

Opening Remarks of INSTAT DG, Delina Ibrahimaj

Eurostat, Luxembourg, 12 and 13 February 2019:

Thank you Mr Chair for giving me the floor,
Distinguished Mr Eduardo Barredo Capelot
Distinguished Mr Bojan Marichikj,
Distinguished Colleagues,

I am very glad to participate in this meeting as the representative of the Albanian Government which will set the beginning of a very long and important journey for the Statistical System in Albania.

INSTAT was established as a statistical institution in 1993 and in the same year the first Law on Official Statistics was approved which marked the first step to building institutional statistical production infrastructure. In 2004, a new law on official statistics was adopted marking in such way the road toward the adoption of the EU standards and regulations for the country based on the opening of negotiations for signing of the SAA. Through these changes the Albanian Parliament decided that INSTAT will be the main statistical production institution in the country, setting new standards in respect of the observance of statistical principles.

At the time of the signing of the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) (in 2006), the Albanian Parliament adopted for the first time the Official Statistics Program for the referring period 2007-2011, which provided the grounds for the stable and sustainable development of official statistics in the long run. This new document didn't only provide the planning of data production but also allowed the identification and commitment of responsibilities of all public institutions involved, data producers or providers.

Article 88 of the SAA expresses the will of all parties for statistical cooperation in order to build a sustainable statistical system, capable of producing objective and accurate data to measure the performance of the Albanian state and the progress of the reforms undertaken. Also, this article expressed the commitment to establish a system that respects the fundamental principles of United Nations Statistics, the Code of Practice of European Statistics and develops towards Acquis Communautaire standards.

In this framework, INSTAT, as the institution responsible for Chapter 18, undertook further steps towards the approximation of the acquis related to this chapter and not only. The EU acquis in the field of statistics requires the existence of a statistical infrastructure including the legal basis, methodologies and data requirements in different statistical domains for the production and dissemination of official statistics.

For the successful achievement, INSTAT and the Albanian government in its entirety has found significant support and cooperation from Eurostat and other national statistical institutions of the member states. This cooperation was mainly focused in monitoring of the progress of statistical development through Peer Review, Sectorial Peer Review, periodic recommendations of the European Commission, and support for specific statistical activities through CARDS and IPA projects, etc.

From the entry into force of the SAA to date several recommendations from Eurostat and the European commission have been met and implemented. Mainly the efforts that the Albanian government has made toward increased professional independency of INSTAT and other statistical agencies staff; Appointment of the General Director through public, transparent and professional procedures; Increase of INSTAT's institutional hierarchy for achieving higher wages for the staff and increased autonomy in resource management as well as increasing the data collection activities and the transmission of statistics to the European statistical system (ESS) in the context of the EU accession process.

In this context, Law no. 17/2018 "On official statistics" enables full approximation to several standards of Directive (EC) 223/2009, as amended, concerning:

- a- Inclusion of the statistical principles in accordance with the Code of Practice of European Statistics;
 - b- Institutionalization of the position of the General Director as the representative of the National Statistical System whose professional independence is guaranteed by law;
 - e- Building a well-defined and stronger relationship between INSTAT and the Bank of Albania for official statistics production in respect to the independency of the two institutions;
 - f- Strengthening the mandate of official statistics for accessing administrative data;
- and Ensuring the principle of statistical confidentiality.

In addition, the Law on Official Statistics enables the implementation of statistical principles, in particular, those related to:

professional independence, positioning INSTAT's at the highest level in the hierarchy of public administration pyramid, as an independent institution reporting directly to the Parliament, and extending the autonomy for managing human and financial resources; and Coordination of the National Statistical System by formalizing the establishment of the system itself, defined by the law with INSTAT as the coordinating body, and reflecting the main activities for ensuring this coordination.

Also what needs to be emphasized is the commitment of the Albanian Government through their commitment of confidence, by expressing its will to influence positively the implementation of the professional independence of the institutions of the National Statistical System.

I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the National Statistical System of Albania, to give a special thanks to Eurostat, European Commission and all partners who have supported the development of Statistics during these years.

I look forward to these two days to learn more about our challenges ahead. As representatives of the Albanian Government we are very interested to hear more about the conditions and the timing of the adoption, implementation and application of EU acquis. In addition, since statistics is an important component of other chapters, we want to better understand our role in the monitoring of the progress toward accession criteria

I would like also to express my efforts to further improving the collaboration with the region by sharing experiences and supporting each other on the improvement of the statistical systems in our countries towards this challenging path.

I wish us all a very fruitful and successful meeting.