP (questionnaires, section 2.2) but that more importance was given to this aspect by the Commission respondents than by the partners. The project documents and interviews generally indicate that enough equipment was provided and that it was not a major constraint.

The SPP also provided software regarded as essential by some beneficiaries (in East Africa interviewees indicated that before EUROTRACE nothing was available for compilation of trade data) whereas some other countries (case of Morocco) mentioned that it entailed costs of adaptation to their specific needs. This results from the MEDSTAT 1 generic approach in countries with large differences of context and history.

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<sup>20</sup> Questionnaires Q1 and Q2, section 2.2.



***J.2.5 The SPP supported by the Commission allowed raising of the capacity of statistical producers in the partner country/region to promote their activities and their results.***

Improvements in dissemination were observed nearly everywhere: development of web sites, adherence to the GDDS or SDDS, availability of statistics via brochures, and electronic support. It is difficult to link these improvements specifically to Commission-supported projects, but undoubtedly SPP contributed to raising awareness. Many SPP had components addressing this aspect but unless projects provided specific funding for the purpose, awareness was seldom followed by effective dissemination and publicity.

Special mention must be made of improvements in documenting of methodologies, to which many SPP projects contributed (e.g. China statistical project, Ukraine projects, MEDSTAT).

### **Answer to Evaluation Question 2**

There is abundant evidence and acknowledgement by the beneficiaries that the SPP significantly enhanced specific components of the statistical system, whether a particular institution or particular category of statistics. However their contribution to the design and functioning of the statistical system as a central coherent element of public administration was negligible since no SPP addressed that issue. This “partial equilibrium approach” had positive results in the sense that key activities related to training and education of statisticians, and to support for the organisation, equipment and software of individual institutions, delivered good quality outputs. However the effects on the functioning of the overall statistical system were more limited and many deficiencies remain in the legal and regulatory frameworks and in national capacities for coordinating the development, monitoring and quality control of official statistics.

### 3.3 Evaluation question n° 3: Improvement in the capacity to produce statistical information

#### ***Evaluation Question 3:***

*To what extent did the Commission-supported SPP strengthen the capacity of the partner countries/regions to develop the statistical information (compliant with international standards when relevant) required for identification, implementation and monitoring of specific sector/thematic or national policies?*

#### ***Key Findings:***

- Support to sectoral thematic statistics was the focus of many projects.
- Improved capacity was evident in areas such as regular production of trade data, early warning indicators, national accounts, the non-observed economy, and social indicators. Major issues remains in terms of trade data at national level.
- The capacity to conduct surveys (drawing up of samples, interview techniques, processing of data) was the focus of many SPP or SPP components, developed in various ways in the institutions supported.
- Long-term technical assistance projects always improved the professional capacity of staff in the institutions supported. Short term technical assistance proved of variable quality and utility on the partner side.

#### ***J.3.1 The SPP supported by the Commission allowed raising of the capacity of the partner country/region to collect and compile data so as to produce sector/thematic statistics (compliant to the international standards when relevant).***

Several projects aimed at developing statistical instruments to support the monitoring of regional or national partner policies:

- Diaper has contributed to improved capacity in the development of early warning indicators related to food security. In some countries, the results of this support could barely be maintained (because of lack of partner ownership or of an absence of take-over from Diaper by any other external source of support).
- Regional production of trade data generally improved over the evaluation period but remains dependent on sometimes limited national capacity to produce comprehensive and reliable trade data on time.
- The monitoring and evaluation of PRSPs was initially hindered by gaps in the information required or by mismatches between the data collected and the objectives of the policy supported. The first generation of SPP provided under the framework of budget support hardly addressed this problem, or only tackled specific gaps relating to those indicators related to budget support. Efforts to build adequate indicators and strengthen the statistical system were more recent, and have primarily addressed the capacity of statistical institutions, and more occasionally gaps in production of primary data. As this new support is recent, it is difficult at present to assess its effects.

When satisfactory collection of primary data is not guaranteed, downstream data cannot be significantly improved. This was not always taken into account in SPP. Some projects were conducted exclusively with national statistical institutions without attention to or support for their primary data providers. This was the case, for instance, in Egypt where Medstat-COMEXT handled the CAPMAS without strengthening the Customs that appear to be the weak point in the chain of production of external trade data. This approach focused on the official statistical institution was also adopted in TACIS. In Ukraine, for instance, it is only in the recent programmes that support to customs was addressed; though conducted in a broader perspective, it should improve the coordination of the different services producing the trade statistics. Not surprisingly projects focusing exclusively on the official statistical institutions are faring worse than similar projects in other regions which address all components of the chain, for instance, the RHCTSS in COMESA.

***J.3.3 The SPP supported by the Commission allowed raising of the capacity of the partner country/region to elaborate and implement censuses and to conduct surveys useful directly or indirectly for the production of public statistics.***

In the ACP countries<sup>21</sup> considerable support was given for the conduct of censuses. In several cases they were funded by a pool of donors where the Commission was not the leading agency. It is a complex matter to analyse the link between these efforts and the development of capacity to produce public statistics. The first reason is that in many cases censuses are supported because the local context is particularly sensitive and in the absence of support they might either not take place or lead to contentious results, possibly generating violent reactions. The second reason is that censuses are “one shot” operations that require an enormous effort in terms of recruiting training temporary survey agents to conduct interviews. This process does not strengthen the capacity of the statistical institutions; and observations confirm that the actual contribution of that support to capacity building was only marginal when it existed at all. The main issue is therefore whether census results contributed to and were used for improving statistical information in specific areas. In the PRSP context, the importance of better understanding of poverty and the potential contribution of censuses to statistical poverty mapping was well perceived, but this was not translated into significant modifications to the design of censuses or to the census questions.

Support for implementation of surveys was effective when SPP were primarily targeted on that objective (e.g. non-observed economy in MEDA countries, specific surveys in Ukraine, Burkina Faso). In some cases the capacity to conduct surveys set up by the SPP in a particular context encouraged the partner to transfer the acquired skills and tools to other sectors (this was the case in China and Ukraine, for example). Not all beneficiaries could afford the effort so and some beneficiaries of SPP regretted that their demands of support for organising such transfers were not met with a positive Commission response. This was the case in Mediterranean countries where the capacity to conduct surveys on the environment and transport sectors was developed under MEDSTAT I and encouraged several partners to extend these instruments to other areas of the sectors receiving support.

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<sup>21</sup> It should be noted that censuses have been supported by SPP exclusively in the ACP although at some point there seem to have been a request for assistance in this area in China.

Morocco wanted to develop data collection in waste management, noise and rail transport, but at that time, these domains were not yet fully developed at EU level and were considered unsuitable for inclusion in MEDSTAT I. According to EUROSTAT files no formal request was addressed to the Commission. Therefore the Community did not support the Moroccan efforts to develop data collection in these domains.

***J.3.4 The SPP supported by the Commission allowed development of local know-how (namely concerning the work methods and the capacity to elaborate guidelines) in accordance with world standards.***

Several projects focused on developing statistical guidelines: they achieved their objective. In terms of development of local know-how, results vary. In some programmes training was designed and implemented on a generic basis, with no adaptation to uneven recipient skill levels. In the case of MEDSTAT 1 for example, the “average” offer was seen as positive to the less advanced countries, while others expected more advanced technical support. The aim was to have a harmonised minimum at regional level, it evolved along the project life. Training evolved over the evaluation period from support to statisticians in NSI to more involvement of the statistical departments in line ministries (mainly in focal sectors), and more recently still to training and awareness-raising for institutions providing primary data (e.g. directors of hospitals in Zambia). This change emanates from the observed limitations and failures of the past.

***J.3.2 The SPP supported by the Commission allowed raising of the capacity of the partner country/region to elaborate and use monitoring tools dedicated to specific programmes/policies (for instance indicators to monitor sector wide approach programmes implemented by local authorities, the Commission and/or other donors).***

***J.3.5 The SPP supported by the Commission improved the local capacity to collect the statistical information needed for the national/regional strategy of the Partner country/region.***

Some projects developed capacity within line ministries to collect primary data, but without coordinating this effort with the NSI. The absence of coordination results in overlaps, as services tend to collect the same information using different methods and classifications, even outside their own field (as illustrated in the health sector in Mali, with conflicts between the *Direction Nationale de la Santé* and the *Cellule de Planification et de Statistique Santé*). The absence of coordination can also result in gaps (again in Mali, where civil registration is considered the responsibility of the Ministry of Interior, but this is not acknowledged by the Ministry). Apart from the ARCS (*Appui au Renforcement des Capacités Statistiques*) in Burkina Faso no project has directly addressed the problems of coordination and interface between statistical and other institutions.

***J.3.6 The SPP supported by the Commission have improved the capacity to process the primary data into the required statistical information.***

Commission support in terms of equipment and software (ASYCUDA, EUROTRACE, ERETES) was always linked to appropriate training. However this technical support was characterized by discontinuities and is not guaranteed in terms of maintenance and upgrade of software as far as ASYCUDA is concerned. Regarding EUROTRACE and ERETES, the support was time-bound and measures for the transfer of know-how (e.g. training, creation of user group) have been organised.

It is worth mentioning that a strategy has been developed to facilitate the transfer of knowledge of the ERETES and EUROTRACE tools to users. This includes training of the trainers in order to strengthen capacities of organisations which are in charge of first level user's support, drafting documentation and also setting up a user group. Also the corrective maintenance of these software is still ensured by EUROSTAT<sup>22</sup>.

Projects improved the professional capacity of staff in the supported institutions. The degree to which this improvement enhanced sustainable production of good-quality statistics varied and was highly dependent on (i) the type of support provided (long term AT, short term AT, training, support to line ministries); (ii) the absorption capacity of beneficiaries; (iii) the thematic focus of support (support to the system as a whole or to specific statistical domains or indicators); (iv) continuity of support; and (v) the willingness of the partner to monitor its policies.

The institutional status of statistical institutions improves when there is dialogue between decision-makers and statisticians. The question is to what extent SPPs encouraged this dialogue. This clearly occurred when an SPP resulted from a request from the partner based on a perceived need for information to underpin a policy; the effect is more ambiguous when SPP respond to demands for information from the European side.

***J.3.7 The SPP supported by the Commission allowed raising of the capacity of the partner country/region to control and diversify the sources of data and assess their quality, consistency and relevance to producing the required statistical information.***

The contribution of SPP to monitoring and improving policies conducted jointly by the Commission and the partner is linked to how mature these policies are:

- In the case of regional integration, statistical support addressed the key instruments needed to monitor policies (trade statistics, harmonization of national accounts indicators and of consumer price indices, macroeconomic surveillance) and had varying degrees of success according to the weight, the willingness and legal means of the regional institution. Generally, capacity of the regional partner remained limited to organising collection and management of the information required for the conduct of regional policies.

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<sup>22</sup> At least for what concerns the national version of EUROTRACE, the regional one being discontinued.

- Under budget support, the first generation of SPP defined the information needed to monitor poverty reduction policies but did not address the issue of how to obtain it. The second generation focused more on systemic problems of collection and management information systems. This approach focused on the follow up of PRPS indicators but had not yet addressed the integration of the PRSP monitoring system into the national statistical system in the widest sense.
- Finally, the preparation of EPA remains dependent on extremely weak statistical information.

### Answer to Evaluation Question 3

The SPP supported by the Commission enhanced the capacity of partners to collect and process data on early warning indicators and regional trade data. This resulted from a valuable learning process in relation to long-supported sectors. This learning process is now leading to renewal of the statistical approach to budget support, with the trend in support moving from a focus on specific indicators in the direction of institutional capacity building (with the primary focus on statistical institutions, extending in the most advanced cases to producers of primary data).

The SPP supported by the Commission raised the capacity of partners to conduct surveys when they were explicitly focused on that objective. In some cases an improved capacity developed in a particular context encouraged the partner to transfer it to other sectors, sometimes in the absence of further Commission support.

Some projects developed capacity within line ministries to collect primary data, but without coordinating this effort with the NSI.

The capacity to conduct censuses was not substantially improved in the sense that Commission support was *ad hoc* and not targeted on building sustainable capacity.

### 3.4 Evaluation question n° 4: Improvement in collection, processing, control and dissemination of statistical data

#### ***Evaluation question 4:***

*To what extent did the Commission-supported SPP improve the collection (coverage/frequency), processing, quality control and dissemination of the statistical information needed for the national/regional strategy of the partner country/region?*

#### ***Key findings:***

- Almost all projects contributed to increasing the quality and diversity of sets of statistical data accessible to all users. The most significant contributions are improved comparability with international statistics, improved recording of data, improved access to meta-information, improved coverage of existing statistics and extension of existing statistics to new domains. But in most cases quality remains a major issue.
- Improving accessibility of data was a rather new component of technical assistance projects. There was general awareness of the importance of this requirement and a general trend towards improved accessibility.
- A large number of projects resulted in better coverage of statistical information which in turn allowed better identification, formulation and monitoring of national or regional policies.
- At national level projects linked to budgetary support or supporting poverty reduction policies gave rise to improvements in statistical coverage. There are positive aspects to this kind of support; but there are also many significant risks associated with developing specific indicators for monitoring specific policies when that is not accompanied by parallel support to the statistical system as a whole.

The purpose of the question was to assess the effectiveness of the SPP in improving collection, processing, quality control, and dissemination of the statistical information needed for the partner's strategy. More specifically, with respect to the intervention logic<sup>23</sup>, the question addresses the extent of achievement of the second specific objective (OS2 in diagram 1 of annex 4) and assesses the extent to which the underlying operational objectives (OO1 to OO4) have contributed to it. Three judgement criteria are therefore used to verify how far the SPP increased the quality and diversity of the sets of available data, enhanced the identification and monitoring of policies, and improved the quality of the statistics needed for this objective.

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<sup>23</sup> See annex 4.

***J.4.1. The SPP supported by the Commission allowed increases in the quality and diversity (in terms of covering new domains) of sets of statistical data accessible to all users.***

The questionnaires<sup>24</sup> clearly indicate that almost all projects contributed to increasing the quality and diversity of the sets of statistical data accessible to all users. Moreover, there is a good correlation between the replies from the partner organisations and those from the Commission Delegations. The most significant contributions are:

- Better international comparability of statistics (e.g. data on external trade in China);
- Improved recording of data;
- Access to meta-information (information on methods, concepts, nomenclature);
- Improved quality of existing statistics (e.g. consumer price indices in UEMOA countries, national accounts, early warning indicators, etc.);
- Production of statistics in new domains (environment, social indicators, Millennium Development Indicators, informal economy);
- A reduction in the time needed to make the information produced available to users.

The projects aimed at strengthening regional integration yielded very good results in policy areas where there was good ownership by the regional institution and the member states (e.g. indicators for multilateral surveillance in the UEMOA); in other areas the results were not as good (e.g. data on external trade in the same region).

In most cases quality remains a major issue (mirror data for external trade, comparability between countries of the same region or between regions ...).

As far as data dissemination is concerned, improving accessibility of data is a rather new component in technical assistance projects. There is a general awareness of the importance of this requirement and a general trend favouring improvements in accessibility. Some projects have included provision (publications, websites, subscriptions to SDDS or GDDS) to that end (e.g. TACIS Statistics 8 in Ukraine).

***J.4.2 Statistical coverage in areas of importance for the identification, formulation and monitoring of national/regional policies was broadened and deepened as a result of SPP supported by the Commission.***

A large number of projects resulted in a better coverage of statistical information allowing better identification, formulation and monitoring of national or regional policies. This was particularly true of projects aimed at strengthening regional integration, either at macroeconomic level (e.g. PARSTAT – see findings for the previous judgement criterion) or at the level of certain sectors (e.g. the ASYCUDA/EUROTRACE project in the COMESA which aimed at increasing efficiency in the customs process and at improving revenue control).

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<sup>24</sup> Questionnaires Q1 and Q2, section 2.3.



This was also partially true at a lower level for other regional projects like MEDSTAT, even where there was no regional counterpart to the Commission, resulting in an analysis of needs based mainly on the views of the Commission rather than those of the beneficiary countries<sup>25</sup>. However, in this case some new domains were explored (environmental statistics, informal economy) and coverage of more classical domains was improved (transportation, migrations, national accounts, tourism ...), in accordance with the domains covered by the Barcelona Declaration.

At national level projects linked to budgetary support, particularly in the “social” ministries, or projects supporting poverty reduction policies, permitted improvements in statistical coverage. There were positive aspects to this kind of support, but also many significant risks associated with developing specific indicators oriented to the monitoring of specific policies without, at least in parallel, a more systemic approach including strengthening of the basic capacities of the NSIs to produce current statistics and carry out their daily missions. Production of current statistics, and of the data required for the monitoring of the strategic framework for poverty reduction or other sector policies, should be two facets of a single national strategy for statistical development prepared and co-ordinated by the NSI.

***J.4.3 The quality of statistics in areas of importance for the identification, formulation and monitoring of national/regional policies improved as a result of SPP supported by the Commission.***

It is difficult to measure global change of quality in statistics. The participation of transition and developing countries in the operation of GDDS under the auspices of the IMF was too recent for observation of any significant results to be possible.

Globally, quality certainly increased over the ten-year period, but it is almost impossible to be precise. Two important regional projects may be taken as examples:

- DIAPER: owing to improved capacity of the ministries of agriculture for collecting, producing and disseminating data on food and agriculture, the CILSS countries can now count on sound methodologies, better visibility of the agricultural statistical services, production of indicators relevant to follow-up of the MDGs, and better quality of national accounts. But the sustainability of the results over the long term is not ensured.
- PARSTAT: significant progress was achieved but, owing to weak national advocacy along with inadequate human and budgetary resources, delays were still evident and shortcomings remained in production of national accounts; at the same time, owing to the stress placed on multilateral surveillance with only limited focus on other statistics or on co-ordination of all statistical activities within the UEMOA, progress with social indicators was less good.

In general, quality is more and more perceived as a major concern.

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<sup>25</sup> See Evaluation Question 1

### Answer to Evaluation Question 4

No simple answer can be given to this evaluation question. On the one hand, there is some evidence from and acknowledgement by the beneficiaries that the SPP gave rise to increased quality and diversity of the sets of statistical data accessible to all users. There are more extensive linkages between the definition, preparation and implementation of statistical projects and programmes, on the one hand, and the identification, formulation and monitoring of policies, either national or regional, on the other.

On the other hand, quality remains a major issue and the level of awareness of the importance of statistics still needs to be raised.

### 3.5 Evaluation question n° 5: Improvement in the demand for and use of statistical data

#### ***Evaluation question 5:***

*To what extent did the Commission-supported SPP improve the demand for and use of quality statistics to prepare decisions concerning national/regional strategies and/or specific sector/thematic policies, and to monitor the effects of their implementation, including the interpretation of statistical data?*

#### ***Key findings:***

- The issue of raising the demand for statistics and their understanding by decision-makers is mentioned in many projects but little firm action was being planned.
- The number of seminars and workshops addressed to users was very limited.
- Provision for promoting statistics was included in most projects but was generally not sustainable beyond project termination.
- No projects had been undertaken on producer-user dialogue or on advocacy.
- Projects in preparation had begun to include the advocacy dimension.

The question assesses whether the SPP supported by the Commission improved decision-makers' and stakeholders' awareness of the importance of statistics or their capacity to use them; and whether these actors have increasingly used statistics in their activities. The question addresses the *effectiveness* of the SPP in raising understanding and awareness of the utility of good quality statistics among the partner country/region authorities, firms and Civil Society. It also permits assessment of the sustainability of the results achieved by the SPP insofar as it is very unlikely that efforts will continue if there is no demand for statistical information.

Three judgement criteria have been identified to help answer this question.

***J.5.1 The SPP supported by the Commission improved the deciders' and other stakeholders' understanding and interpreting of statistical data.***

A distinction must be made between two categories of SPP:

- Those designed to develop the statistical infrastructure of the country in general without addressing a particular segment of the statistical information needed for specific policies. Such projects included support for statistical schools and training centres, generic interventions to strengthen statistical institutions, and support for improving methodologies, harmonisation and processing of statistical categories (environment, transport data, etc.);
- Those designed specifically to provide the information needed for implementation and monitoring of well identified policies: these included for instance SPP supporting regional integration, monitoring of objectives agreed during the policy dialogue underlying budget support, etc.

The absence of components or activities addressing the dimension of understanding and interpretation of data does not necessarily imply that they were not necessary. On the contrary, only projects in the second category mentioned which addressed that dimension were likely to produce useful outcomes.

Project documents generally mentioned the need for developing the capacity for understanding and interpreting data but few projects included explicit actions to this end. Even the projects of the second category included only nominal reference to this in their documentation; however in this case a positive trend was perceptible and more recent projects accompanying budget support included provision for the “statistical education” of targeted users. The projects were too recent for an assessment of their results to be possible.

By the end of the evaluation period the number of seminars and workshops set up to help users interpret data had remained very limited and in most cases they were directed to producers of statistics rather than to final users such as policy-makers, Civil Society or other stakeholders. For instance, the Medstat and Statistics (TACIS) projects systematically included training and seminars addressing interpretation of data, but they were designed to help statisticians assess data quality, rather than help policy-makers interpret data.

It is worth noting that some organisations benefiting from SPP, for instance the statistical department of the COMESA and the Direction de la Statistique in Morocco, have organised seminars and information sessions for their main “clients”, that is targeted categories of policy-makers or stakeholders; but it was not possible to establish a link between these initiatives and the SPP.

***J.5.2 The SPP supported by the Commission contributed to improving promotion of their activities and results by the statistical producers in the partner country/region.***

The issue was largely covered under J.2.5. The questionnaires Q1 and Q2 included a set of questions on this point<sup>26</sup>. The answers revealed a difference of perception between the producers and at least one category of user: indeed 89% of the respondents of the statistical institutions considered that explanations were systematically attached to the statistics they distributed, and 69% that they organise seminars and meetings with the users of the information. However, for respondents to questionnaire Q2, who constituted only a segment of the population of users, these percentages were reduced respectively to 57% and 52%; it is worth noting that all respondents to questionnaire Q1 answered these two questions, whereas 30% and 17% of questionnaire Q2 did not answer the questions, probably because they did not know the answers.

***J.5.3 The SPP supported by the Commission developed an active sector dialogue between statistics producers of the partner country/region and data users (including the national public authorities, the firms, the civil society, and the international donors).***

No projects were exclusively targeted on the advocacy issue but some elements of dialogue between producers and users were perceived<sup>27</sup>, although it was not possible to assess clearly the contribution of the SPP to this outcome.

Some statistical institutions (Central Statistical Office in Zambia, CAPMAS in Egypt, for example) had recently engaged in a policy of regular surveys to assess user demand for their data; interview data points to absence of any link between these initiatives and the SPP as the projects supporting these institutions included no specific activities to this end.

It was in projects linked to food security and poverty reduction that the team encountered more concern for this issue and for organisation of specific activities. The DIAPER III project placed much emphasis on the question and developed an elaborate mechanism of analysis and dissemination. However, results did not match expectations and even awareness of what data was available was weak.

In the PRSP process regular reviews had been organised into which the use of statistical data was integrated, generating a “self feeding” process. This may be a major explanation for the clear trend in statistical projects accompanying budget support. Over time they moved away from simple calculation of specific indicators towards production of the complex information sets needed to formulate and implement policies in the sectors supported. Emphasis was increasingly placed on use of the data not only for verifying the extent to which variable budget support tranches can be disbursed but also for moving towards evidence-based sector policies. It is evident that budget support programmes always included a component for “institutional strengthening”. This amount, usually 3-5%

<sup>26</sup> Annex 9, questionnaires Q1 and Q2 section 2.5.

<sup>27</sup> For instance the SADC Regional Statistical Training Programme planned and carried out training of users.

of the total budget support, was available in technical assistance projects to improve the capacity of the beneficiary to use its budget for implementing its poverty reduction policy. The facility was mainly usable in assistance to public finance management and development of statistical information systems. It could be mobilised at the request of the beneficiary. It had remained largely under-utilised, but when utilised (example of Mali, Burkina Faso, Zambia) it correctly addressed utilisation of the data for decision-making. Such projects could be seen as the first attempts by the Commission to really address the advocacy issue. Nevertheless, the low rate of demand by the beneficiaries for the use of this facility tended to demonstrate that there was as yet no real perception of the importance of sound statistical information in preparing and implementing policies.

### **Answer to Evaluation Question 5**

Overall the Commission SPP included few activities and resources targeted on advocacy and stimulation of demand for relevant, reliable and credible statistical information by policy-makers and stakeholders (including Civil Society). There was only extremely limited evidence of increased use of statistical information by the decision-makers, and even less evidence of increased demand from decision-makers that would be demonstrated by allocation of increased resources to the statistical institutions. Where such demand was evident the contribution of the SPP was impossible to assess.

The PRSP process and the budget support provided by the Commission to fund it favoured a trend to closer interaction between producers and users of data for policy making. This trend was visible in the Commission SPP but demand for this type of assistance remained low and, by the end of the period, SPP had not significantly improved either the degree of dialogue between producers and users, or the level of user awareness of the importance of statistical information.

### 3.6 Evaluation question n° 6: Contribution of implementation to attainment of objectives

#### ***Evaluation Question 6:***

*To what extent did the implementing modalities of SPP contribute to the attainment of their operational objectives?*

#### ***Key Findings:***

- Owing to their instrumental role in decision-making, statistics interventions involved data producers, analysts, decision-makers and Civil Society at regional, national and local levels. These features impact on selection of the best adapted instruments and levels of intervention.
- A “value for money” benchmark for interventions was limited by the diversity of partners’ situations (public reform, market, etc.) and by the variable level of Commission support for the same objective (as for example in the case of support to trade statistics).
- Procedures were unanimously recognised as heavy, generally requiring costly adaptation on both the partner and Commission sides.
- The lessons from the past were generally taken into account in successive interventions. This was observed across all sectors at both regional and national level.

#### ***J.6.1 The Commission's organisation framework and division of responsibilities fostered delivery of programmes and projects.***

SPP entailed implementation modalities involving both the Commission Services (in Brussels and in the Delegations) and EUROSTAT. Three models of cooperation emerge from this situation:

- In the case of Medstat and TACIS Statistics programmes, the strategy roadmap was defined by Relex/AidCo, while EUROSTAT was strongly involved in implementation, technical support and project management.
- In the case of SPP involving regional institutions, the distribution of tasks was the same, but with much more involvement and visibility of AidCo in project management.
- Finally, the statistical activities included in budget support – or in contribution agreements – only involved Relex/AidCo, with *ad hoc* or no EUROSTAT involvement.

At the programming stage, EUROSTAT involvement contributed to raising awareness on how crucial statistics are to effective Commission support. EUROSTAT has also contributed to enhanced involvement of the partner’s statistical institutions in the design of interventions.

The MEDSTAT 1 and Tacis Statistics projects have been designed and implemented with a very important involvement of EUROSTAT. The evaluators could observe that in the countries where these programmes have been implemented the involvement of the Delegations and the link between these projects and the pursuit of the other objectives of the cooperation programme of the Commission was relatively weak.

In the case of MEDSTAT, although diagnostic missions were carried out at country level in the initial phase, the governance mechanisms of the programme only permitted those priorities that had been jointly adopted to be fully addressed. As the priority of the programme was convergence and harmonisation of the statistics within the region, this excluded, at that time, any possibility of systematically address all countries' own priorities.

In the case of TACIS Statistics (prior to Statistics 8) the demands of the beneficiary to draw on the regional statistical facility were totally initiated at country level, and in principle validated by the Delegation or AidCo. They were in line with the overall objectives of the Statistics regional programme but it was difficult to find a particular relation with the non statistical national priorities; for instance, with the information needs in the focal sectors supported by the Commission. The statistical support was part of the envelope “Small Projects and Programmes” of the national action programmes, rather independent from the rest.

Partner involvement in implementation proved effective when regional SPP were implemented by regional institutions. For example, the involvement of UEMOA, COMESA or the Andean Community in addressing regional topics in SPPs proved valuable. Similarly, local needs were better met when SPP were implemented on a national basis or when regional programmes were adapted to country-specific situations: this was the case with TACIS Statistics projects which in practice were regional envelopes on which the member states could draw for their own projects. This stands in contrast with the regionally standardised system applicable to the MEDSTAT I project. Indeed it did not adapt to specific national needs, and although it was regional there was no regional interlocutor to manage its implementation.

The quality of support on the contractor side was generally assessed as positive by the partner. In particular, the CESD (Communautaire + “national” CESD”) was a large network of professionally qualified statisticians with good experience of transition and developing countries and who could mobilise the European statistical institutions in support of its interventions. This network was highly valued by both the Commission Services and the partner institutions. But this should not obscure the fact that performance varied from one national CESD to another in respect of the quality of the technical support provided and of the interaction between the partner and the Commission Services.

### ***J.6.2 The provision of statistical support contributed to covering statistical needs in the most cost effective way.***

In general the Commission's heavy procedures led to enormous delays, which resulted in restricted available time for implementation<sup>28</sup>. The organisational framework included a number of hand-over points in the decision chain; this did not mean greater distribution of responsibilities but more often additional or overlapping administrative steps. Procedures were found particularly heavy and constraining in terms of recruitment and day-to-day management of contractors. Recruitment of short term experts, purchase of equipment, and so on required procedures similar to those applicable to larger-scale interventions. Such situations were particularly unsuited to the local level: for example the recruitment of local agents to conduct surveys required time for preparing and managing tenders, whereas delegation of action to the partner's managing authorities would have saved time and money and would have favoured capacity building. The rigid procedures both increased costs and irritated partners. Such was the case with the operations in China, a country where seminars usually entail a bulk payment paid to the host institutions and cover the cost of the venue as well as the full accommodation costs of the participants. Whereas this appears less costly than payment for the premises and delivered services by means of separate per diem payments to participants to cover their expenses, only this latter procedure was allowed under Commission rules.

The adequacy of the resources allocated to the objectives was reasonable at the level of specific actions, but questionable in terms of the overall statistical objectives: SPPs relating to international harmonization or adoption of market economy mechanisms required much more funds than were available in the Commission-supported SPPs. This is partly explained by the Commission focus on capacity building, while equipment was generally financed by other means (for example, the World Bank projects include support for equipment and are therefore on a much bigger scale). Several projects encompassed large-scale objectives, but without any guidelines on allocation of resources to priority needs. This sometimes resulted in scattered interventions. The TACIS Statistics programmes were much more priority-focused.

Finally, a comparison of the unit cost of similar interventions provided little evidence on efficiency: for example, one cannot compare the support to trade statistics and customs in East and Southern Africa (ASYCUDA, Eurotrace; €20m) with that under the MEDSTAT 1 Comext programme (€2.5m) because of the different statistical situations of the partners, the different structure of their economies and the differences in number of countries involved.

### ***J.6.3 The mix of projects, resources and instruments proposed was designed to address the priority needs and contribute to the proposed objectives.***

When provision of equipment was included in the support, it was generally regarded as adequate. This was conditioned by prior examination of the partner's needs and adaptation of support to specific needs: MEDSTAT 1 showed that a regional offer that resulted from

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<sup>28</sup> For example, the Tacis *Statistics 8* relates to budget year 2002, but started only in 2006.



a generic design and had limited room for adaptation to national specificities. For instance, EUROTRACE proved easy to implement in Algeria, whereas, in the case of Morocco adaptations<sup>29</sup> has to be made in view of integrating EUROTRACE into the existing national information system. In fact, the use of EUROTRACE does not depend on the volume of data but needs an adequate organisation of databases for data storage. It is worth noting that on the issue of equipment the questionnaire survey revealed differences of view between the partner institutions and the Commission Services. Contrary to what one would expect, the majority, 67%, of respondents from partner institutions considered that equipment was sufficient, whereas only 48% of respondents from the Commission Services shared that view<sup>30</sup>. Similarly, when asked about the importance of the inputs provided by the SPP, only 42% of respondents from the partner side regard acquisition and upgrading of equipment as important, with a score of 3.4 out of 5, against 71% of respondents from the Commission side who give a score of 4 out of 5 on this criterion<sup>31</sup>.

Training was the most important instrument of support. Both interviews and questionnaire revealed it to be the most significant contribution of the Commission SPP and the most useful. Here the views of the partners and Commission services converged: 91% of respondents from the partner side and 90% from the Commission side rated training as an important contribution to capacity building with scores respectively of 3.9 and 4.1 out of a maximum of 5<sup>32</sup>. Concerns were, however, expressed about insufficient adaptation of training programmes to local needs and, more particularly within the regional programmes (MEDSTAT, RHCTSS, e.g.), about the fact that many training courses were organised for participants from institutions with varying levels of knowledge and experience. These programmes therefore had to target an “average” audience which generated frustration from some participants who had difficulty keeping up with the level of the subject-matter taught whereas others expected still more specialised and advanced courses. Most interviewees of the partner institutions regarded long-term on-the-job training support as an essential factor in capacity-building and in the stability and sustainability of the support, and regret that it was not more systematically provided. In this regard the EUROSTAT practice of sending a “semi-resident” advisor, usually from the CESD, was widely appreciated. This practice of long term resident of semi-resident CESD postings was not generalised (examples are Madagascar, Zambia/COMESA, UEMOA). The expertise and qualifications of these advisors was recognised but as a result of their “semi-residential” status they tended to intervene only as troubleshooters, appearing whenever an emergency problem had to be solved. It is interesting to note that the COMESA Secretariat considered that, whereas this greatly helped them, at the same time it militated against ownership and responsibility.

Countries that benefited from a “resident advisor” from the IMF (Ukraine for instance) considered that this was much more effective in helping them improve their statistical system.

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<sup>29</sup> This was regarded as a costly adaptation by the Direction de la Statistique in Morocco.

<sup>30</sup> Annex 9, questionnaires Q1 and Q2, section 2.3.

<sup>31</sup> Annex 9, questionnaires Q1 and Q2, section 2.2.

<sup>32</sup> Annex 9, questionnaires Q1 and Q2, section 2.2.

***J 6.4 & 6.5 The support was consistent over the evaluation process and could be adapted to accommodate shocks and change of context.***

Improvements were observed between successive generations of SPP. Both questionnaires and interviews showed that lessons from experience were taken well into account:

- At bilateral level for example, institutional strengthening in support of the monitoring of PRSP evolved from one EDF to another. Support was first targeted on the measurement of monitoring indicators. Successive evaluation and monitoring reports stressed the weaknesses of the partner's information system in terms of poor quality, lack of consistency and delays in provision of data. The current generation of budget support adopts a more systemic approach oriented to strengthening those institutions in charge of the production and analysis of primary data (NSI and/or PRSP Monitoring units).
- At regional level, MEDSTAT II drew on the lessons of MEDSTAT I (a uniform offer, ill-adapted to local specificities and badly coordinated locally at design level). MEDSTAT II – at least in its starting phase – placed more attention on assessment of the partner's strengths, weaknesses and needs, so as to better take into consideration the level of performance or reform of the public administration on the partner's side. The learning process, however, presupposed reasonable continuity of support over time. Several SPPs acknowledged delays of 3 or 4 years from the completion of one phase to the effective launching of the next (see DIAPER III, Medstat I and II). Such delays jeopardised the sustainability of skills gained. These delays had two causes:
- Changes of economic/political/institutional context at the level of the partner. Examples of such changes were: the decision of the members of a regional grouping to form a customs union, or the withdrawal of a member country who decided to join another regional arrangement, or revisions of national priorities of member states). This always had an impact on projects, usually causing delays. Strong contractors and flexibility of procedures generally helped cope with the situation, while conflicts or major political changes could not be coped with.
- Exogenous events leading to reorganization or restructuring of the Commission Services: some of these events (such as the EUROSTAT crisis or the creation of SCR in 1999) had critical consequences for SPPs. By contrast, the decentralization process contributed to involving Delegations more actively in support for the partner's statistical system. This positive aspect was sometimes counter-balanced by insufficient knowledge on the part of Delegation staff of what constitutes statistics.

### Answer to Evaluation Question 6

The involvement of EUROSTAT in the Commission-supported SPP was generally a very positive factor in terms of the technical content and quality of the support provided. At the same time there is evidence that in some cases statistical interventions were developed in parallel with other cooperation interventions, although in principle always within a policy framework agreed between the Commission and the partners and under the overall monitoring of DG Relex and AidCo. As a result improvements in statistics may have been generated in certain areas that were not national policy priorities whereas the information needs associated with major priorities, for instance in the focal sector of the country strategy, were addressed to a lesser extent.

The better-suited aid instruments were generally those selected after prior examination of the partner's needs and adaptation of support to specific needs: regional support that resulted in standardised instruments and limited room for adaptation to national needs led to unsuitable tools and frustration on the partner's side.

Lessons from past experiences were generally taken into account in subsequent support. This however presupposes an absence of long delays between one programming phase and the next.

### 3.7 Evaluation question n° 7: improving the statistical capacities of the partner in a sustainable way

#### ***Evaluation question 7:***

*To what extent was sustainability realistically addressed in the programming of SPP and achieved after the end of the project?*

#### ***Key findings:***

- The project documents usually mentioned the need for sustainability of the results. However, they tended to indicate only the conditions for achieving it rather than including real provision in terms of human, budgetary and technical resources.
- With relatively few exceptions, SPP faced problems of sustainability and were not maintained, or only with great difficulty and on a reduced scale, by the beneficiaries.
- Few countries adopted a national strategy for the development of their statistical system and the legal and regulatory framework governing the status of the NSI and other statistical institutions.
- Almost all projects contributed to improving the technical capacities of the partner organisations. Moreover, there was a good correlation between the responses from these partner organisations and those from the Commission Delegations. The most significant contributions were improvements in the professional skills of the staff, access to information on statistical methodologies, acquisition and/or upgrading of equipment, and access to statistical software more adapted to specific needs.
- Training was the major contribution to improvements in professional skills.
- The national statistical institutes were very often unable to recruit and keep qualified staff because of lack of adequate financial resources and modern equipment.

The purpose of the question is to assess the sustainability of the results of the SPP and to verify whether they improved the statistical capacities of partners, taking into consideration three components: technical, financial and human resources and capacities. More specifically, with respect to the intervention logic<sup>33</sup> the question verifies the sustainability of operational objectives 1, 2 and 3 (OO1 to OO3 in diagram 1 of annex 4) and therefore of the intermediate objective. Three judgement criteria address the design, realisation and follow-up of the SPP.

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<sup>33</sup> See Annex 4.

### ***J.7.1. SPP were designed to ensure sustainability of their results.***

A major issue for sustainability is the commitment of the partner States to take over the collection and processing of basic data after completion of the projects. The role of the Commission is to obtain this commitment, prior to the programming of the activities, within the context of a policy dialogue on the priorities rather than on the needs in terms of information. There is little evidence of such preliminary policy dialogue and agreement between the Commission services and the partners.

The project analytical fiches show that the project documents (terms of reference, etc.) usually highlighted the need for sustainability of results, but generally in terms more of a general statement of the conditions needed to achieve it than of real provision of human, budgetary and technical resources.

Regional projects generally included provision for sustainability, but the provision was often problematic. DIAPER may be considered a partial but important success: it created real capacities in the statistical services of the ministries of agriculture of the CILSS member countries for collecting, producing and disseminating data on food and agriculture. On the positive side, many results can be highlighted (see Annex 10 and 11). The balance of achievements is impressive. Even if the production of statistical data on food and agriculture somewhat decreased after the end of the project and its volume and quality varies across the different countries, the general sustainability of the activities seemed ensured. A new Action Plan for an Information System on Food Security (PASISA) supported by FAO and the Dutch co-operation programme will contribute to maintaining its flow of results. The results of PARSTAT may also be considered as globally positive and reasonably sustainable. On the other hand, provision for sustainability was not present in the design of MEDSTAT 1; in this case the fact that this programme would not be sufficient to ensure sustainable development of MED statistical systems was rapidly perceived and the problem could be mitigated by starting early the planning of MEDSTAT 2.

Some other projects did not require particular provision to guarantee sustainability, mainly because they addressed structured organisations (e.g. the SSCU in Ukraine, the National Bureau of Statistics in China, or the directorates of statistics in Tunisia or Morocco).

This lack of sustainability may be linked to the fact that few countries had adopted a national strategy for the development of their statistical system and the legal and regulatory framework governing the status of the NSI and other statistical institutions. No Commission-funded project aimed at building such a national strategy or at studying the opportunities and risks associated with one status vis-à-vis another.

***J.7.2 The SPP supported by the Commission improved in a sustainable way the technical capacities of the statistical system in the partner region/country.***

The questionnaires<sup>34</sup> clearly indicated that almost all projects contributed to improving the technical capacities of the partner organisations. Moreover there was good correlation between the replies of these partner organisations and those of the Commission Delegations. The most significant contributions were:

- improvements in the professional skills of the staff,
- access to information on statistical methodologies,
- acquisition and/or upgrading of equipment, and
- access to statistical software more adapted to needs.

Training was the major contribution to the improvements in professional skills, mainly through working tours, seminars and workshops, and also through on-the-job training provided by technical assistants. But there was a large degree of variation in the level of these contributions between the different projects.

On the positive side, the following can be highlighted:

- Creation of new departments or units that did not exist before the project in some important domains (e.g. environmental statistics within the CAPMAS and the 'Direction de la Statistique' of Morocco)
- Important progress in elaboration and dissemination of the national accounts (Egypt, Morocco, countries of the UEMOA, but sometimes realised mainly with the support of other cooperation programmes)
- Improvements in the degree of harmonisation of certain statistics and adoption of international recommendations in a number of areas (environment with MEDSTAT, harmonisation of consumer price indices with IHPC and PARSTAT, etc.).
- Some improvements in data exchange: provision of data (in particular, external trade statistics) to the EUROSTAT database New Cronos; external trade data transferred monthly to the COMESA regional centre for the compilation of COMESA trade data.
- Dissemination to the public and availability of data improved without however this being clearly linked to the projects.
- Unanimously appreciation of training programmes despite some limitations (too theoretical, specific country needs not taken into account, etc.).
- Exchanges of experience possible between countries participating in the same regional project; some "South – South" co-operation had started.

These positive results were derived not only from opinions collected during interviews but are also based on the following factual evidence (although it is not possible to attribute all these positive results to the Commission interventions):

- Several countries were able to join SDDS and/or GDDS.

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<sup>34</sup> Questionnaires Q1 and Q2, section 2.2.

- Adoption of international classifications and standards for important statistics: MEDSTAT (HS for merchandise trade, SNA93 for the national accounts); PARSTAT (classification of economic activities, NAEMA, as well as classification of products, NOPEMA, in AFRISTAT member countries).
- Improvements in the image and promotion of statistical information (creation of websites, publication policy, development of information centres).

However, in a number of other areas progress was negligible or mixed. These results, or their absence, are illustrated by:

- The unchanged situation in respect of production delays; and there has been no significant improvement in quality (e.g. mirror data for the statistics of external trade);
- Even if, in theory, statistical data are accessible to the public, the reality in a number of countries and domains is quite otherwise;
- Staffing levels have not stabilised in a majority of countries.

### ***J.7.3 The level of service achieved with the assistance of the SPP supported by the Commission could be maintained after completion of the interventions.***

There are three facets of maintaining the level of service achieved by the SPP once interventions have been completed: availability of human resources, financial sustainability and technical sustainability.

As far as *human resources* are concerned, the questionnaire responses indicated that the national statistical institutes were very often unable to recruit and retain qualified staff because of lack of finance and modern equipment. In most of the developing countries, this is mainly a problem of reform of public services whereas in some others (Zambia, Ukraine, Morocco, Egypt) there was a real willingness to maintain a quality team of statisticians. On the other hand, the responses also indicated that some projects permitted support for and development of good internal training capacities (creation of training centres in the statistical institutes, training of trainers) as in Morocco or some CIS countries. Once achieved, it seems to have improved the sustainability of the projects. To summarize, one may say that most projects contributed to improving the professional skills of the statistical staff but too often the successful transfer of knowledge may have been hampered by significant loss of qualified staff from the statistical offices.

In several countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (mainly in Francophone countries), in order to pay better salaries to statisticians it was decided to confer the status of autonomous public agency, or even that of a public or private enterprise, on the national statistical institutes. Such a decision could have positive consequences providing that all the problems it raises are carefully studied, in particular those linked to coordination of the national statistical system, preparation of the annual and long-term statistical programmes, and funding of statistical activities (such a decision should not be taken with the idea that it will permit a reduction of the budget for national statistics). Without serious preparation, such a decision may be a total failure.

It must be added that the problem is extremely complex. Maintaining staff in indefinite position may not be a sign of sustainability but reflect a situation in which NSIs retain staff in large (or excessive) numbers over many years because of the lack of alternative employment. In this situation, staff often becomes less amenable to new methods. A certain degree of turnover can be positive, particularly if a job in a NSI is viewed by potential employers as an asset. In that case the NSI may become a springboard towards higher paid positions and therefore attract the best new graduates.

*Financial sustainability* was far from being ensured. The greater the initial dependency of the beneficiary on project funding, the more difficult it was to ensure financial hand-over after the end of the project (e.g. COMESA vs. China as regards external trade statistics). Problems remained in respect of the institutional capacity of the statistical offices in certain regions and of their high dependency on donor funds. During project execution, insufficient or delayed communication of Commission's decisions at a time when continuation of funding of interventions was anticipated by the beneficiary, did not contribute to sustainability (as was the case for instance for COMSTAT, EASTC).

*Technical sustainability* implies maintenance and upgrading of the software delivered by the project. Eurostat has devoted successfully considerable efforts to facilitate the transfer of knowledge of the ERETES and EUROTRACE tools to users. This included training of the trainers in order to strengthen capacities of organisations which are in charge of first level user's support, drafting documentation and also setting up a user group. Corrective maintenance of both software is still ensured by EUROSTAT until 2010 at the latest but there will be no upgrading. The absence of transfer of EUROTRACE sources codes to the beneficiary is perceived by several NSO as an obstacle to full ownership and sustainability.

For regional projects commitment of member countries was generally a key factor. The regional institutions and regional project partners needed to ensure some financial follow-up to ensure that the level of service offered by the projects would be maintained after completion of their activities. This was partially the case for PARSTAT (collection of data for the production of the harmonized consumer price index was still ensured even if sometimes with some difficulty; efforts to produce more comparable GDPs and national accounts were continuing, with appreciable help from the French cooperation programme). At the level of the member countries, PARSTAT contributed to increasing awareness of the importance of producing timely, credible and reliable statistics through the national economic policy cells with the general participation of the national statistical offices; there was a global improvement in the quality of statistics produced through this project. But in some other cases, sustainability would not have been ensured without the implementation of a new project (e.g. MEDSTAT2, or RHTACISS in COMESA).

Since its creation (strongly supported by the European Commission and in particular EUROSTAT) AFRISTAT had played an important role in helping the NSIs and other to improve their activities, define and identify the main challenges they had to face, and find solutions to meet them. This was achieved variously through harmonisation of concepts, methods and classifications; organisation of regular meetings, workshops and seminars; and promoting development of "South – South" co-operation. Collaboration between AFRISTAT and donors had therefore been very efficient, in particular with some



multilateral institutions (World Bank, African Development Bank, ACBF, IMF through AFRITAC-West) or bilateral donors (French co-operation, DFID). Relations between AFRISTAT and the European Commission, in particular EUROSTAT, were affected by the EUROSTAT crisis in 2003. Previously, EUROSTAT had participated regularly in the AFRISTAT Steering Committee meetings as an observer. It did not attend the 2004 and 2005 meetings but returned in 2006. This temporary absence has been perceived by AFRISTAT as a lack of support to increase statistical capacity building in the region. However, EUROSTAT continued its technical cooperation throughout, attending in particular the 2005 workshop on provisional accounts organised by AFRISTAT and INSEE.

### **Answer to Evaluation Question 7**

There is ample evidence and beneficiary agreement that the Commission-supported SPP contributed to improving the technical capacities of the statistical systems in the partner regions or countries, and particularly the professional skills of the staff. The technical improvements generally survived the conclusion of the projects, but there was abundant evidence and agreement that the sustainability of progress achieved and of maintenance of the level of service was highly fragile and uncertain. In many cases it was not guaranteed even in the relatively short term. Where the absence of sustainability was noted, the crucial explanatory factors were (i) absence of real demand for information by decision-makers or of awareness of the importance of evidence-based decisions; (ii) absence of a clear partner country vision of the development of its statistical systems within the overall architecture of State functions; and (iii) lack of financial resources and, to a lesser extent, at least in the short-term, of human resources. On the last point it had been generally very difficult to maintain the level of service achieved through SPP assistance after completion of the interventions, the main reason being that the national statistical institutes were very often unable to recruit and retain qualified staff because of lack of budgetary resources and modern equipment.

### 3.8 Evaluation question n° 8: 3Cs

#### ***Evaluation Question 8:***

*To what extent were Commission-supported SPP coordinated with and complementary to partners' authorities/government strategies and other bilateral and multilateral interventions? And to what extent did the Commission-supported SPP help the partner country/region to improve its relations with the EU?*

#### ***Key findings:***

- An adequate coordination structure between the partner NSO and EU NSO (EUROSTAT or a MS NSO) was always sought in the SPP and was very important in some of them.
- Projects conducted under large partnerships (TACIS PCA, Barcelona process) involved little coordination with other donors.
- Coordination between donors at diagnostic level was poor or non-existent.
- Important coordination roles were played by regional organisations and some strong national NSO.
- Multiple funding and cooperation with MS was evident in statistical schools projects.

The question reflects a specific request of the Terms of Reference<sup>35</sup> and addresses aspects related to the “**3C's**”: coordination, complementarity and coherence; and therefore also to *efficiency*. It assesses whether the SPP supported by the Commission:

- Were in line with the partner Government's priorities and strategies;
- Involved co-financing by the partner so as to maximise ownership, and/or by other donors to enhance sustainability and efficiency in the use of Commission's resources;
- Were complementary at the various level of the Commission's interventions (national, regional or cross-border);
- Were complementary with those of other international donors, and in particular with those of the MS;
- Were implemented coherently with the statistical interventions of other donors;
- Improved coverage (larger and deeper) of the statistical needs in the partner country or region.

The question also verifies whether the SPPs permitted partners to improve their relations, in particular the implementation of various cooperation agreements, with the EU.

Four judgement criteria underlie the answer to the question:

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<sup>35</sup> See annex 1, section 5 of the ToR.

***J.8.1/2 The SPP supported by the Commission took into account and were coordinated with those of the partner government and other donors.***

***The Commission sought to involve the partner and other donor in SPP it supported, or participated in SPP supported by other donors.***

The major findings related to these two judgement criteria are:

a) Coordination with the beneficiary

The coordination with statistical institution, both the beneficiary NSO for the identification and the implementation of the project and statistical offices from MS to organise partnership with the beneficiary for the implementation of the project, was nearly always sought in SPP; it was particularly important in the MEDSTAT (MEDA) and Statistics (TACIS) programmes. Some examples of poor coordination with the beneficiary were observed: in Mali the statistical support provided by the Commission to the CSLP (Cellule Statistique de Lutte contre la Pauvreté) included activities in support of the INSD, yet this institution was not involved in drawing up of the Terms of Reference.

The role of the beneficiary in coordination may be important. Some statistical institutions (for instance the SSCU Ukraine, assisted by a permanent adviser from the IMF; the INSD in Burkina Faso) exhibited a willingness and capacity to organise the coordination of external assistance. Such cases created the conditions for enhanced ownership of statistical projects by the partner and allowed better complementarity of donor activities.

The coordinating role of regional organisations, for example COMESA and UEMOA, was also very active and effective. The particular case of Afristat, the only regional institution with an exclusively statistical vocation, needs to be highlighted, since this organisation contributed to coordinating the cooperation of the Commission and France with Afristat member countries.

b) Coordination with other donors

There was no evidence of coordination with other donors in large regional projects conducted under partnerships: e.g. PCA, Barcelona process. The Delegations were generally aware of donor activities and avoid overlapping and duplication. However, this did not mean that there was a strategically designed division of labour between donors, but rather that each attempted to avoid entering areas where others were already active.

A major finding that emerged from the documentary analysis, field visits and interviews was the poor coordination at diagnostic level. While a certain amount of inter-organisational contacts take place and information on projects is exchanged, in practice, EUROSTAT relies on the partner countries to keep them informed of statistical projects supported by other organisations. This does not always work as well as could be wished and may point to a weakness of coordination between the Delegation (and/or the Tacis Coordination Unit in the Tacis countries) and EUROSTAT. For example, at the beginning of Statistics 8, EUROSTAT was unaware of the formulation by the SSCU in Ukraine of a statistical strategy funded by the World Bank. The World Bank and, more recently, the

African Development Bank, had increasingly been encouraging and helping countries to draw up such national statistical strategies so as to derive master plans for the implementation of activities. By the end of the period these initiatives had not been exploited by the Commission.

Budget support programmes for funding implementation of poverty reduction strategies generally involved multiple funding and a common agreement on indicators for monitoring the progress and outcomes of the PRSP. However, this had not prevented donors from including additional indicators for their own interventions and from unilaterally developing statistical interventions with little coordination from other donors.

Cooperation with the Member States was more advanced and had enhanced the quality of the interventions:

- The projects supporting statistical education (statistical schools in French-speaking Africa, East African Statistical Training Centre) took the form of multiple funding of scholarships, involvement of MS statistical education institutions, distribution of responsibilities and tasks relating to establishment of curricula, selection of students, etc. But some severe deficiencies were observed. One of the worst examples was that of the Commission ending funding of the scholarships for the statistical schools in academic year 2004-2005 without timely warning, with the result that the information was received by the partners (Schools and French cooperation) after the selection of candidates had been made and the results announced.
- The TACIS statistics projects, the China statistical project, and others contracted by the CESD, systematically involved MS statistical institutions as sub-contractors and providers of specific services. This proved extremely important and beneficial for the projects although selection of the MS institution was sometimes a source of delay.
- Twinning, i.e. secondment of staff of MS statistical institutions to partner organisations was used and found very fruitful in many projects. It was also a way of combining bilateral and regional support. For instance, in Egypt it was being planned to provide twinning to CAPMAS under the bilateral programme to implement the regional MEDSTAT II programme. It is, nevertheless, an area where coordination deficiencies were observed: partner statistical institutions were not necessarily always informed by the Delegation of the existence of twinning possibilities, while in Morocco twinning projects with statistical components (environment, external trade, maritime security) were being developed without information on what had been undertaken under MEDSTAT in these fields.

***J.8.3 The SPP, supported by the Commission, programmed and/or implemented at regional level were consistent with those programmed and/or implemented at bilateral level.***

Several cases must be distinguished:

- The ACP and ALA countries: the rationale for selecting a regional approach was always clear and, where appropriate, the consistency between the regional and national interventions was ensured.

Regional integration (West Africa, Caribbean, East Africa, Asean, Latin America) was basically supported through regional projects focused on international trade statistics and harmonisation. These projects either involved national components for computing national statistics or, in regions where regional integration includes a dimension of multilateral surveillance, support was justifiably provided at national level to compute national data appropriately.

Many statistical projects in these regions were bilateral and do not raise particular issues of articulation with regional projects, either because there is no regional project (China) or because they are self-standing interventions (notably the census in the ACP).

- The Mediterranean region: so far statistical projects consisted almost exclusively of the two MEDSTAT regional programmes. They included generic thematic components implemented in all countries<sup>36</sup>. These programmes had no links with bilateral activities and generally were implemented independently of the rest of the cooperation strategy.
- The TACIS region: the statistical programmes were regional but in fact consisted of a global envelope which defined the eligible themes and the resources each constituent country was allowed to draw on to conduct activities corresponding to those themes. In this region the bilateral statistical programmes were essentially institutional strengthening projects accompanying budget support provided in the context of food security. There were no linkages between these projects and the Statistics programmes.

***J.8.4 The statistical material supported by the SPP permitted accelerated implementation of agreements with the EU or facilitation of relations.***

Although some programmes (MEDSTAT/TACIS) had that explicit objective, there was no evidence of concrete improvements from specific actions carried out in fulfilment of the Barcelona Declaration or implementation of PCAs. However, in the case of the MEDSTAT programme the progress in environmental statistics could be regarded as a positive move towards achievement of common public goods; but on important and difficult themes like migration little progress was observed.

Similarly, there was no evidence that the SPP in the Mercosur region contributed to particular improvements in the trade and investment relationships with the EU.

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<sup>36</sup> In a few Mediterranean countries (Palestine and Lebanon) bilateral projects were also implemented; these were designed in compliance with the objectives of the cooperation strategy with these countries.

In contrast, the China statistical project facilitated resolution of the issue of comparable measurements by both parties of EU-China merchandise trade and in so doing contributed to improving relationships and the trade discussions.

It is worth noting that several interviews with users, on the Commission as well as on the partner' side, indicate that statistical data supported by the SPP are not much used in the preparation of activities of the conduct of policy discussions. This is not only because their reliability is judged insufficient but largely because there is no culture of recourse to the statistical information.

### **Answer to Evaluation Question 8**

Coordination with the partner institutions on identification and implementation of SPPs had generally taken place. Coordination with the MS had been active in certain fields and facilitated by the existence of the CESD network and the use of the twinning mechanism.

Overall, coordination with other donors had been very limited or even non-existent when implementing diagnostic analysis, although other donors were active in the field and had contributed to formulation of national statistical strategies.

The establishment of appropriate linkages between regional and national statistical programmes was achieved in regions where both types of programme were being implemented. In the MEDSTAT regions the generic regional programme appeared not to have been optimally adapted to country needs, whereas in TACIS the regional programme was in fact a facility to be used by the member countries; in neither region could one really speak of coordination between the two types of approach.

Apart from the China programme there was no evidence of a contribution of the SPP to an improvement in relations with the EU.

### 3.9 Evaluation question n° 9: Cross Cutting Issues

#### ***Evaluation Question 9:***

*To what extent were cross-cutting issues (environment, gender and good governance) taken into account into the SPP and did this result in increased awareness and understanding of these issues by the stakeholders?*

#### ***Key Findings:***

- With the exception of environment, none of the identified SPP were exclusively targeted on support for cross-cutting issues.
- Only a few SPP included in their *modus operandi* provision for cross-cutting issues (example in training, with focus on gender).
- Governance aspects of statistics linked to legal and regulatory framework (such as confidentiality) were seldom covered by SPP. The Nigerian census and Statistics 10 in Ukraine were two exceptions to that finding.

This EQ addresses three aspects of cross-cutting issues on which SPP may have positive impact:

- First, to what extent did the design of SPP explicitly address cross-cutting issues?
- Second, did SPP raise partner awareness of cross-cutting issues?
- Finally, did information on cross-cutting issues improve as the result of SPP?

#### ***J.9.1 The design of statistical programmes/projects explicitly addressed cross-cutting issues.***

None of the observed SPP directly addressed cross-cutting issues related to gender and governance. Moreover, these two topics were generally only marginally taken into account in the design of SPP and their programming documents. Only a few SPP included provision for these cross-cutting issues in their objectives or procedures. Project documents for training programmes, for instance, generally insisted on significant participation of women in the courses. On governance, this was also the case for the implementation of and lessons learned from the Nigerian Census. Finally, budget support had always included social indicators, and in some cases provision for information on corruption.

By contrast, environment is an area on which SPP placed particular emphasis through specific programmes or actions directly aimed at assessments and information on that aspect (see for example the environmental component of MEDSTAT 1, named Med-Env).

An important aspect of coordination in the area of statistics is the existence of a National Statistical Council or similar mechanism. Such institutions usually bring together representatives of the statistical institutions, those departments that are important providers or users of statistical information, and of Civil Society. Their primary role is to

contribute to the democratisation of information. Statistical information is a public good and every citizen should be entitled to free access to reliable and objective information. The role of a National Statistical Council is usually consultative: it collects and summarises the opinion of its members on the work programme of the statistical authorities and gives advice and recommendations on the future direction of work and improvements to be achieved. However, the questionnaire surveys<sup>37</sup> revealed that in only in a minority of partner countries (40%) did a National Statistical Council exist prior to the launch of the SPP. The majority (61%) of respondents from those countries consider that the SPP did not contribute to improving the functioning of this council. In the majority of countries without a National Statistical Council only a minority of SPP (22%) contributed to the establishment of such a Council or to making the situation more favourable for its creation.

Participation in IMF mechanisms like the GDDS and the SDDS involves adherence to rather strict rules in terms of the number of economic and financial indicators, their quality, the timing of their availability, and the frequency of their publication and documentation, all of which are important elements of statistical governance. Over the period of this evaluation the number of partner countries that had accessed GDDS and SDDS regularly increased. It was impossible to attribute this to the SPP supported by the Commission, or even to assess their contribution, but there was evidence that the contribution had been real. On the one hand interviewees acknowledged it, on the other hand a number of technical improvements (improvements in methodologies, definitions and classifications, trade statistics) achieved through the SPP were necessary steps to permit the partners to join the GDDS or SDDS.

The European Code of Practice in the field of statistics, drawn up by EUROSTAT, will be used as a model and a target in the TACIS Statistics 10 Programme now in course of preparation. It is also being adapted in the new regional programmes in West Africa, Central Africa and the Caribbean.

### ***J.9.2 Information on the cross-cutting issues improved.***

SPP contributed to improved information on cross-cutting issues when that was the explicit purpose of the support. In this regard the elaboration of information on environment was the most important direct effort of the SPP, with several projects specifically dedicated to production of new statistics in this field and creation of correspondingly specialised statistical departments. There was also evidence of indirect contributions by the SPP, which were difficult to attribute to a particular project, but which were nevertheless significant. For instance, although it was not a component of the ECOSTAT project, the ECOWAS Secretariat produced<sup>38</sup> a major assessment of the environment statistics in the ECOWAS countries. Another example was the launch by the Secretariat of the COMESA of a programme to compute a CPI (Corruption Perception Index) for the member countries. Such initiatives, while not part of SPP as such, were nonetheless made possible by the awareness and capacity generated by past SPP.

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<sup>37</sup> Annex 9, questionnaire Q1, section 2.4.

<sup>38</sup> And disseminated on the ECOSTAT website.



### ***J.9.3 Awareness of the importance of cross-cutting issues improved.***

SPP including environment-related components raised the level of awareness of local authorities which previously had had no information on this sector but were acknowledging increases in data production. In some cases (such as Morocco under Medstat I) the Commission's support raised not only awareness levels but also willingness to develop environment-related information. The Moroccan INS had started making its own surveys and was extending the statistical scope to environmental areas relevant to its point of view (measurement of noise, domestic waste). One should however mention that, although the INS needed support for the launch of that kind of data collection (as an extension of the Med-Env basic offer), it was not supported by the Commission or EUROSTAT, as the extension was not considered as a priority by the Commission Services.

For gender and governance, no evidence of such improvement was observed elsewhere. However, in relation with SPP gender issues cover both technical activities (structure and implementation of household budget surveys, employment surveys, censuses, MDG data, poverty analysis) and management issues (offering a gender neutral professional environment). On the first point there is little evidence, neither from the answers to the questionnaires nor from the project documents, of explicit activities geared at improving gender measurement, but it remains that over the years there is an increasing effort conducted in social and poverty statistics, in particular in liaison with budget aid. Regarding the managerial aspect of SPP, there is an evident concern in many training projects to ensure balanced gender participation and to record systematically the beneficiaries according to their gender. The EASTC project, e.g. explicitly measured access to scholarships by gender.

#### **Answer to Evaluation Question 9**

Among the three cross-cutting issues addressed by this question, only environment was the focus of specific interventions to improve statistical information. In this area clearly positive results from SPP were observed, in terms both of increasing data production and of sensitisation of the partner to the issue. Sensitisation sometimes developed to the point of specific actions by the partner to develop and extend data collection related to that topic. But here the partner's request for complementary support did not always receive a positive response from the Commission.

Gender was not the focus of much input into SPP. On governance the observed results were scarce and scarcely linked to any specific SPP action.

Promotion of statistical governance in the sense of guaranteeing free access to statistical information for all citizens was not a major thrust of the Commission-supported SPP but there is evidence that SPP contributed to enabling partners to join the GDDS and SDDS and that they promoted an awareness of and willingness to improve governance aspects. In the most recent programmes governance aspects had been given a higher profile than in the older ones.

## 4. Conclusions

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The answers to the Evaluation Questions (section 3) are based on the findings and conclude the analysis for each specific question. The overall conclusions of the evaluation presented in this section are presented in such a way as to facilitate an overall synthesis of these answers and to draw lessons for programming, designing and implementing statistical support to third countries. They are presented in four groups corresponding to different phases of the project cycle:

- Conclusions 1 to 4 relate to the intervention logic and the intervention strategy in the field of statistics;
- Conclusions 5 to 7 relate to the identification, programming and design of statistical interventions;
- Conclusions 8 and 9 relate to the implementation modalities;
- Conclusion 10 focuses on the results.

### 4.1 On the intervention logic and the strategy of intervention

#### ***Conclusion 1:***

Notwithstanding the difficulties associated with comprehensive and accurate mapping of the Commission's statistical interventions, the intervention logic reconstructed for this evaluation permitted the encompassing of all observed programmes and projects current during the period 1996-2006. Nearly all projects were *relevant* to this background and over time there was a clear trend towards strengthened coherence between the statistical interventions and the overall cooperation strategy.

However, some components of the intervention logic have benefited from insufficient focus and support. Few, if any, projects and resources included specific activities to address the legal, regulatory and organisational framework of partners' statistical systems, and similarly few explicitly addressed the advocacy dimension. This weakened the overall performance of the statistical interventions and may be at the root of the difficulty of achieving sustainability of the results achieved.

The intervention logic<sup>39</sup> that underlies the methodological approach to this evaluation describes the conceptual links between the intervention activities (i.e. the inputs), the corresponding outputs and the subsequent results and impacts. This intervention logic was reconstructed *ex post*. The reason is that statistics are not an end in themselves in the context of the Commission's economic and development cooperation programmes but

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<sup>39</sup> Cf. section 2.2.1 and annex 4.

rather an instrument contributing, where and to the extent necessary, to achievement of the wider goals of the cooperation programmes as agreed with the partners. Therefore, the reconstructed intervention logic in its complete form has never been an explicit component of the programming of statistical interventions. It is nonetheless of central importance to assessing the relevance of the individual interventions and that of the Commission support to statistics in general. Individual projects and programmes are relevant if, among other conditions, they fit into this framework and are designed to produce outputs and results consistent with those of the general scheme. The achievement of the intermediate impact “*sustainable production and use by the partner country/region (and the involved stakeholders) of reliable statistics contributing to policy formulation and evidence based decision making directed to the realisation of the overall objectives*” also requires balanced implementation of the whole intervention logic, particularly with a view to achieving specific results. In that sense the absence of interventions in certain domains may reveal deficiencies in the approach.

The findings presented in section 3 and the analysis of the inventory<sup>40</sup> permit derivation of some useful conclusions. These must be interpreted taking account of the many limitations of the inventory which have already been underlined and which rendered it impossible to map statistical interventions in the partner countries or regions accurately and comprehensively. Three limitations are particularly significant: absence of information on the statistical components of non-statistical projects, incomplete information on statistical support provided in association with budget support, and insufficient information to assess precisely the share of statistics in the total support provided by the Commission to a country or region.

Notwithstanding these problems some clear messages emerge:

- 1° Every single project examined in this evaluation<sup>41</sup> fitted well<sup>42</sup> into the reconstructed intervention logic, and thus their design was relevant to the logic;
- 2° The activities supported by the Commission were extremely diverse, as might be expected from the differences in the local situations and the diversity of requests for assistance; it is however striking that, in general, SPP focused on training and on strengthening the capacity of selected institutions to improve the quality of the statistical output; no SPP specifically addressed the issue of the architecture and the functioning of the whole statistical system of the partner, notably its legal, regulatory and organisational aspects, and no activities were explicitly designed to stimulate greater use of statistics in policy-making (advocacy);
- 3° A clear trends over time can be perceived: the SPP were increasingly designed to support the other cooperation objectives, this trend being particularly significant given the growth of budget aid support and the accompanying institutional strengthening.

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<sup>40</sup> Cf. section 2.1.2 and annexes 6 and 7.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. annex 10 for the analytical fiches of the sample of projects.

<sup>42</sup> With the possible exception of projects like the 7th ACP MLI 124 (support to the Cellule de Planification et Statistique) that were included in the sample but, after examination, proved unduly classified as statistical projects.

This conclusion on the Commission's comparative lack of focus on the overall statistical legal and institutional framework of partners and on advocacy is important. Indeed, these factors weakened the impact of SPP in terms of sustainability of results and of promotion and generalised use of statistical evidence in support of policy-making. The conclusion may be affected by the non-observation of projects that were not mounted due to insufficient institutional environment but this does not change the fact that existing projects have not approached these issues in a systematic manner.

*Based on J1.1, J2.1.*

### **Conclusion 2:**

The intervention strategy of the Commission in statistics took insufficient account of the *systemic dimension* of national statistical systems and their embodiment in public sector functions. This created difficulties in the implementation of projects and reduced their efficiency. More important, it created risks of fragmentation of the statistical systems and of development of statistical system components outside an adequate and comprehensive legal and regulatory framework.

The statistical system is a public infrastructure. It is an essential part of the State and it is also a major producer of public goods in society. Its functioning is completely intertwined with that of the rest of the public sector. Its complex architecture normally comprises:

- a national statistical institution in charge of the compilation, processing and dissemination of official statistics based on information collected by itself or by other (public or private) bodies;
- specialised departments of line ministries (Education, Health, Labour and Social Affairs, etc.) or other public institutions (Central Bank, Trade Board, Port and airport administrations, etc.) responsible for collecting primary administrative data for fulfilling their mission, but very often useful to feed into the wider body of comprehensive official statistics;
- a statistical council or a similar institution, including representatives of Civil Society, to advise the statistical authorities on the needs and concerns of the users of statistical information;
- a legal and regulatory framework governing access to and use of information by the statistical institutions; as the statistical system is both a provider of essential information for the State and Civil Society and also an instrument of the State for obtaining information on society, its regulation is an essential element of governance.

Several major findings of this evaluation demonstrate that the Commission's intervention strategies have frequently overlooked this systemic aspect of statistics in several ways:

- many statistical projects were implemented in institutions that should previously or simultaneously have undergone restructuring or public administration reform to enable them to benefit fully from external support for statistical projects; in the absence of such restructuring or reform the efficiency of interventions was significantly reduced;
- there was frequent conflict between restrictive public finance policies and support for statistical institutions. In particular public administration reforms and support for statistics were insufficiently coordinated or followed inconsistent approaches: statistical institutions were often among the first to be hit by restrictions on wages and recruitment of staff, and the last to benefit from restructuring and reform of the public administration; this, by creating a dependency on aid projects, adversely affected efficiency and sustainability. On occasion the problem was addressed by transforming the statistical institution from a line department into an autonomous public agency. While this may be beneficial in terms of the institution's intellectual and (relative) financial independence, it may provoke fragmentation and incoherence if it is not done within the context of careful reassessment of the organisation of the system as a whole;
- as already alluded to under conclusion 1, there was an absence of specific action to enhance the overall organisation and coordination of production of statistical data; for instance no statistical project fully addressed the issue of coordination (in terms of monitoring, methodologies, concepts, classifications and quality control) between the official statistical office and the other institutions involved in the production of statistics;
- some projects addressed the needs of the official statistical institution but excluded its suppliers of primary data, which again proved detrimental in terms of efficiency and effectiveness;
- many projects, particularly first generation statistical projects accompanying budget support, targeted improvements in the quality of limited data sets or indicators without considering the relationship of this work to the rest of the beneficiary's statistical system. In such cases the potential benefits of technical progress realised in one area were lost or insufficiently replicated in the wider production of official statistics, which created a risk of fragmentation of the statistical system.

Further to this relatively negative conclusion it is important to stress that trends in the right direction are also clearly visible in the new SPP recently launched or in preparation: in the area of budget aid there is a clear move from compilation of specific indicators to comprehensive sector management information systems, although the linkages to the rest of the statistical system remain insufficiently addressed; the example of Niger points in the right direction insofar as the support for the statistical institution is geared to helping it to fulfil its day-to-day tasks and responsibilities rather than providing resources for a specific study or survey; also the example of Burkina Faso where a recent SPP insists on the necessity of increasing links between the NSI and the statistical units in the line ministries.

*Based on: J1.2, J2.1, J2.2, J3.7, J4.2, J7.1, J8.1/2*

**Conclusion 3:**

The Commission-supported SPP did not sufficiently focus on the *complementarity and interdependence* aspects that exist between statistical information and policy decision-making. There was a lack of activities addressing this issue although awareness of the use of statistical information in decision-making has increased.

The major role of statistical information is to improve the rationality of public and private decision-making. The objective of statistical projects is to increase the level of evidence underpinning policy decisions. This was always mentioned in project documents but few concrete actions were proposed to address the issue. It must be acknowledged that one cannot easily influence, let alone compel, beneficiaries to use statistics improved by SPP for decision-making purposes, but even so the lack of provision was obvious. In the context of regional integration, for instance, no particular effort was made within the SPP to provide decision-makers, or their technical Services, with the necessary skills to interpret and use the newly produced or improved data in the preparation of their policies and reforms. But a positive counter example is the project PARSTAT, designed and implemented by the Commission of the UEMOA in order to facilitate the community policy of multilateral surveillance between the member countries.

In this context, the monitoring of poverty reduction strategies and budget support introduced a radical change of perspective since they include in their core features a recognition of the need to develop, in parallel with the policy dialogue, adequate statistical information to underpin formulation, adaptation and monitoring of the policies under review. The afore-mentioned trend away from production of specific indicators to comprehensive sector information systems has been accompanied, as demonstrated in the more recent project documents, by a major effort to involve the sector actors and decision-makers in understanding the data at every stage of the “sector statistical chain”, from primary data at local (e.g. village, hospital, school, etc.) level to data at aggregate sector level.

The relatively low-key advocacy of using statistical data in the decision-making process has led to a situation in which many statistical projects have indeed improved the quantity and the quality of the available data yet with no significant change in the way decision-makers use statistical information to formulate policy. This deficiency has therefore been a major cause of a lack of sustainability as decision-makers are not particularly motivated to increase resources for producing information they do not use.

*Based on: J3.7, J5.1, J5.3*

**Conclusion 4:**

The linkage between the *objectives of statistical support and those of the cooperation and development strategy* agreed with each partner was variable and sometimes loose, with the result that the contribution of statistical interventions to other cooperation objectives tended to be uncertain or limited.

The findings point to areas of possible misalignment of the “statistical objectives” and the other cooperation objectives:

- From the standpoint of the cooperation objectives the tendency would be to focus on immediate improvements in provision of the statistical information required for the priority policies and issues; from the point view of the statistical specialists the first priority was to address the main technical weaknesses of the NSOs. This choice was not clearly formulated in most SPP and the selection of one route or the other seemed to depend more on which individual or service had had the most proactive role in the design of the SPP, than on a comparison of the costs and benefits of each approach;
- Misalignment between statistical projects and the wider Commission intervention strategy can lead to both types of intervention developing along parallel tracks in the beneficiary countries. This was largely the case with the generic regional programme MEDSTAT 1. It pursued a statistical strategy at regional level, and although its implementation modalities included the capacity to adapt it to local situations, the adaptations were designed to improve implementation of the narrow statistical functions, not to make them more convergent with the needs and objectives of the wider country strategies. Similarly, the TACIS programmes developed an approach under which the statistical component of the annual action programmes became an exogenous element automatically included in the programmes without any attention to aspects of support for or complementarity with the other activities;
- The rationale for assigning as priority SPP objectives such issues as harmonisation of nomenclatures with those of the EU or adoption of European methodologies was unclear, except in the cases (e.g. TACIS) where it was set by the partner country. Whereas it is evident that European methodologies are commendable and international comparability highly desirable, it is not always obvious that such objectives are the most crucial for improving the “evidence-based content” of the partner’s decisions; there may be an ambiguity between the objectives of providing the Commission with the data it requests, on the one hand, and meeting the real needs of the partner, on the other.

*Based on: EQ1, J6.1*

## 4.2 On identification, programming and design of interventions

### **Conclusion 5:**

The Commission provided its statistical assistance *via regional and bilateral* channels. The reasons for favouring a regional vis-à-vis bilateral approach were generally clear and justified. The results achieved by the regional interventions depended largely on two factors: the existence of a regional institution that could serve as a link between the donor and the member countries of the region, and the institutional and technical strength of the member countries’ NSOs.

In the MEDA and TACIS regions almost all statistical interventions were conducted in the form of regional programmes. In the ACP and ALA regions both regional and bilateral SPP were implemented. Leaving aside the case of TACIS where the regional programme is a facility drawn on bilaterally, the justification for the adoption of the regional route is usually clear and even self-evident: regional programmes are offered either to support regional integration or regionally-based policies (e.g. DIAPER in the CILSS area, PARSTAT in UEMOA, statistical cooperation in the Andean Community) or else to support the statistical implications of agreements concluded between a region and the European Union (e.g. MEDSTAT).

The regional approach permits economies of scale and facilitates adoption of common methods, comparability of data and exchanges of information between the countries of the region that may lead to some kind of South-South cooperation. The following lessons can be derived from the findings of these regional programmes:

- The existence on the side of the beneficiary of a regional institution that can act as the main interlocutor with the Commission Services and as an interface with the member states of the region had several advantages that contributed to better SPP outcomes. In particular these institutions (e.g. UEMOA, MERCOSUR, Andean Community, COMESA) engaged in policy dialogue with the Commission and reflected in it both the priorities of the regional policy which they are responsible for promoting and the needs of the member states. In that sense the stronger the institutions, the richer the policy dialogue. The gradual adoption of contribution agreements between the Commission and the regional institutions is a positive move as it gave the latter more autonomy to merge the Commission assistance with their other resources in the conduct of their policy;
- Such institutions, as with AFRISTAT, could offer an occasional strong technical support to the national NSO of their region (this is in particular the case of AFRISTAT); this aspect was important and very beneficial in West and Central Africa and could go as far as organising assistance and training by one NSO for that of another member country; in that sense regional institutions not only better identified the differences of strength between the NSO but to a certain extent also contributed to mitigating the differences;
- In the absence of a central regional institution (e.g. MEDSTAT and PALOP), adaptation of the regional programme to the policy priorities and statistical capacities of the member states proved more difficult;
- In all cases the results and the outcomes of the regional SPP depended crucially on the commitment of the member countries, in terms both of thoroughness of implementation of the regional programme and of sustainability. On sustainability, the continued contribution of the member NSO, once the project or regional institution benefiting from it ceased its financial support, proved a major constraint, all the more so when the share of the project resources in the total resources of the NSO was large.
- The benefits of regional programmes depend on the ability of the inter-regional agreement to reflect mutual priorities for collective action. Regional statistical priorities can be highly distinct from existing national statistical priorities, either through a lack of communication between national and regional fora or because there are specific benefits from the regional programme that cannot be captured at national level. Moreover, an agreed regional statistical programme might partly reflect EU priorities to receive data from its partners.



Based on J1.1, J3.1, J3.4, J3.5, J3.7, EQ4, J6.1, J6.1, EQ7, J8.3.

#### **Conclusion 6:**

Monitoring of *poverty reduction strategies* and generalisation of *budget support* have increased demand for statistical information directly linked to the pursuit of policy priorities. Responses that only focused on production of the required indicator proved unsatisfactory and created a risk of fragmentation of the statistical systems. Awareness of these problems induced a trend towards more comprehensive management information systems, but these were still insufficiently integrated into the overall national statistical systems.

Budget support (including funding in the context of several Food Security Programmes) has created new demand for statistical information and strengthened the convergence between statistical support and the objectives of the partner and other Commission interventions. This process has evolved and drawn lessons from the difficulties met. First, structural adjustment facilities supported the computation of very *ad hoc* indicators that proved unsatisfactory because they did not respond to the needs relating to formulation, implementation and monitoring of sector policies. Moreover, they were often computed by experts recruited for the purpose, but this generated production of information outside the official statistical circuit which was consequently difficult to maintain. Gradually they were being replaced by comprehensive management information system elaborated at the level of complete social sectors. Analysis of recent project documents revealed considerable progress compared to the previous approach. However, these MIS were designed without taking account of the need for integration into the legal and organisational statistical system as a whole, and often without involving the NSO (or at best involving it only loosely for production of the aggregate statistics needed to compute composite indicators). Such evolution risks fragmentation of the statistical system and may weaken governance.

Based on J3.2.

#### **Conclusion 7:**

The magnitude of the *share of resources devoted to SPP* in the cooperation programmes varied widely, but was generally not commensurate with the objectives announced. The allocation of resources for SPP between countries was difficult to justify.

As indicated under conclusion 1 the available information did not permit an accurate estimate of the share of cooperation resources allocated to supporting statistics. From the data available this share was fairly small in countries that benefited only from regional statistical interventions (for instance, in Ukraine it amounted to 1% of the national action programmes over the evaluation period). Such amounts can significantly contribute to specific actions but are too limited to permit achievement of the ambitious objectives generally mentioned in the project documents. The share of resources for statistics was

probably higher in ACP countries that benefited from regional and bilateral SPP, especially when censuses were funded. In that case it is difficult to understand the rationale behind the bilateral choices. For instance, apart from cases where there were clear political considerations, it was not possible to determine or explain why a given type of intervention was supported in one country but not in another.

The discrepancy between the needs and resources allocated for statistics very much depend on advocacy, given the generalisation of budget aid. Indeed, in this case statistical support is included in a provision for institution strengthening that can be mobilised, on the request of the partner, to fund capacity-building TA projects. So far this possibility has remained largely unexploited owing to low beneficiary demand. Where it is exploited, substantial resources are mobilised that may have a significant impact.

*Based on Inventory, J3.2, EQ6.*

### 4.3 On the implementation modalities

#### **Conclusion 8:**

Statistics are an area where the technical DG of the Commission, EUROSTAT, has been systematically involved in the provision of support to third countries. This had beneficial consequences in terms of the *technical quality* of the interventions. On the other hand, whereas nearly all interventions of EUROSTAT were carried out within the programmes and strategies agreed between the Commission and partners, it was observed that Commission services of the RELEX family tended to consider SPPs, particularly the large regional ones with general objectives such as MEDSTAT and TACIS Statistics, as relatively independent activities. This reduced the functional integration of the statistical activities with the rest of national and regional assistance programmes.

Contrary to what has been observed in several other cooperation areas, EUROSTAT was involved in identification, programming, implementation and monitoring of mainly regional statistical projects. This had important consequences:

- 1° It had a very positive influence on the technical quality of statistical interventions. The technical advices provided by EUROSTAT to the Commission services contributed to improve the quality of the interventions. The authority of EUROSTAT in terms of methods, statistical know-how and expertise provided an enormous value added and cannot be questioned. All interviews highlighted this fact. This was further strengthened by the existence of the CESD network of highly qualified professional statisticians. The combined actions and credibility of EUROSTAT and the CESD favoured the integration of partner statistical institutions into international networks of statistical institutions, which stimulated exchanges and proved a major asset in all projects where it occurred. The twinning operations organised, often thanks to the mediation of EUROSTAT and the CESD-Communautaire, were also important contributors to the success of the projects that included them.

- 2° Whereas the continued involvement of DG ESTAT and the CESD was favourable to continuity and deepening of statistical interventions, the closure of CESD following the EUROSTAT crisis was a major source of disruption with very damaging effects on the beneficiaries.
- 3° Several large statistical programmes in the past became relatively autonomous from other cooperation activities and this proved detrimental to the development of synergies. It contributed to the relative separation between the programming and implementation of statistical activities and that of the other components of the national or regional assistance programmes. It should be noted that SPP are only minor components of total assistance to a country or region and are relatively technical. One could not expect each Delegation to possess or develop the corresponding expertise, but the role of the Delegations is nonetheless crucial in terms of advocacy.

Based on J1.1, J1.2, J3.2, J3.5, EQ5, EQ6.

#### **Conclusion 9:**

The full potential for *coordination and complementarities* among individual SPP and between SPP and other activities was not exploited even though it would have generated economies of scale and other gains in efficiency.

Coordination and division of labour with other donors was limited, except for cooperation with the EU Member States' bilateral cooperation and statistical institutions. This increased the transaction costs for the beneficiary and reduced efficiency.

Many findings point to the lack of synergies between components of the large multi-domain statistical projects. The bias towards “self standing” development of the different components of large SPP was strengthened by the fact that they were implemented by different contractors. The absence of synergies not only reduced efficiency but also weakened the construction of coherent statistical systems.

As regards donor coordination and complementarity, a distinction must be made between cooperation with multilateral donors and that with EU Member States. Although the interventions of other donors proved to be essential factors in improving the statistical system of the beneficiaries, cooperation with projects funded by multilateral donors was limited. In particular diagnostic studies, statistical master plans and other national strategies for the development of statistics, were not shared. In most cases donor coordination was limited to ensuring that no duplication of activities took place but it did not go as far as a distribution of responsibilities decided *ex ante*. Donor coordination was improved when there was a strong national statistical institution capable of managing it (e.g. Ukraine with IMF and World Bank assistance). Equally favourable was the existence of a regional institution possessing knowledge of the domain and of the local situations and which could act as contractor or subcontractor of SPP and ensure coordination (cases of AFRISTAT and Secretariat of COMESA, for instance).

Cooperation in SPP with the Member States' bilateral cooperation programmes and statistical institutions was well developed and beneficial<sup>43</sup>. It took the form of a real distribution of labour in the support for the statistical schools, but the lack of predictability and advance notice to MS partners of some Commission decisions at times had damaging effects. In West Africa the complementarity between French and Commission support to statistics was well organised, AFRISTAT playing a significant role in this case.

*Based on J6.3, J6.4, EQ8.*

#### 4.4 On the results

##### **Conclusion 10:**

The SPP supported by the Commission generated *substantial results* and contributed important improvements in the capacity of the statistical institutions and in the transfer of professional know-how and training of human resources. Notwithstanding these significant achievements, *the outcomes remained limited* because the information base used by decision-makers for formulation and monitoring development policies remains modest. Moreover, the *sustainability* of the progress made remains *very fragile*.

Advocacy for the use of statistics in decision-making was not the object of much support in past SPP, which may constitute a major missing link between results and outcomes.

The questionnaires, interviews and documents consulted conveyed a very positive appreciation of the results achieved by the SPP. The quality of the interventions and the services provided was regarded as very high in terms of development of methodologies, assistance in adoption of international classifications, design and conduct of surveys and processing of their results. It was obtained with an adequate blend of training, equipment and software to accompany these transfers of professional know-how. In consequence practically all projects left positive results in the form of broader and deeper coverage of existing information, development of new areas of statistics, increased efforts to disseminate data, use of better methods and software, and adoption of international recommendations and classification systems.

These results are not negligible and were achieved with relatively modest resources when compared to large programmes such as those of the World Bank or the long term technical assistance provided by experts seconded from the IMF statistical department.

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<sup>43</sup> See also conclusion 8 on role of CESD.

However, if one looks at the outcomes and asks the question “did these results lead to significant improvements in decision-making and was significant progress observed in the use made of statistical information by the decision-makers?” the answer has to be much more circumspect. Overall, results are substantial but outcomes remain limited.

Real improvements in the information base and its use in decision-making were observed in a few central statistical categories that were also strongly supported by other donors: measurement of informal sector, consumer price indexes, government accounts, external trade statistics, etc. These areas are the key for the core macro-economic policies. Their development was generally supported by the international agencies or by donors who had the most active policy dialogue with the country (e.g. IMF in the field of government accounts, France with the countries partners in its CFA monetary unions, the United States with Egypt, etc.). The Commission limited its support to those areas that required very large resources, including equipment, and were often not under the responsibility of the NSO.

Notwithstanding the good results stated above, reliability and accuracy remain major issues in the main statistics targeted by the SPP: trade statistics, transport, migrations, social sector statistics (MDG indicators), and even environment statistics, production of which became possible in several beneficiary countries thanks to the SPP. In these areas progress has not yet led to availability of data that has been widely accepted for decision-making, and the SPP did not increase the willingness of decision-makers to base their actions on quantitative information.

For instance, considerable progress was made in the production of trade statistics, or in the extension of their coverage, in the African regional integration zones. Nevertheless, users from the Delegations and the Commission Services considered that the quality and reliability of the data was insufficient, whereas the authorities of the member countries of these zones did not commit the resources or engage the reforms that would have permitted substantial improvements in their information base.

Finally, a major issue was a lack of sustainability. Sustainability was easily achieved when the SPP represented a minor fraction of the resources of the partner statistical institutions. In such cases it was easy for the recipient to absorb the transfer of qualifications and professional know-how and to integrate it into its daily work after the end of the project. The Chinese statistical project and the support to the SSCU in Ukraine are good examples. When SPP amount to a substantial share of the total resources of the beneficiary and completely support the domain in which they intervene, sustainability requires a commitment of the beneficiary to continuing the activity and therefore to providing the necessary resources. This can take place only if the beneficiary is convinced that the opportunity cost of transferring resources to the statistics is compensated for by the benefits brought about by better-informed decisions. This was clearly not observed and, moreover, there was also a major issue regarding advocacy, which was not the object of much support in past SPP, while the weak linkage observed in some countries or regions between the SPP and the country strategy priorities was a further negative factor.

*Based on J2.3, J2.4, EQ3, EQ4, EQ5, J7.2, J7.3, J8.4.*

## 5 Recommendations

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The evaluators consider that three groups of general recommendations emerge from the conclusions of section 4. They are, in declining order of importance:

- 1 Recommendations addressing the weak links between the good results of SPP and the development of evidence-based decision-making.
- 2 Recommendations aimed at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of SPP.
- 3 Recommendations aimed at improving information on Commission activities in support of statistics in third countries.

Addressing these priorities requires interventions by different actors. Therefore each recommendation includes suggestions for operational steps for putting it into practice and identifies implementation responsibilities.

The recommendations are annotated with cross-references to the supporting conclusions.

### 5.1 Priority 1 recommendations

***R1 Include systematically, in the design and implementation of SPP, activities promoting the emergence of a culture of evidence-based decision-making.***

A major conclusion of this evaluation is that whereas SPP have generally produced good and appreciated results, it is difficult to perceive significant moves towards evidence-based policy-making. The need for effective advocacy for statistics is important and necessary.

To go beyond the level of rhetoric, advocacy must be factored into the design and implementation of every statistical project. Below are some practical proposals to this end:

- In project design do not concentrate support exclusively on the “supply side”, i.e. the statistical institutions and the production of data, but also target the users and draw up specific measures to involve them in the planning and implementation of the project; this goes beyond provision for dissemination of information but might include specific seminars to help users understand the data and develop confidence in their accuracy, reliability and integrity. The priority users to be targeted are the decision-makers and other main stakeholders in the area covered by the project.
- As far as possible use the ICT to promote publication and updating of data on websites and dissemination portals. Also organise within projects exchanges of information and linkages of the specific data produced to the rest of the statistical system. Instruct users in data-warehousing techniques which facilitate the making available of large data-sets which in turn can be compiled into tables meeting the exact needs of users.
- Whenever possible and relevant, include in the objectives of SPP participation in schemes such as the GDDS or the SDDS.

- Include in project activities production of advocacy material (in cooperation with PARIS21), use it during the project for advocating the direct use of statistics developed, and transfer advocacy skills and materials to the managers of statistical systems who will build on the project.

It may be noted that the current trends are in the direction of this recommendation: under the 10<sup>th</sup> EDF focus will be more on dissemination, EUROSTAT has already introduced practices to facilitate data dissemination and use.

This recommendation, *based on conclusions 1 and 3*, is addressed to the Commission Services and regional institutions that design and manage SPP.

***R2 In the design and implementation of SPP, ensure that the financial, technical and human resources committed are sufficient both to ensure smooth transition after completion and to maximise sustainability of the results achieved.***

To sustain the progress accomplished through SPP has been found particularly difficult to achieve and is a major issue. Particular efforts should be made to factor sustainability into the design and implementation of projects. These efforts need to address the three following dimensions of sustainability highlighted in this evaluation:

***Financial sustainability.*** To ensure financial sustainability the phasing-out of SPP needs realistic planning. In this regard it must be accepted that statistical offices, like many other providers of public goods, cannot subsist and develop solely on the revenue from sale of their services and publications<sup>44</sup>. In quasi all developed countries sale of statistical products accounts for no more than 10% of the resources of the NSO. While such resources are of course welcome and should be pursued it remains vital to ensure, particularly in large projects which finance a significant share of the functioning of statistical institutions, that funding is taken over after the end of the intervention by either the Government or another donor. The policy dialogue accompanying the provision of statistical and other support is particularly important in this regard. It should take care that the partner government takes the necessary steps (including request for specific support) to ensure the adequate provision of information to implement and monitor its policies. The major factor to induce the support to the production of statistics is the demand for information by the deciders.

***Human resources sustainability.*** This is linked to the foregoing; in this case also well-planned phasing-out of a SPP will ensure that the same personnel that worked in the project can continue and transmit their know-how to others. The considerable effort made to develop human capacity through statistical schools has been partly lost as the statistical institutions cannot afford to recruit the qualified professional staff produced by this system. Providing incentives to induce students to start their professional life in the NSO and at the same time to give NSOs the resources to absorb them is recommended and could be the focus of a follow-up intervention.

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<sup>44</sup> That is, unless there is a system of internal invoicing within State services under which, for instance, the Ministry of Employment would purchase the employment surveys and statistics from the Statistical Office. Sweden is a country that has partially adopted that model; but it requires sophistication in the organisation of public services that may be out of the reach of many developing countries.

**Technical sustainability.** When software (EUROTRACE, ERETES, ASYCUDA and similar) is included in the inputs of an SPP, it is important to ensure that maintenance and upgrading are performed and that clear guidance is also given on the necessary frequency and cost of future maintenance and adjustments.

Better focus on building sustainability into the design and implementation of projects is necessary but may not be sufficient. Follow-up action should be envisaged; this may take several forms:

- Complementary and integrated project activities to organise transfer of the project resources and achievements into the day-to-day practice of those agencies which are supposed to take over and build on them. These complements should be programmed and announced before the termination of the main project. In the past (cf. the examples of DIAPER II and of several ASYCUDA projects) such steps were merely encouraged by observation, after project termination, that everything would be lost if a new project were not launched. Continuity and visibility, essential to sustainability, were totally missing in such cases. As a general rule, these actions should not constitute complementary projects but actions integrated into the main project. However, there are cases where it is obvious that complementary interventions will be needed; they should be anticipated and announced. This is the case for instance with the developments of ASYCUDA: it is clear that the current text based version (ASYCUDA 2.7) will be replaced by client server version that will require considerable investments and adaptation efforts that can be hardly envisaged without additional assistance.
- Better coordination with public administration reform and negotiation of adequate pay schemes and incentives in the statistical services, for instance within the policy dialogue associated with budget support.
- For software developed by Commission services, provide the code sources, if the developer does not upgrade.

This recommendation is linked to recommendation R7 and based on *conclusions 10, 5 and, to a lesser extent, 7*. It concerns the services responsible for the design of projects but also the implementation agencies and contractors.

**R3 Insist that identification of statistical projects be based on a triple assessment of *i*<sup>o</sup> the statistical situation, *ii*<sup>o</sup> the information needs linked to the cooperation objectives, and *iii*<sup>o</sup> the components of the institutional statistical system needing strengthening to improve “evidence-based policy” in the areas of cooperation.**

This recommendation has been formulated to address a number of deficiencies and difficulties frequently met in SPP. Such deficiencies include:

- Projects being implemented in NSO without prior verification that the NSO’s sources of primary data can deliver the quantity and the quality of inputs needed for achievement of the project objectives.
- Improvements to statistics in areas which users judge not to be the most important ones given the policy priorities and most pressing issues in the partner country/region.



- SPP developed in a limited (sector or thematic) perspective without any attempt to maximise their synergies and coherence with the rest of the statistical system.
- SPP that deliver good results which however are not channelled into the decision-making process.

This recommendation concerns the services in charge of the preparation of strategies and programming of SPP. Since project design is often partly done during the first phase of implementation, it also concerns the implementing agencies and contractors. It is based on *conclusions 1 and 4*.

***R4 The Commission's regional approach proved fruitful and should be continued and enhanced, but the design of regional statistical interventions should be better adapted to the institutional framework of the partner region.***

The Commission is probably the institution that has most used a regional approach in supporting statistics, and maybe the only one among the multilateral donors. As indicated in the findings and conclusions, this proved a commendable route but results could be enhanced through better adaptation to the different regional settings. Differing cases should be distinguished thus:

- *Support to Regional Integration Organisations (RIO)*. In this case the link between the statistical support and the objectives of the regional policy are quite clear. Supporting the RIO with a contribution agreement rather than with a traditional project is a strategy that the Commission has recently initiated and should be pursued. Its main advantage is to give the RIO full command over the resources needed to implement its policy and to ensure coherence between statistical and other activities. This approach, however, requires a close cooperation between the regional organisation and the member states to ensure the adequacy of the regional and national objectives and the support of the NSO by the member states. It is therefore important that the policy dialogue conducted by the Delegations at national level extends to the national implementation of regional policies, both to encourage the member countries to cooperate with the RIO and to convey the concerns of the NSO to the RIO if these do not provide them with sufficient assistance.
- *Regional statistical support to regions lacking, or with only weak, regional integration objectives and weak or non-existent regional institutions*. This applies to the large regional programmes in the TACIS and MEDA regions and some, but to a lesser extent, Latin American or Asian projects.

These projects are generally provided in the context of the signature of a regional cooperation agreement with the EU (Barcelona Agreement, PCA) and fulfil a double function: the first is the approximation of the *acquis communautaire* in the adoption of methodologies, classifications, quality criteria and so on in the area of statistics; the second is the strengthening of member countries' statistical systems and institutions. In this case the recommendation favours bilateral approaches for the second function so as to better tailor the assistance to the needs and capacity of the NSO, and to focus the regional approach on provision of common methodologies, harmonisation of statistics, and organisation of linkages and exchanges between NSO. The Delegations should play an active role in identifying the bilateral support needed.

This recommendation is based on *Conclusions 5 and 10* and targeted to the Commission services in charge of programming of SPP and also to the partner regional institutions.

***R5 The commendable efforts to accompany budget support with institutional building in the area of statistical information provision should be pursued and enhanced with a view to strengthening the statistical system as a whole.***

Efforts, already undertaken in recent projects, should be pursued along the following lines:

- Strengthen the capacity of the statistical institutions to fulfil their day-to-day mission rather than supporting specific surveys or activities or compilation of specific indicators; this will eventually produce better statistical data and indicators and favour sustainability. In other words the focus of assistance should be more on strengthening the capacity of the statistical institutions to produce regularly good quality reliable basic data rather than on supporting one study or a particular survey.
- The current evident trend away from the elaboration of specific indicators towards development of sector management information systems should be encouraged provided care is taken to include it in a comprehensive vision of the statistical system and avoid fragmentation (great care should be placed on the application of the “statistical governance principles<sup>45</sup>” when developing these MIS);
- When developing sector MIS projects, include components aiming at strengthening coordination of the statistical system (a useful model of institutional mechanisms guaranteeing such coordination is the ARCS in Burkina Faso).

This recommendation, which concerns especially sector budget support, is based on *Conclusion 6*. It concerns the Delegations, the beneficiaries institutions, EUROSTAT and Aidco.

***R6 In large projects and non-statistical sector programmes, systematically reserve a share of project resources for institutional development linked to collection and processing of statistical information and make sure it is used for monitoring the policy supported by the project/programme.***

The aim of this recommendation is to generalise and improve a practice current in budget support programmes and entails reserving a share (2 - 5%) of the allocated resources to institutional development linked to collection and processing of the necessary information. It is recommended that project programming documents should include an estimate of the information needs and the cost of processing and disseminating the information generated by the project or programme. This would have several advantages: first, it would ensure that data requirements are duly taken into account and benefit from adequate resources; second, it would gradually permit measurement of the cost of information and provision of

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<sup>45</sup> The « European Statistics Code of Practice » enumerates 15 principles recommended for Governance and statistical authorities. The interested reader can find them in: [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/pls/portal/docs/PAGE/PGP\\_DS\\_QUALITY/TAB47141301/VERSIONE\\_INGLESE\\_WEB.PDF](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/pls/portal/docs/PAGE/PGP_DS_QUALITY/TAB47141301/VERSIONE_INGLESE_WEB.PDF). When developing MIS it is important that these principles are applied also by the non statistical institutions (line ministries, etc.) in particular, the following ones: Mandate for data collection, statistical confidentiality, impartiality and objectivity).

resources to this end in non-statistical programmes; and third, it would permit better justification and substantiation of the selection of SPP offered to a particular country or region, as well as the share of resources allocated to statistics in the national or regional programmes.

The procedures for the elaboration of RSP and CSP should remind the need to take statistics into account. The guidelines for budget support do so and could be used.

This recommendation is targeted on the Commission Services in charge of programming non-statistical interventions; it is complementary to recommendations R1, R8 and R13 and based on *conclusion 7*.

***R7 Better articulate SPP and policies related to public administration reform and, where and when possible, include development of statistics in the policies associated with budget support.***

This is both a priority 1 and priority 2 recommendation. The evaluation findings show that the status and resources of the national statistical institutions are a major factor contributing to or limiting the possibility of improving sustainably the production of good quality and reliable statistical data. SPP implemented without ensuring their coherence with other policies affecting public administration generally face insurmountable difficulties and seldom achieve their objectives. The first part of the recommendation is necessary to improve effectiveness of SPP and is therefore a second-level priority.

The production of statistical information is not only an instrument but an integral part of the architecture of the public services. It provides the services of an infrastructure and an element of governance in the policies implemented. Therefore budget support should as far as possible include provision of assistance for enhancement of the statistical functions of the State, and the underlying policy dialogue should therefore encompass that dimension. In some cases the quality of statistics could be a criterion of eligibility to budget support. The expected advantages are: better mainstreaming of statistics into important policies; and easier achievement of complementarity and coordination through budget aid managed by beneficiaries rather than through independent projects.

Given the transversal nature of statistics and its importance for the conduct of all economic, social and environmental policies, it could be envisaged to develop an instrument of assessment of the adequacy of the statistical system. It could take its inspiration in the model of the Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability (PEFA) developed by a group of multilateral and bilateral donors to assess the conditions of a country public expenditure and financial accountability systems. A measurement framework could be devised with a set of agreed performance indicators and criteria to score them. The experience of EUROSTAT would be valuable

This recommendation is targeted on the Delegation and Aidco and is based on *Conclusions 2, 3, 4, 6 and 9*.

## 5.2 Priority 2 recommendations

**R8** *Prior to engaging in statistical interventions, conduct a thorough assessment of the country statistical situation, if not done already, and draw up with the partner a strategy for the development of statistics.*

The drawing up of a national strategy for the development of statistics is a prerequisite for ensuring the building up of a coherent and comprehensive statistical system. If such strategy exists, the Commission-supported SPP should be designed and implemented according to its dictates. If there is no statistical strategy, the recommendation is that, prior to starting interventions and where not already carried out, a thorough assessment of the statistical situation should be undertaken. An example that could serve as a model is the assessment recently conducted in MEDA countries as an initial step for the implementation of the MEDSTAT 2 programme in that country. Based on such an assessment, a strategy for the development of statistics should be agreed with the partner. The assessment and strategy should build on existing material such as the Statistical Master Plans and National Strategies for the Development of Statistics promoted by the World Bank and PARIS21, and other national plans, as well as multilateral and bilateral donor initiatives. The findings indicate that the Commission has made only limited use of the diagnostic studies of other agencies and this recommendation also aims at remedying this situation.

This recommendation is complementary to R3 but whereas the objective of R3 is mainly to ensure that statistical projects are fully integrated and compliant with the cooperation strategy of the Commission, R8 is more operational and aims at ensuring that statistical interventions are fitted into a partner strategy for the development of statistics. It is based on *Conclusions 2 and 9* and is targeted on Delegations, EUROSTAT and Aidco.

**R9** *To assist its services in the dialogue they engage in with partners on the preparation of statistical interventions, the Commission should produce guidelines and checklists on how to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the statistical system in relation to the information needs of the priority policies.*

This recommendation is complementary to R3 and R8.

This recommendation is self-explanatory and addressed to EUROSTAT and the Services in AidCo responsible for sector policies, at least to the extent that such guidelines and checklists need to be sector- or theme-specific. The Commission has already drafted guidelines for its priority sector policies; instructions on the information needed and the statistical strategy for collecting them would be a sensible contribution to evidence-based sector policies.

EUROSTAT and Aidco are about to produce a guide to the Commission statistical cooperation which will explain why, when and how to incorporate statistics into the Commission's development assistance. The guide will be for Commission staff in charge of preparing, monitoring and evaluating Commission supported development programmes

and projects. This commendable effort should be pursued and it is important that existing the sector-thematic guidelines are revised either to point to it or to include the most relevant aspects for the sector/theme concerned. The reason for this is that the sector/thematic specialists will primarily use their own guidelines and not always consult a statistical guide if they are not led to it. The point is of importance for this recommendation aims also at strengthening the coherence between the development policies and the statistical support provided.

This recommendation concerns EUROSTAT and the AidCo Services responsible for sector and thematic policies and the Delegations.

It is based on *Conclusions 2, 4, 7 and 8*.

***R10 In the design and implementation of SPP, strengthen those elements that the evaluation has shown to favour the technical quality of the support provided.***

These elements are:

- The capacity to put the statisticians of the beneficiary institutions in professional contact with their opposite numbers in EU or other beneficiary countries: this could entail twinning or the use of statisticians' networks. The role of the CESD network was very interesting in that respect. Care should be taken that the demise of this network, which was linked to other factors, does not lead to a weakening of that dimension.
- EUROSTAT advisory and coordinating role regarding the Commission support for statistics has proved to be crucial for the technical quality of the support. The participation of EUROSTAT to a number of meetings which aimed at improving coordination at international level of support for statistics of developing countries, such as FASDEV, Paris21 Steering Committee, AFRISTAT Board of Directors<sup>46</sup> is also a positive factor.  
In 2006, the Director Generals of the EU national statistical offices adopted a EUROSTAT's proposal to re-establish an advisory group on international statistical cooperation to improve coordination and reporting on statistical projects funded the Commission and the Member States, to assess the demand for statistical capacity building and to promote best practices based on an exchange of experiences made by the members of the group. Such initiative is directly in the line of the present recommendation
- Longer term training and TA have been identified as major requirements of many interviewees. Twinning seems a better answer than longer-term TA as the latter is linked to the duration of a project whereas the former initiates a relationship between institutions that can survive beyond the period of the assistance. Twinning is often also the trigger for complementary bilateral funding.

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<sup>46</sup> With the restrictions mentioned in footnote 35.

- Study tours and participation in international scientific events have proved beneficial in many cases. However this facility does not exist outside the boundaries of individual projects. It is recommended that a facility be created (for instance an “all ACP” programme) allowing partner statistical institutions to benefit from financing for attendance at such events or to participate to facilities offered by other donors (e.g. the Trust Fund for Strengthening Statistical Capacity Building managed by the World Bank that has decided to allocate a – small – percentage of its resources to support such activities).

This recommendation is based on *Conclusion 8* and is targeted to the Commission Services.

***R11 Make better use of the competences and means of regional and sub-regional organizations with statistical responsibilities, which have a better knowledge of local situations and capacities, by increasing their responsibilities in the design and implementation of statistical projects; and where possible use contribution agreements.***

The following findings combine to support this recommendation:

- PARSTAT, a sub-module within the regional integration support programme (PARI) managed by the UEMOA Commission and the Delegation of the European Commission (together with headquarter services) and using CESD technical assistance, was a case where the competences of a sub-regional organisation have been used, namely those of AFRISTAT. Without the assistance of that institution this sub-module would have faced serious technical problems during implementation. However, complications and delays occurred in particular in the identification and application of the appropriate procedures (e.g. contract in form of a grant agreement with AFRISTAT)<sup>47</sup>.
- Compared to the traditional financing agreements the contribution agreement authorises the use of the financial procedures of the partner organisation. This has a simplifying effect and, more important, the negotiation and the implementation of the contribution agreement is accompanied by a policy dialogue focused on the development strategy of the partner rather than on the use of the resources associated with statistical support. So far, the evolution of the assistance to COMESA from a traditional SPP to a contribution agreement seemed to favour implementation of statistical support and its coherence with other activities.

This recommendation is meant to help simplify the decision-making chain and improve understanding of and tailoring to local situations.

This recommendation is targeted on the Commission Services responsible for concluding the financial arrangements and contribution agreements.

It is based on *Conclusions 5 and 8*.

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<sup>47</sup> These were outside the scope of responsibilities of EUROSTAT and CESD.

***R12 Aim to enhance the potential gains in economies of scale and effectiveness from cooperation with other multilateral and bilateral agencies.***

This recommendation is complementary to R8 and aims at promoting coordination and cooperation between the main donors in the field of statistics on such issues as sharing of diagnosis and assessment studies, and development of road maps for implementation of statistical strategies and projects.

The distribution of tasks according to comparative advantage and project co-financing should be encouraged. Such cooperation took place between the MS and the Commission in several places (statistical education projects in East and West Africa, for instance) and proved fruitful. Efforts should be made to adopt the same approach with other bilateral and multilateral donors. In so doing it is important to keep in mind a finding of this evaluation that long-term distribution of tasks is preferred by the beneficiaries. Having the same donor working on successive projects in the same field is distinctly preferable to having a different donor at every round.

This recommendation is based on *Conclusion 9* and is targeted mainly on the Delegations.

### 5.3 Priority 3 recommendations

***R13 Improve the information on statistical projects and programmes.***

This recommendation advocates:

- Improvements in the definition of what constitutes a statistical project or the statistical component of a non-statistical project; a possible definition is “a cooperation activity that entails statistical capacity building, collection, processing and dissemination of statistical data as a basis for, inter alia, policy-making”.
- Identification in project design of components corresponding to this definition and of the resources allocated to them.
- Inclusion of this information in the CRIS database.
- Update properly and timely the DAC database with the required information.

Its adoption would permit accurate mapping of the Commission’s statistical information that would be useful for analytical purposes. In particular it would provide elements of information on the cost of specific statistical activities and permit derivation of conclusions on the efforts necessary to achieve results at country and regional levels.

This would furthermore facilitate EUROSTAT's mandate of advising and coordinating EU efforts with Member States in statistical capacity building in developing countries. In order to improve coordination among donor organisations, EUROSTAT has also agreed to report on behalf of the Commission on Commission support for statistics to Paris21 (Light monitoring mechanism). To this end Eurostat is constructing a knowledge data base including all Commission supported statistical projects with links to similar databases in the EU Member States.

The recommendation is addressed to the managers of the Commission databases, to those responsible for designing projects and feeding databases and EUROSTAT.

It is based on *Conclusion 1 and Section 2/inventory*.

***R14 Increase the basic statistical knowledge in the delegations to help them to follow the preparation and implementation of the SPP in the future.***

This recommendation is based on the observation that the delegations have generally no advisor able to understand the objectives and methods of statistical projects or statistical components of non statistical projects. This could be done through regular courses included in the training programme of Relex DGs. EUROSTAT may provide technical advice for these courses.

This recommendation is addressed to Aidco, EUROSTAT and the Delegations.

It is based on *Conclusion 8*.