

## Multi-beneficiary Statistical Cooperation Programme

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### 1. Foreword

Dear readers,  
We are pleased to present the fourth edition of the IPA 2022 newsletter, highlighting recent milestones and ongoing activities under the service contract. This edition reflects the continued momentum in strengthening statistical cooperation, capacity development and knowledge exchange between Eurostat, EU Member States, EFTA countries and partner countries in the enlargement region. From high-level cooperation fora and expert exchanges to traineeships and hands-on institutional learning, this edition showcases how IPA 2022 continues to support the development of robust, harmonised and future-oriented statistical systems. We hope you enjoy reading about the latest achievements and insights shared by our partners and colleagues.

ICON IPA 2022 Team

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### 2. Forging new pathways on Statistical Cooperation: Insights from the MGSC 2026 Meeting

The 28th MGSC meeting (12–13 March 2026) brought together representatives from across Europe and partner regions to exchange experiences on statistical cooperation, with a focus on future strategies, peer reviews, donor coordination and capacity development. Key discussions also addressed crisis response and innovative approaches to statistical learning.

On 12-13 March 2026, Eurostat hosted the twenty-eighth meeting of the Management Group on Statistical Cooperation (MGSC). This annual forum welcomed 51 representatives from the international relations and statistical cooperation departments of 38 member states, and enlargement countries, along with international organisations.

Chaired by Eurostat, the meeting fostered dialogue and lessons learned exchange on improving statistical practi-

ces, showcasing key advancements and cooperative practices designed to enhance statistical collaboration across Europe and its neighbouring regions.

During day one, participants were informed about the political context of cooperation with enlargement countries, the Eastern neighbourhood, Central Asia, and the MENA regions and cooperation programmes and activities implemented by Eurostat. Eurostat also shared information about the development of new cooperation strategies in

the different regions for the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) as well as information on peer reviews, including feedback from the reviews implemented in Moldova and Kosovo\*. Another key topic was donor co-ordination, a crucial aspect of international cooperation. Presentations unveiled Eurostat's comprehensive survey findings, alongside collaborative efforts spearheaded by EFTA and Statistics Sweden.



MSGC 2026 in Luxembourg

The second day delved into topics such as development cooperation and the sustainability of cooperation programmes like the Pan-African Statistical II programme (PAS II). The presentations offered insights into capacity-building efforts, results from the PAS II programme and statistical tools on offer for developing countries.

The event concluded with discussions on crisis response strategies including a presentation from Ukraine on its challenges to maintain statistical production in times of war and information on the innovative e-learning platform, the PAS Academy, underscoring commitment to developing statistical education in Africa.



Eurostat representatives during the MGSC 2026 meeting

The dialogue fostered during the meeting was instrumental for an increased exchange of experiences and lessons learnt from statistical cooperation and raising awareness about cooperation projects implemented by the Member States, EFTA countries and Eurostat.

### 3. Spotlight interview with Key Expert for Social Statistics

The Key Expert on Social Statistics, Mr Patrick Simon, reflects on the crucial role of LFS and EU-SILC data for EU accession, highlighting their importance for evidence-based social policies and alignment with EU standards. The interview also points to persistent challenges in data production capacity, infrastructure and migration-related complexities.

**ICON: From your perspective as a demographer in France, why are social statistics – particularly the Labour Force Survey (LFS) and EU-SILC – essential for the EU accession process of the Western Balkan and Türkiye partner countries?**

Mr Simon: Social statistics provide crucial information for designing and supporting social policies aimed at reducing poverty and inequalities, among other challenges to social cohesion in democratic societies. They also contribute to economic development, and more broadly, to improving living conditions across Europe. The EU accession process requires implementation of EU laws and standards in the

enlargement countries, and statistical production must comply with the European acquis in statistics. Western Balkan countries and Türkiye therefore need to meet EU standards in producing reliable indicators on employment, poverty, and living conditions. Beyond the institutional requirements for EU membership, social statistics are key to strengthening social cohesion, promoting equality, and reducing social inequalities. They also help foster public trust in the government action, provided that social policies make effective use of statistical evidence. Finally, social statistics contribute evidence to EU policies on social cohesion and social values. In conclusion, social statistics

\* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence

are not only technical tools but also an instrument of integration, both within countries and towards the EU.

**ICON: EU-SILC provides data on income, poverty and living conditions. Based on your work with Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina, what are the methodological and operational challenges that still need to be addressed to produce reliable EU-SILC data?**

Mr Simon: The production of data on income, poverty and living conditions requires a strong and integrated statistical system, which is still far from being fully achieved in relatively new independent entities. One important aspect is the capacity to combine survey data with administrative data on income and living conditions, which is not yet possible in the case of Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina, at least regarding linkage with EU-SILC. Secondly, household sampling remains a complex task, given the lack of an up-to-date census, in the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the fragility of the sampling frame in Kosovo. Thirdly, limited human resources explain why data cannot always be produced in a timely manner, with all the necessary quality checks needed for reliable data. Fourthly, the technical infrastructure of the two NSIs does not yet provide full support for implementing EU statistical standards for EU-SILC. Neither NSI has access to the SAS software, which is commonly used in European NSIs to process EU-SILC datasets and produce indicators for Eurostat. This requires them to use alternative software, meaning that Eurostat programming and coding must be adapted to other environments (i.e. SPSS or R). This is time-consuming and, more importantly, does not always ensure the same level of validation checks and imputations, particularly to produce longitudinal datasets. There is therefore an urgent need to establish a comprehensive system for processing EU-SILC data, to deliver reliable statistical information on income, poverty and living conditions.

**ICON: Based on your experience working with national statistical institutes in the region, what are the most common difficulties they face – is it methodology, data collection, administrative data access, human resources**

**or other?**

Mr Simon: A key constraint is the lack of technical resources, including appropriate software such as SAS, which is commonly used to implement EU-SILC in European NSIs, as well as for sampling and developing CATI versions of questionnaires. This often leads to the need to implement time consuming alternative approaches that ultimately do not fully meet the requirements for effective data collection and dataset production.



Mr. Simon Patrick,  
Key Expert on  
Social Statistics

There is also a need for investment in skilled statistical staff. Qualified statisticians are scarce and difficult to recruit, as they often seek better-paid positions abroad. The resulting high staff turnover makes it difficult to retain and build on institutional statistical knowledge and methodologies. For example, the EU-SILC team at BHAS had to rebuild the survey production system following the departure of most of the staff involved in the pilot survey.

**ICON: How does demographic change – such as migration – impact the quality and reliability of social statistics in these**

**countries? Are there any examples of good practices that could be highlighted?**

Mr Simon: Since the 1960s, Western Balkan countries have been countries of emigration, and more recently also of immigration. Migration into the region has largely consisted of intra-regional mobility, while in recent years these countries have increasingly become transit countries for migration towards the EU. Temporary migrants who failed to enter the EU have often stayed longer than expected and can now be considered long-term migrants. Both emigration and immigration are difficult to capture through surveys, although some censuses collect information on former household members who have emigrated, and immigration can be partially identified through place of birth data. Migration does not directly affect the reliability of social statistics, but it can influence observed changes in indicators. As a result, trends may be misleading if the selection biases introduced by migration are not properly considered.

## 4. Overview of Key Capacity Building Activities under the Statistical Projects: Study Visits, Workshops and Training Courses

This section presents an overview of key implementation activities carried out under the statistical projects, including study visits, trainings, workshops and other horizontal actions supporting capacity building across partner countries. It reflects ongoing knowledge exchange between national statistical institutes and EU Member State institutions, aimed at strengthening methodological alignment, improving data quality and supporting the gradual integration into the European Statistical System.

### Study Visit SP 1.5 – Regional Accounts (Madrid, Spain)

The study visit on regional accounts was hosted by INE Spain and provided experts from INSTAT and SORS with an in-depth exchange on the compilation of GDP by regions in line with ESA requirements. The programme covered the full production chain of regional accounts, including regional GVA compilation, employment, household accounts and gross fixed capital formation, with a strong focus on data sources, regionalisation methods and benchmarking techniques. Special attention was given to the integration of administrative data and the balancing of regional and national aggregates, as well as the use of chain-linked volume measures and detailed NACE breakdowns. The visit also supported discussions on Albania's and Serbia's ongoing development of a complete set of regional accounts, identifying practical approaches and methodological solutions to further align with European standards.



Participants from Albania and Serbia together with experts from INE Spain during the SP 1.5 study visit from 24 to 26 February 2026 in Madrid

### Study Visit SP 3.6 – Energy Statistics (Zagreb, Croatia)

The study visit on energy statistics, hosted by the Energy Institute Hrvoje Požar (EIHP) and the Croatian Bureau of Statistics, brought together experts from the Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Türkiye to strengthen capacities in industrial energy statistics. The programme combined methodological presentations, practical exercises and institutional exchanges on energy balances, industrial consumption data and Eurostat reporting requirements. Particular emphasis

was placed on improving data collection and validation processes, understanding the role of industrial surveys, and strengthening links between energy statistics and policy frameworks such as National Energy and Climate Plans. The visit also provided participants with practical experience in questionnaire completion and data analysis, while highlighting common challenges related to data availability, institutional coordination and methodological harmonisation.



Representatives of INSTAT, BHAS, KAS, SSO, Monstat and TurkStat with hosting institution, EIHP during study visit in Zagreb from 25 to 27 November 2025

### Study Visit SP 6.1 – Quality Management (Rome, Italy)

The study visit on quality management, hosted by ISTAT, focused on strengthening quality assurance systems in official statistics across 7 partner countries, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Türkiye. Participants were introduced to ISTAT's integrated quality management framework, including process-oriented approaches based on GSBPM, internal quality audits, quality reporting systems and supporting IT tools. Discussions covered the implementation of quality indicators, peer review experiences, and the use of quality guidelines to support continuous improvement in statistical production. The visit also addressed broader topics such as the use of administrative data, revision policies, user and staff satisfaction surveys and governance structures within national statistical systems.

Overall, the activity provided practical insights into advanced quality management practices and their application

in strengthening national statistical systems in line with European standards.



Representatives of ISTAT, INSTAT Albania, BHAS, FIS, RSIS, KAS, Monstat, SSO North Macedonia, SORS, and TurkStat, during the Study Visit in Rome, Italy on 24-25 March 2026.

### SP 3.3 Workshop on Passenger Mobility held in Zagreb

On 15–16 April 2026, the second workshop under Statistical Project 3.3 on Transport Statistics was held in Zagreb, Croatia, bringing together representatives from 6 partner countries, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia and Türkiye, Eurostat and the Croatian Bureau of Statistics (CBS) to discuss the development of passenger mobility statistics in the region. The workshop focused on methodological preparation for future Passenger Mobility Surveys (PMS), including



Participants during 2<sup>nd</sup> Workshop, from 15 to 16 April 2026, under SP 3.3 in Zagreb, Croatia

survey design, sampling strategies, questionnaire development, data collection methods and the use of EU methodological guidelines. Eurostat and CBS Croatia presented practical experiences and highlighted both the opportu-

nities and challenges related to the production of mobility statistics, including the use of digital tools, response rates, survey costs and data quality management.

Partner countries also shared their current experiences and future plans in this area, with discussions confirming that most countries are still in the preparatory phase of developing passenger mobility statistics. A key outcome of the workshop was the collective development of national roadmaps outlining future steps towards the implementation of harmonised Passenger Mobility Surveys aligned with Eurostat recommendations. The workshop further strengthened regional cooperation and provided an important platform for exchanging practical knowledge,

identifying common challenges and supporting the gradual development of passenger mobility statistics across the enlargement region.

### Training Course on Temporal Disaggregation, Benchmarking, Balancing and Statistical Reconciliation Using JDemetra+

The training course provided participants, from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Serbia and Türkiye, with a comprehensive introduction to temporal disaggregation, benchmarking, balancing, and statistical reconciliation methods used in official statistics, combining theoretical sessions with extensive hands-on exercises in JDemetra+. Over three days, the participants explored methodological concepts, relevant international guidelines, and practical applications using real datasets and dedicated plugins in JDemetra+ versions 2 and 3. The course structure encouraged active participation and knowledge sharing, allowing participants to discuss challenges from their own statistical work and explore how the presented methods could support their national practices.

A strong emphasis was placed on practical learning through guided exercises, discussions, and individual support from trainers. Participants also received extensive training materials, including presentations, user guides, datasets, bibliographies, and supplementary references for further self-study. The course concluded with participant presentations based on their own data and use cases, creating an interactive platform for peer learning, technical discussions, and exchange of experiences among statistical experts from the beneficiary countries.



Training in Cologne, Germany, from 18-20 February 2026

## 5. IPA 2022 3<sup>rd</sup> round of traineeships

The third round of traineeships enabled 18 statisticians from the Western Balkan and Türkiye NSIs to gain practical experience across Eurostat and European statistical institutions. The programme strengthened technical skills and professional networks while supporting long-term statistical capacity building.

From 2 February to 29 April 2026, the third round of the traineeships took place, offering 18 experienced statisticians from the NSIs of Albania, Türkiye, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and North Macedonia the valuable opportunity to strengthen their expertise across a broad range of statistical fields. This time, seven traineeship placements were offered within different Eurostat units, while 11 additional positions were hosted in statistical institutions across EU and EFTA countries. Key statistical domains covered included Economic and National Accounts Statistics, Price and Business Statistics, Social and Labour Market Statistics as well as Environmental and Sustainability Statistics. Throughout their stay, trainees actively contributed to a wide range of activities, including data collection, data processing and analysis, methodological research as well as the preparation of statistical publications and surveys. The trainees also supported working groups, data deliveries, and the implementation of new statistical methods. By fostering practical experience, knowledge exchange and professional networks, the traineeships offered an excellent opportunity to the participants to deepen their understanding of the European perspective on statistical key competencies. Thus, the traineeship programme contributed to the long-term strengthening of statistical capacity across the participating countries. Following the successful completion of this traineeship round, we are pleased to present to you some of the impressions and experiences of the trainees themselves:

### Mr Nysret Sylejmani (Kosovo)

I have been undertaking my traineeship on “**Actuarial calculations on pensions and medical insurance**” at



Trainee Nysret Sylejmani  
from Kosovo

Eurostat in Luxembourg, working in Unit C.3 – Statistics for Administrative Purposes. It has been a great pleasure to be part of this traineeship programme. As part of the pensions and medical insurance team, this traineeship provided me with the opportunity not only to strengthen my technical and analytical skills, but also to gain a deeper insight into the functioning of European statistical institutions.

Furthermore, I had the great opportunity to learn from the expertise and daily work of the team, which has been a

valuable experience for my professional development. One of my main activities involved the analysis of population datasets used in the calculation of the Joint Sickness Insurance Scheme (JSIS). Based on the available datasets and reports, I conducted a comparative analysis of the data for 2023 and 2024 across all categories, identifying key changes and trends. In addition, I contributed to the analysis of key actuarial parameters, including the Nominal Discount Rate (NDR), Inflation Rate (IR), Real Discount Rate (RDR), General Salary Growth (GSG), and Individual Salary Progression (ISP).

One of the main skills I developed during this experience was understanding the methodology used to calculate the JSIS liability, also referred to as the “Defined Benefit Obligation” (DBO). Another interesting aspect of this experience was working in a multicultural and highly professional environment, where I had the chance to exchange ideas with colleagues from different backgrounds and learn from their approaches and experiences. In addition, this traineeship allowed me to establish valuable professional connections at Eurostat.

### Ms Stana Kopranovic (Bosnia and Herzegovina)

My traineeship on “**Environmentally related taxes and subsidies**” at the Federal Statistical Office of Germany (Destatis) offered me the valuable opportunity to deepen my understanding of environmental-economic accounts, particularly environmentally related taxes, and to work directly with EU statistical standards and methodologies in a highly supportive environment. What impressed me most was the active role my colleagues in Unit G25 play in shaping and developing methodologies at both EU and international level. In particular, I was fascinated by their contribution to the ongoing update of the SEEA-CF, the international statistical standard for environmental-economic accounts.

Thanks to the support of my colleagues in Unit G25, I also had the opportunity, for the first time, to participate in the work of the EU Discussion Group on Harmful Subsidies. This experience gave me a valuable insight into the collaborative process behind the development of new statistical modules and emerging statistical areas within the European Union.

### Mr Hasan Çiğ (Türkiye)

During my traineeship at Eurostat’s Unit C3 within the area of “**Remuneration for Administrative Purposes**”, I had the opportunity to gain both methodological and technical experience in the production of remuneration

statistics used for national and EU civil servants. One of the most valuable aspects of the traineeship was observing how statistical methodology, data validation, and operational processes are combined within an international institutional environment.

I was actively involved in data processing tasks related to the annual Articles 64 & 65 exercise and contributed to improving efficiency through automation-oriented solutions. In addition, I developed a data collection automation framework for CPI-related web data collection tasks, which helped me strengthen my technical skills while also understanding the practical challenges of statistical production workflows. Beyond the technical experience, the traineeship provided a highly collaborative and multicultural working environment. Participating in meetings, expert group preparations, and daily team



Trainee Hasan Çiğ from Türkiye (third from right) with colleagues from Eurostat's Unit C3 in Luxembourg

activities allowed me to better understand the importance of international cooperation within the European Statistical System. Overall, the traineeship was a very valuable professional and personal experience, and I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute to and learn from the work carried out at Eurostat.

#### Ms Dance Aleksovska (North Macedonia)

I completed my traineeship within Eurostat's Unit B3 in the area of "Statistical Cooperation with non-EU countries." This experience provided me with the opportunity to gain a practical insight into the functioning of the European Statistical System and the role of Eurostat in supporting statistical development and cooperation with enlargement and partner countries. During the traineeship, I was actively involved in activities related to the preparation of the 2026 edition of the Statistical Requirements Compendium (SRC). My responsibilities included reviewing and updating different sections of the document, checking the consistency of information, and supporting the integration of contributions received from various statistical domains. Through this work, I developed a dee-



Trainee Dance Aleksovska from North Macedonia

per understanding of the SRC as an important reference framework that brings together EU statistical legislation, methodological recommendations, standards, and requirements relevant for candidate and partner countries. Another important aspect of my traineeship was contributing to the Compliance Monitoring process. This allowed me to become familiar with the methodology used by Eurostat to assess the level of alignment of non-EU countries with the EU statistical acquis. Through reviewing monitoring materials and following the reporting process, I gained practical knowledge of how statistical progress is evaluated and how cooperation with partner countries is monitored in a structured and systematic manner.

In addition, I participated in the MGSC meeting, where I had the opportunity to observe discussions related to international statistical cooperation, coordination of activities, and exchange of experiences between Eurostat, Member States, and enlargement countries. This experience helped me better understand the collaborative dimension of European statistics and the importance of coordination in achieving harmonised statistical systems. Beyond the professional aspect, the traineeship was also a wonderful personal experience. I especially appreciated the supportive atmosphere within the team, as my colleagues were always approachable, encouraging, and willing to share their knowledge and experience. Working in such an international environment was very important for my professional development and allowed me to gain new perspectives while building valuable connections. Overall, the traineeship represented a highly valuable professional and personal experience.

#### Ms Joana Kostaqi (Albania)

I completed my traineeship at the Swiss Federal Statistical Office (FSO) in Switzerland, within the International and National Affairs Unit. The traineeship focused on "Support to the Project Trusted Data Observatory (TDO)". My traineeship at the Swiss Federal Statistical Office was an extremely valuable and enriching experience, both professionally and personally. During my stay, I had the opportunity to contribute to the Trusted Data Observatory initiative, supporting activities related to communication, coordination, strategic documentation, and international collaboration. One of the most rewarding aspects of the traineeship was being part of a dynamic and multicultural working environment where I could collaborate with highly skilled and supportive colleagues. Working closely with the TDO team allowed me to gain a practical insight into international data governance, multilateral cooperation, and the development of global initiatives in an increasingly AI-driven information environment.

Beyond the technical and professional skills that I developed, this experience also helped me grow on a personal level. I learned how to manage responsibilities in a fast-paced environment, communicate effectively with people from different cultural and professional backgrounds, and

contribute constructively within diverse teams. I was particularly impressed by the professionalism, organization, and collaborative spirit within the FSO. The supportive atmosphere of the unit made the experience especially meaningful and motivating. Participating in coordination meetings, contributing to strategic documents, and supporting international events linked to the UN Statistical Commission gave me valuable exposure to high-level international cooperation processes. Overall, this traineeship was an important milestone in my professional journey and provided me with knowledge, experiences, and connections that will continue to shape my future career and personal development.



Trainee Joana Kostaqi (first from left) with colleagues from the Federal Statistical Office (FSO)

## Contacts

### CONTRACT MANAGER

Mirza Demirovic

mirza.demirovic@icon-institute.de

### DEPUTY CONTRACT MANAGER

Gulshod Sharipova

gulshod.sharipova@icon-institute.de

### PROJECT MANAGERS

Adrienne Meunier

adrienne.meunier@icon-institute.de

Dovile Minkeviciute

dminkeviciute@devstat.com

### MANAGEMENT ASSISTANT

Daria Lambrecht

daria.lambrecht@icon-institute.de

### SUPPORT IN THE PARTNER COUNTRIES

Sasa Cupac (overall support in all countries)

sasa.cupac@easternbridge.be

Selma Bavic (BA)

selma.bavic@easternbridge.be

Agron Hoti (XK)

agron.hoti@icon-institute.de

Consortium partners:



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