

History of the establishment of state statistics in the Republic of Belarus

The state statistics of the Republic of Belarus has passed a long way of establishment which went hand-in-hand with the history of the country. In the 19th century the statistics of Belarus was actually a part of the all-Russian statistics. Its formation started with the establishment of provinces (guberniyas).

In the early 20th century there were statistical divisions in Minsk, Vitebsk, Mogilev and Grodno, their activities being primarily related to census operations of 1914, 1916 and 1917.

In 1918 provincial statistical divisions were transformed into provincial statistical bureaus.

Formation of the republic statistical centre in Belarus started after the Socialist Soviet Republic of Byelorussia (SSRB) had been proclaimed on 1st January 1919. In summer 1920 work started in the country to restore the national economy destroyed by the foreign invaders and bearing a heavy loss. For its more rapid recovery, it was required to improve stock-taking and control over the production and consumption.

On the 23d August 1920 the SSRB Military Revolutionary Committee adopted a resolution on the establishment of statistical institutions in the country. Maintaining of statistics within Belarus was assigned to the Central Statistical Bureau and local bodies to be established thereby. This date is considered as the day of creation of state statistics bodies in the Republic of Belarus.

Late 1920 and the whole year 1921 are referred to as the period of formation of statistical bodies and country-wide development of statistical recording and reporting. As early as in 1920, the Central Statistical Bureau started to survey food conditions in the country alongside with the number of large-scale and important statistical activities.

In 1921 the staff schedule of the Central Statistical Bureau envisaged the following sections:

- General Management Division (28 persons);
- Demography (17 persons);
- Public education statistics (14 persons);
- Public health statistics (8 persons);
- Labour and social security statistics (12 persons)
- Land economy statistics (16 persons);
- Current agricultural statistics (16 persons);
- Industrial production statistics (27 persons);
- Economic statistics (17 persons)
- Forestry statistics (8 persons);
- Military statistics (8 persons); and
- Public utilities and administration statistics (13 persons).

In 1924 the Central Statistical Bureau was re-organized into the Central Statistical Office of the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic (CSO BSSR).

In the 1920s the bodies of state statistics for the first time compiled the national economy balance and agricultural products balance, and issued the first *Statistical Yearbooks*.

Radical changes took place in the organisation of state statistics in the 1930s:

- in February 1930 the CSO BSSR was abolished, its functions and executive office being transferred to the State Planning Commission at the Council of People's Commissars (Sovnarkom) of BSSR;
- in March 1932 the Department of National Economy Accounting to the State Planning Commission of BSSR was created;
- in June 1933 the Department of National Economy Accounting to the State Planning Commission of BSSR was re-organized into the Department of National Economy Accounting of BSSR, the main tasks of which related to implementation of accounting as the most important tool of planning, economic management and plan performance control in all sectors of national economy. The activities of the Department were temporarily suspended as the Great Patriotic War began.

In the course of the first postwar five-year plan a task was set not only to restore the prewar level of the national economy, but even to surpass it. To solve this task, the bodies of state statistics were required not only to organize the survey of national economy, but also to carry out regular economic analysis of conditions, under which it was developing, in order to reveal unused reserves.

The task set could not be successfully solved with the accounting and statistics methods existing in the country at that time. The state statistics did not meet the requirements of state administration and planned management of the national economy.

In August 1948, in order to eliminate the existing drawbacks, to improve statistical activities, and to increase the role of state statistics in the management and planning, the Department of National Economy Accounting of BSSR was re-organized into the Statistical Office to the Council of Ministers of BSSR (SO BSSR). Regional statistical divisions and town and district inspectorates were created in regions and towns and districts respectively. SO BSSR was subordinate to and operated under the direct supervision of CSO USSR.

In January 1960 SO BSSR was transformed into the Central Statistical Office to the Council of Ministers of BSSR (CSO BSSR), which became a union-republic body subordinate to the Council of Ministers of BSSR and CSO USSR. The following tasks were allocated to the CSO BSSR:

- to carry out measures to centralize accounting and statistics, to keep record of state plans performance, and to carry out other statistical activities;
- to develop and analyze statistical materials related to production economics, labour productivity and product costs;
- to produce estimates of national income, balance reports of material and labour resources, and to make population projections;
- to publish in press data on plan performance and other statistical materials, to issue statistical databooks and bulletins;
- to train and re-train accounting workers for the national economy of the country.

With gradual development of the national economy, economic relations became more complex, the volumes of material resources used grew up, and production outputs increased. All this required continuous improvement of state statistics. And the measures to raise the status of central statistics-governing body were directed thereto.

In August 1987 CSO BSSR was re-organized into the union-republic State Committee of Byelorussian SSR on Statistics.

In July 1990 the State Committee of Byelorussian SSR on Statistics was re-named into the State Committee of BSSR on Statistics and Analysis.

In September 1994, pursuant to the Decree of the President of the Republic of Belarus, the State Committee of BSSR on Statistics and Analysis was transformed into the Ministry of Statistics and Analysis of the Republic of Belarus subordinate to the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus.

In August 2008, by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Belarus, the Ministry of Statistics and Analysis of the Republic of Belarus was re-organized into the National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus (Belstat) subordinate directly to the President of the Republic of Belarus.

The largest statistical activities refer to **population censuses** conducted in January 1959, 1970, 1979, 1989, in February 1999, and in October 2009.

A specially developed **Republic Programme of Transition of the Republic of Belarus to Internationally-Adopted System of Accounting and Statistics for the years 1992-1995** served as a basis for the state statistical system reforms.

The main task was to improve the whole system of accounting and statistics to allow for transition from the national economy balance to the compilation of national accounts and estimation of Gross Domestic Products, assigning to it the status of the baseline indicator measuring the total economic activity of the country. Development of national accounts required changes in the accounting system and statistical surveys, in order to obtain more objective data missing in the official statistics.

A project related to conducting a household sample survey was developed and implemented jointly with The World Bank. The survey results have been widely used in various statistical calculations.

In 1993, with the expertise of the International Monetary Fund, **the consumer price index system was built** meeting international requirements to this indicator. In 1995 similar work was done with regard to **industrial producer price index**.

In 1997 **the Law of the Republic of Belarus “On State Statistics”** was for the **first time** adopted in the country. The Law specified the main tasks and principles of state statistics, rights and responsibilities of the state statistics bodies and those of state bodies maintaining state statistics, as well as the liability for violation of statistical reports submission. In 2004 a **new Law of the Republic of Belarus “On State Statistics”** was adopted, which incorporated the following complements:

- main terms and concepts used in statistical activity;
- main principles of state statistics (such as professional independence, scientific validity, rationality in choosing the modes to collect primary statistical data,

relevance and timeliness of statistical data (information), confidentiality of primary statistical data) and other provisions.

As a follow-up to the Republic Programme of Transition of the Republic of Belarus to Internationally-Adopted System of Accounting and Statistics, **the Programme of State Statistics Improvement in the Republic of Belarus for 2001-2005**, and **Programme of State Statistics Development for 2006-2010** were approved in 2001 and 2006 respectively. The main objective of these programmes was to provide for the complex reforms of state statistics in the framework of enhancement of reliable, high-quality, rapid and publicly available statistical information on the economy and social sphere of the country, and to support public credibility in official statistics.

In order to build an Integrated Information System of State Statistics of the Republic of Belarus, and to enhance efficiency of information support to the bodies of state administration, **the State Programme of Implementation of Integrated Information System of State Statistics of the Republic of Belarus for 2007-2011** was approved by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Belarus in 2006. The programme provides for the complex of measures to implement qualitatively new approaches to process automation in the organisation and maintenance of state statistics.

On 23 August 2010 the 90th anniversary of the establishment of state statistics bodies in the Republic of Belarus will be celebrated. To mark this important event, the scientific and practical conference “Belarusian Statistics: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow” is planned to be held 23 to 24 August 2010.