



GENERAL QUALITY POLICY OF THE CZSO

Czech Statistical Office, January 2007





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1. Concept of quality in statistics, principles, rules, documents

The concept of quality in statistics as understood nowadays is not only quality of numerical statistical outputs (e.g. their accuracy); it has to be understood in a much wider context. It is about overall quality of the statistical service provided to the society, which is paid from taxes. Besides quality of a product, the quality of statistical service comprises also relevance and effectiveness of that service, amount of the burden on respondents, professionalism, transparency, etc.

Today, the key document describing essential characteristics that all national statistical institutes within the European Union (EU) are to meet is the so-called **"European Statistics Code of Practice"** (CoP) adopted by the Statistical Programme Committee on 24 February 2005. In Czech, it can be found at:

http://forum.europa.eu.int/Public/irc/dsis/coded/library?l=/2005_final_cspdf/_CS_1.0_&a=d and in English at:

http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/pls/portal/docs/PAGE/PGP_DS_QUALITY/TAB47141301/VERSIONE_INGLESE_WEB.PDF

The CoP is a common summary of European standards for statistical authorities and the whole ESS (the European Statistical System) and consists of 15 rules (they include also commitment to quality and characteristics of quality in statistics mentioned below), added by "indicators of right procedure" to measure how they are kept, that will be regularly controlled and monitored by the Statistical Programme Committee. Fulfilment of the rules is a requisite for complete harmonization with the European Union. In the first phase – in the year 2005 – the EU Member States and Eurostat (Statistical Office of the European Communities) elaborated introductory self-assessment reports based on a complex questionnaire prepared by a group of experts from 11 EU Member States and Eurostat. Monitoring of how the CoP is met will follow after a three-year period of its gradual implementation.

Since 2003, already before the publication of the above-mentioned Code, the Czech Statistical Office (CZSO) has applied principles of the Total Quality Management (TQM), which result from the philosophy that quality of outputs (products and services) can be ensured the best by enhancing of the quality of all activities of the organization. Within those principles, the CZSO concentrates on 5 key priorities:

- orientation on users/customers,
- quality of outputs,
- reducing of respondents' burden,
- orientation on employees,
- effectiveness of processes.

Even with the help of the five priorities that were adopted, we can reach **Full implementation of rules of the CoP, which is the top priority for the CZSO.**

The CZSO joined the recommendation to approach systematically to quality improvement and to measuring of processes that are crucial for all improvements. Members of the European Statistical System (ESS) should use self-assessment by the model of the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) as a basis for their improvement (besides those who already use another similar model). It is also important to prepare manuals for identification of key variables in executive processes, their measurement and an analysis of the measurement.

2. Quality of products – the European Statistical System, definition of quality in statistics

The European Statistical System (ESS) means the partnership comprising Eurostat, National Statistical Institutes and other national statistical bodies responsible in each Member State for producing and disseminating of European Statistics. Thus, it consists of statistical systems of the EU Member States and Eurostat. The ESS is not fully homogeneous, yet. Eurostat as a statistical office of the European Communities (EC) therefore makes effort to harmonize national statistical systems, to co-ordinate concepts, methods, documentation, common rules, etc. It started to deal with quality of statistics closely in the beginning of 1990s. Resulting from that effort was a definition of components (characteristics) of quality, which have to be monitored and improved in individual statistics. In the current concept, which was taken over also by the Czech Statistical Office, statistical quality is determined by the following characteristics: relevance and completeness, accuracy and reliability, timeliness and punctuality, accessibility and clarity, coherence and comparability.

All of these quality characteristics of statistics are important; for each user/customer¹ any of them may be the most important in a certain moment.

A. Relevance and Completeness

Statistics are relevant when they meet needs and priorities of users in that extent, which is achievable with regards to limited sources. These statistics are specified by identification of main users and finding of their needs (requirements).

¹ Differentiated are: users who receive statistical services and products for free, while customers have to pay.

B. Accuracy and Reliability

Accuracy is defined as an extent of approximation of the statistically estimated value to the (unknown) real value. Evaluation of accuracy includes an analysis of the accumulate error related to the available estimation. Total accuracy is of primary importance and it is one of the main needs of users. It is specified by presentation of the confidence interval together with the relevant statistics.

C. Timeliness and Punctuality

Statistics are timely, when they are topical for users, i.e. they are published in the shortest possible time after they are surveyed; they are punctual when published in deadlines announced in advance.

D. Accessibility and Clarity

Statistics are easily accessible when they are available to users in the form, which they need, they are clear to users and documented in an adequate way (they are accompanied by “metadata”). Thus, statistical service that is provided includes also help with utilisation and interpretation of statistical information.

E. Coherence and Comparability

Coherence – logical connection – should exist especially between preliminary and final statistics, between annual and short-term statistics, among various types of statistics in the same socio-economic domain, and the like. Statistics resulting from different sources, e.g. from various surveys with different survey frequencies are logically coherent to that extent to which they are based on general definitions, classifications and methodological standards. Statistics are most important when they enable reliable comparison in the space (for countries or regions), over time and as for objectively determined groups (“domains”) specified by classifications.

3. Quality management at the CZSO

3.1 Advisory bodies to enhance quality

In the year 2003, the top management of the CZSO clearly joined the **leading role** at quality management and since that time it has been gradually and systematically initiating activities and implementing principles, rules and instruments (see points 2 and 4) necessary **to enhance quality of all activities at the CZSO.**

An important role in the process is fulfilled by:

- a) **TQM Committee** founded in 2003 as an advisory body to the CZSO president in the area of implementation of activities of the total quality management. The chairman of the committee is in charge of the area of quality management in the office.
- b) **Committee to increase the coherence and comparability of statistical indicators of the CZSO** founded in 2005 as an advisory body to the CZSO president. It is a managing body as for activities enhancing quality of outputs via improvements of the system, sources, etc. Its mission is to identify weak points in the area of logical consistency and comparability of statistical indicators, to define tasks for analytical work of created working groups and propose measures leading to better coherence and comparability of statistical indicators.
- c) **Steering committees** established in the end of 2004 by the CZSO top management, which initiated **projects** the solution of which will result in **essential quality changes** in the statistical system in the medium-term outlook:
 - I. **Reform of the Statistical Surveys System (RSSS)** – the purpose is to transform the current system of surveys in order to rationalize (reduce) costs, capacities and to optimise burden of respondents (by better utilisation of administrative data sources) while maintaining necessary level of quality characteristics for the users.
 - II. **Statistical Metainformation System (SMS)** – the system of "information on statistical information" that is under construction will provide internal as well as external users with the necessary description (data on quality, contents, etc.) of the provided statistical data.
 - III. **Public database (PD)** – Gradually, since the year 2006, a publicly accessible database has been under construction. All statistical data implemented in the database are accompanied by their description (metainformation).

3.2 Strategic planning

The system of strategic planning was launched in the CZSO as at 1 January 2005 as one of the outputs of the SPMSA project (Strategic Planning and Management of Statistical Activities), which was realized in 2004 with the assistance of partners from the Federal Statistical Office Germany. In connection with this project, following a wide discussion, the fundamental CZSO document "**Mission, vision, strategic goals and sub-goals**" was compiled and adopted in 2004; this document defines goals, which the CZSO aims to achieve in the future (including goals concerning quality of statistics). Every year, goals of the CZSO are broken down into tasks

for individual departments and by way of annual assessment interviews employees are engaged in their fulfilling.

3.3 Permanent system of employee education

For better understanding of launched activities, principles and quality instruments, every year there are specific **trainings** concerning quality, organised for employees in leading positions and other employees (e.g. quality management in statistics, strategic management with the help of Balanced Scorecard, self-assessment with EFQM model, etc.). Apart from that, in the CZSO there has been a **permanent system of special education** of employees, which contributes to the motivation of employees to improve, innovate and have a professional approach towards their work and also increases their qualification structure, which is regularly evaluated.

3.4 Process management, cost controlling

Improving of the quality of products and services is closely connected with the **improvement of processes**, by which these are formed. Therefore, in 2005 - 2006 the key processes and sub-processes of the Office were identified and described and during 2007 cost controlling and process management will be applied. This will be enabled by the designed system of monitoring of capacities and expenses on individual orders and sub-processes. The aim is to find places for improvement leading to cost savings.

4. Activities and instruments for quality improvements

Priority activities leading to monitoring and improving of quality are based on the above-mentioned rules and principles of management, i.e. activities of steering committees and their work groups, which define and form a new statistical information system that includes reconstruction of the system of surveys, building of SMS along with the application of cost control and process management. Apart from the mentioned developing activities, the CZSO standardly applies and expands the following activities:

4.1 Reports on quality

For the evaluation of individual quality components in statistics defined in part 2, the Eurostat recommends the introduction of **standardized quality reports**. In 2004 - 2005, an international pilot project "Quality in Statistics" on six selected statistical surveys took place in the CZSO. Within this project, quality reports were prepared and with the support of the project a comprehensive set of quality indicators was developed; these are gradually implemented in all statistics.

4.2 Self-assessment using the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) model and self-assessment questionnaire according to the Code of Practice

Since 2004, self-assessment is carried out in the CZSO every year using the EFQM model. It is carried out within 9 criteria (from the point of view of applied approaches and reached results). Actually, it concerns a comparison to an ideal organisation in all of performed activities. Nine teams participated in the assessment – 32 employees, all of them went through the EFQM model training. A part of the self-assessment is also observation of the fulfilment of the CZSO's strategic goals and sub-goals. The first self-assessment by the "Code" questionnaire took place at the end of 2005. The purpose of both types of self-assessment of the Office is to find weak points and adopt measures to realise the improvement.

4.3 Indicators for measuring of the fulfilment of planned goals

In the end of 2006, two sets of indicators were defined and adopted. The first is a selection of **indicators** used for **measuring of the overall performance of the CZSO**. The second offers **indicators** applicable for **measuring of the fulfilment of strategic sub-goals**; each of the indicators has a bond to some of the sub-criteria of the EFQM model. Planning and measuring of these indicators will be launched during 2007.

4.4 Satisfaction surveys

Since 2003, regular **satisfaction surveys of users, employees, respondents and partners** of the CZSO were introduced. Based on the survey results, measures for improvement are then adopted. Thus, a system of permanent improvement of products and services, employee working environment, optimisation of respondents burden and partnerships is ensured.

4.5 Meetings with representatives of main user groups

Apart from satisfaction surveys, meetings of the CZSO management and other experts with representatives of main user groups, particularly with analysts and journalists are organized. The issues of the meeting are: important CZSO information concerning changes in methodology, ways of dissemination, etc.

4.6 Methodological audits

Among exploited instruments of quality control are methodological audits with the attendance of external auditors; each statistics undergoes these audits approximately once in five years, according to the schedule adopted by the CZSO top management

meeting. The system of methodological audits started in September 2003. Their purpose is to judge whether the used methodologies, principles, instruments and procedures are in compliance with rules and practice of the statistical service of the EC and other international organizations, possibly with other relevant rules for statistical activities (including internal).

4.7 System of analytical activities

The increasing quality of provided statistical outputs – their “value added” is reached partly by gradual enlarging of analytical activities (introduction of different types of analyses) and partly by motivating the analysts by a competition for the best quarterly analysis of the year, which was introduced in 2004.

4.8 Benchmarking, Best Current Methods

When launching the quality principles, the CZSO uses comparison with the best statistical offices. An example is the **Comparable Study on the Quality of Statistical Systems** published in 2006. Taking over the best current statistical methods is connected with the extent of involvement of the CZSO employees in international cooperation and international projects. For example, for the creation of the fundamental document “Mission, Vision, Strategic Goals and Sub-goals”, experience of the German Federal Statistical Office was used, which was based on the international project “Strategic Planning and Management of Statistical Activities”, also the form and content of similar documents of foreign statistical offices from the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America were used.

4.9. Annual staff assessment interviews

Annual staff assessment interviews led by direct superior employees are an important instrument of control and motivation of employees. Their aim is to deepen the internal communication and obtain feedback from employees. One part of the interview is an evaluation of the past period and adjustment of goals of each of the employee (in connection to the adopted strategic goals and sub-goals of the department) and setting the educational needs of the employee.

4.10. Transparency and openness

Good awareness of the CZSO users and the whole public about activities supporting the introduction of TQM and increasing the quality is the prerequisite for their satisfaction with published products and provided services. The Office, therefore, provides the key documents on the Internet, e.g.:

Ethical code of the Czech Statistical Office and its employees

[http://www.czso.cz/eng/redakce.nsf/i/ethical_code_of_czso/\\$File/ecodex.pdf](http://www.czso.cz/eng/redakce.nsf/i/ethical_code_of_czso/$File/ecodex.pdf)

Mission, vision, strategic goals and sub-goals of the CZSO

http://www.czso.cz/eng/redakce.nsf/i/mission_vision

Dissemination policy of the Czech Statistical Office (April 2005)

[http://www.czso.cz/eng/redakce.nsf/i/dissemination_policy_of_the_czech_statistical_office/\\$File/diseminace05.pdf](http://www.czso.cz/eng/redakce.nsf/i/dissemination_policy_of_the_czech_statistical_office/$File/diseminace05.pdf)

TQM activities of the CZSO in 2005

[http://www.czso.cz/eng/redakce.nsf/i/tqm_activities_of_the_czech_statistical_office_in_2005/\\$File/tqm05en.pdf](http://www.czso.cz/eng/redakce.nsf/i/tqm_activities_of_the_czech_statistical_office_in_2005/$File/tqm05en.pdf)

Annual report 2005

[http://www.czso.cz/eng/redakce.nsf/i/annual_report_2005/\\$File/ar2005.pdf](http://www.czso.cz/eng/redakce.nsf/i/annual_report_2005/$File/ar2005.pdf)

Revisions policy of the CZSO

[http://www.czso.cz/eng/redakce.nsf/i/revisions_policy_of_czso/\\$File/revision_policy_czso.doc](http://www.czso.cz/eng/redakce.nsf/i/revisions_policy_of_czso/$File/revision_policy_czso.doc)