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QUALITY MANAGEMENT AT STATISTICS LITHUANIA
by Statistics Lithuania

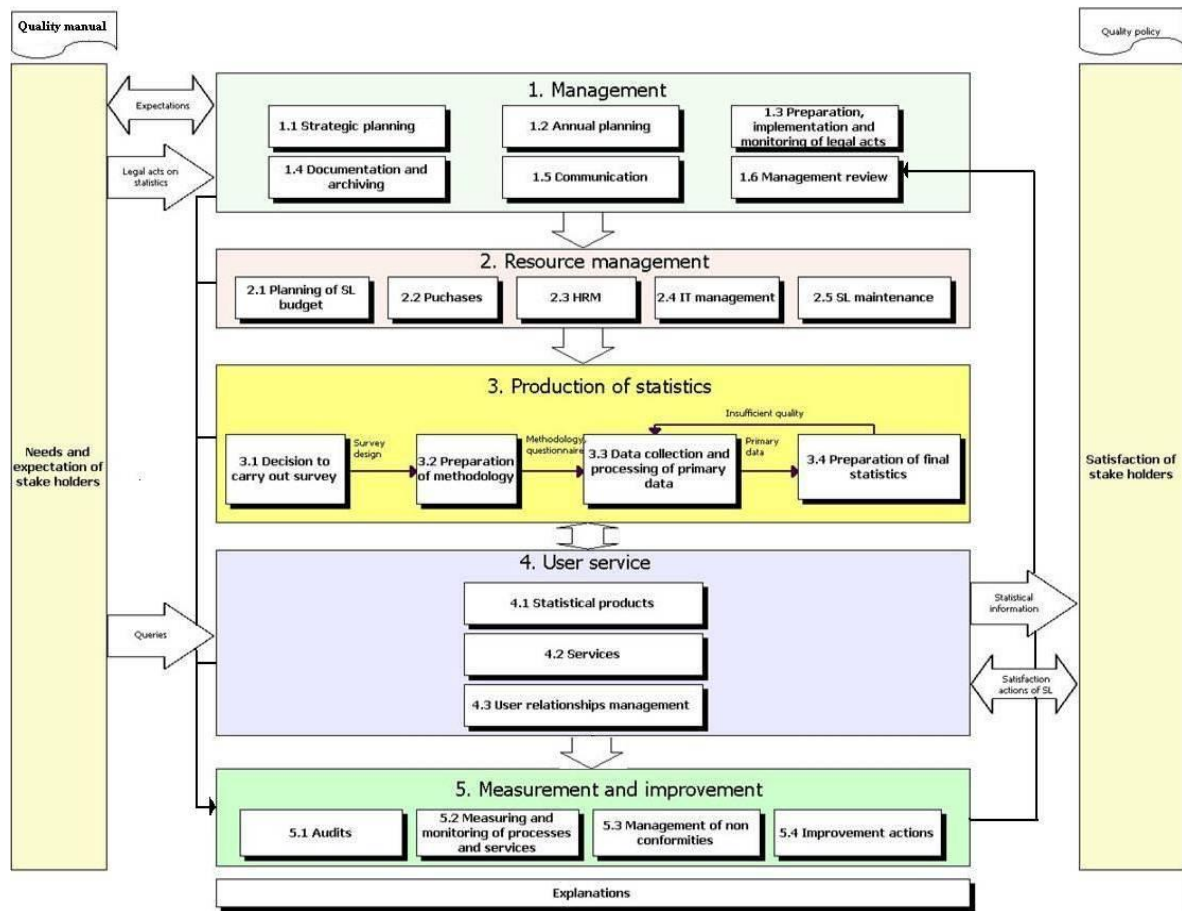
In 2007, in order to ensure a systematic approach towards quality management and implement provisions laid down in the Quality Declaration of the European Statistical System (ESS) and the European Statistics Code of Practice, Statistics Lithuania has introduced a quality management system conforming to **ISO 9001:2000 standard requirements**. The standard of quality management systems was taken as a framework for the further development of the quality management system towards the implementation of EFQM model requirements.

Statistics Lithuania was the second National Statistical Institute in the ESS – after the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic – awarded with the ISO 9001:2000 conformity certificate.

Process management

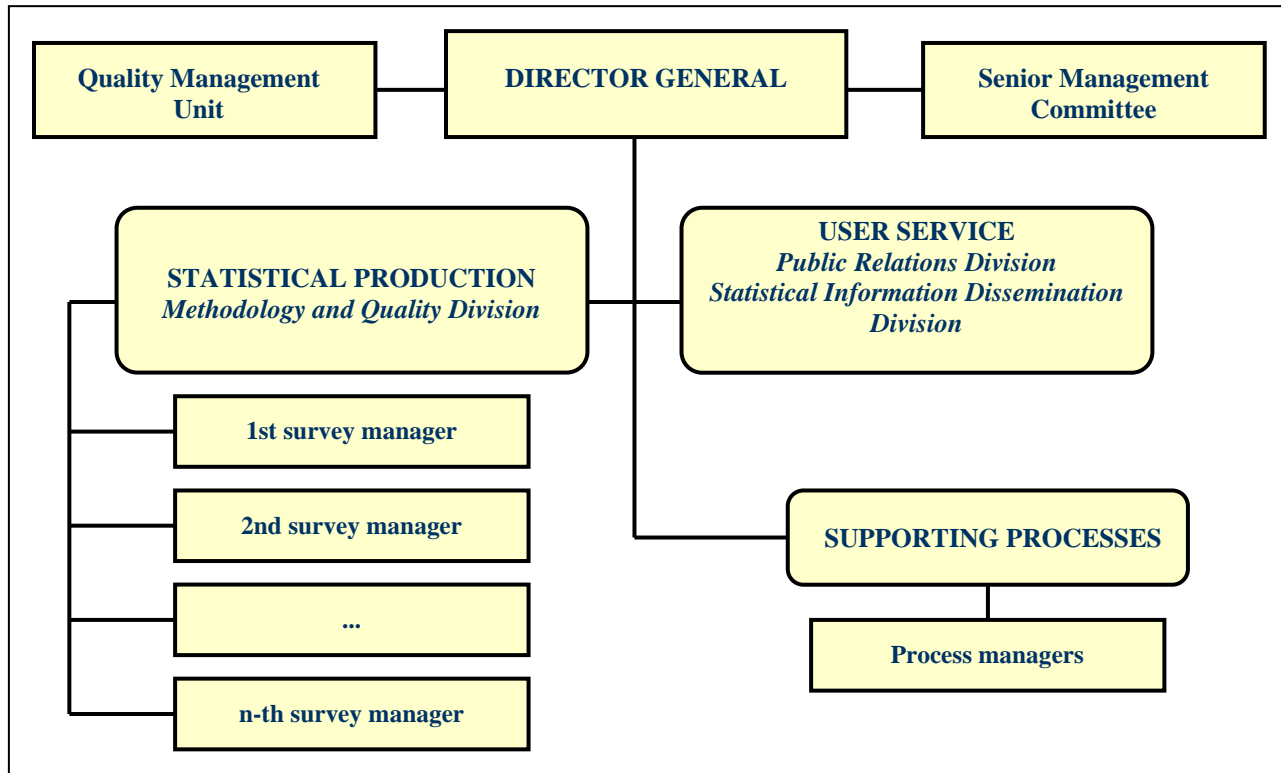
The Quality Management System at Statistics Lithuania covers organization of statistical surveys, preparation and dissemination of statistical information. Core processes of production and dissemination of statistics are supported by appropriate performance and resources management.

Figure 1. Processes at Statistics Lithuania



Process management is performed by process managers appointed for all processes. Process managers ensure effective operation of the processes. Their main responsibilities consist of setting objectives, rules and procedures for the process, monitoring and analysis of improvement possibilities, management of improvements, and assessment of their effectiveness.

Figure 2. Processes management at Statistics Lithuania



An important role is played by the Methodology and Quality Division, which is responsible for the management of statistical production process. This division sets rules for the monitoring of the quality of statistical production process, analyses results of statistical surveys, and provides recommendations for possible improvements. This unit works in tight contact with survey managers, responsible for the management of a particular survey. In 2005, in order to support better performance of a statistical production process, a Handbook on Production of Statistics has been developed under coordination of the Methodology and Quality Division. The handbook provides detailed recommendations for each sub-process.

The overall coordination of quality work at the institution level is performed by the Quality Management Division by the Director General. The division is in charge of coordination and planning of all quality work, setting rules for quality measuring and monitoring, monitoring and analysis of the effect of improvement actions launched in the institution.

All major improvements are regularly discussed at the meetings of the Senior Management Committee, which consists of 13 members (deputy directors, quality manager, division heads). The Senior Management Committee takes a final decision on future improvement work.

Quality Policy

Quality management is based on three main elements: quality planning, quality control and quality improvement. Particularly great attention must be paid to quality planning. To this end, the ISO standard 9001:2000 requires to set quality policy and quality objectives and monitor and analyse their implementation.

The Quality Policy of Statistics Lithuania clearly defines quality commitments of Statistics Lithuania:

- To prepare and disseminate statistical information in compliance with the national and EU legal acts as well as in relation with continuous improvement of its quality characteristics.
- To improve the services provided by implementing the customer relationships management system and using its capabilities to analyse and satisfy the needs of different user groups.
- To implement the measures reducing statistical response burden systematically.
- To extend the implementation of the provisions of the European Statistics Code of Practice to other institutions producing European statistics.
- To take over the best practices of Lithuania and other countries and continually improve the quality management system.
- To stimulate responsibility of the staff for final results and the quality of the product they deal with; to upgrade their qualifications and competence.
- To establish a systematic approach towards effective use of resources.

Statistics Lithuania promotes its quality commitments by defined quality objectives and their implementation actions at a unit and individual level. The quality policy reflects key commitments of Statistics Lithuania stated in the Strategy 2008–2012 of Statistics Lithuania. The progress on the implementation of quality objectives is discussed quarterly at the Senior Management Committee meeting.

User focus

Statistics Lithuania pursues the satisfaction of today's and future user needs. To this end, Statistics Lithuania uses a whole set of tools, allowing it to assess user satisfaction and timely react to the changes in user satisfaction and expectations.

Starting from 2005, Statistics Lithuania performs several types of regular user satisfaction surveys, assessing user perception from different perspectives (e.g. surveys targeted on different user groups, a survey exploring the image of Statistics Lithuania, surveys focusing on improvement of the website of Statistics Lithuania). User satisfaction surveys are followed by prompt and immediate follow-up procedures.

In order to gain more exact information on the new tendencies and to set new quality objectives, starting from 2008, Statistics Lithuania started calculating a user satisfaction index.

Relationships with users are continuously strengthened by organising meetings and discussions. Users are afforded an opportunity to submit proposals concerning the preparation of statistical information. They

are informed about the quality of statistical information and methods of preparation thereof. All this information is published on the website of Statistics Lithuania.

Human resource management

The professionalism and competence of the staff, developed quality culture are crucial factors for a successful performance of an institution. With regard to the strategy of Statistics Lithuania, the focus is given to the creation of a system of career planning, improvement of training and motivation systems, encouraging pro-activeness, responsibility, flexibility, loyalty of employees and allowing the development of versatile capacities, as well as transfer of good practice.

Following the provisions of the Law on Public Service and internal regulations, Statistics Lithuania performs a regular appraisal of employees. In 2007, the implemented staff competence surveys and a system allowing assessing the effectiveness of training enable to ensure a continuous growth of staff competence. A newly established system of rotation of employees allows developing a wider circle of employees with a wider view, enabling to use experience gained in different areas.

Systematic staff satisfaction surveys allow exploring different aspects of employees' perception. The results are discussed and deployed into improvement activities.

Measurement, analysis and improvement

In order to ensure a continuous quality improvement, in addition to user and staff satisfaction surveys, Statistics Lithuania implemented the following tools:

- A system for measuring and monitoring SL performance indicators allows making expeditious decisions based on objective information, important for the improvement of performance and removing drawbacks. For all performance indicators, critical values are defined, which allows managing risk, identifying and solving problems on time. Monitoring of the quality of statistical information is based on quality requirements of the ESS (relevance, accuracy, timelines and punctuality, accessibility and clarity, coherence and comparability).

- From 2007, regular inspections of statistical surveys have been carried out, the purpose whereof – objective estimation of the quality of preparation of statistics, exchange of experience, indication of good examples. Experts of SL, who assess a statistical survey, prepare detailed recommendations for the improvement of the quality of statistical surveys. During the inspection of a statistical survey, the following aspects are assessed: management and planning, applied methods, staff qualification and competence, application of IT tools, dissemination of statistical information, user relations.

- From 2004, a self-assessment of statistical survey managers has been carried out on the initiative of survey managers. The self-assessment allows identifying the drawbacks with the organization of statistical surveys, areas for improvement. It is based on a detailed checklist for quality assessment of surveys (DESAP). Survey managers are committed to perform a self-assessment once per 5 years.

- An effective tool for quality improvement is the audit of the quality management system. The audit allows identifying areas for improvements and creating favourable conditions for further improvements.

- One of the important requirements of ISO 9001:2000, implementing continuous improvement principle in practice, is related to the control of nonconforming product and eliminating causes of nonconformities (i.e. corrective actions), as well as eliminating causes of potential nonconformities (i.e. preventive actions).

Future work

Implementation of quality management principles at Statistics Lithuania allowed implementing a quality management system ensuring continuous improvement, setting clear values in the institution, consolidating the staff for the implementation of the quality policy and quality objectives.

Future activities of Statistics Lithuania are closely related with further development and expanding the quality management system. It is foreseen to implement quality management principles in regional statistical offices of Statistics Lithuania.

One of the priorities of Statistics Lithuania is strengthening of quality culture, stimulating initiative and innovativeness of employees.

A lot of work must be done in the field of cooperation with main stakeholders: other producers of official statistics, respondents, and users. Further improvement of user service is directly related to the satisfaction of individual user needs: broadening the scope and exhaustiveness of statistical, quality and methodological information accessible to the users, improvement of statistical literacy of the users.

In summary, it may be stated that all the quality-related activities performed by Statistics Lithuania correspond to a well-known saying that quality management does not have final destination – it is always a way forward with new strivings and challenges.