



2017:13

Sida Decentralised Evaluation

Pier Giorgio Ardeni
Leif Danielsson
Sabina Ymeri

Evaluation of the Sida-funded Partnership in Statistics: A cooperation project between Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORS) and Statistics Sweden (SCB)

Final Report

Authors: Pier Giorgio Ardeni, Leif Danielsson and Sabina Ymeri

The views and interpretations expressed in this report are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect those of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Sida.

Sida Decentralised Evaluation 2017:13

Commissioned by Sida

Copyright: Sida and the authors

Date of final report: January 2017

Published by Citrus 2017

Art. no. Sida62039en

urn:nbn:se:sida-62039en

This publication can be downloaded from: <http://www.sida.se/publications>

SWEDISH INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AGENCY

Address: SE-105 25 Stockholm, Sweden. Office: Valhallavägen 199, Stockholm

Telephone: +46 (0)8-698 50 00. Telefax: +46 (0)8-20 88 64

E-mail: info@sida.se. Homepage: <http://www.sida.se>

Evaluation of the Sida-funded Partnership in Statistics: A cooperation project between Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORS) and Statistics Sweden (SCB)

**Final Report
January 2017**

**Pier Giorgio Ardeni
Leif Danielsson
Sabina Ymeri**

Table of contents

Abbreviations and acronyms.....	7
Executive summary	8
1 Introduction.....	14
2 Rationale and purpose of the evaluation.....	18
3 Methodology	24
4 Findings.....	26
5 Conclusions	59
6 Recommendations.....	65
Annex 1 – Terms of Reference.....	67
Annex 2 – List of documents	75
Annex 3 – List of interviewees.....	76
Annex 4 – Evaluation questions and assessment/responses	77

Abbreviations and acronyms

BPO	Belgrade Project Office
BTS	Business tendency and consumer survey
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
EEA	Environmental expenditure and accounts
EPPI	Energy Production Price Indices
Eurostat	European Union Statistical Office
IMPI	Import Price Index
IPA	EU Instruments for Pre-Accession Assistance
LTA	Long-Term Advisor
LTUS	Light Time Use Survey
MFA	Material flow accounts
MONSTAT	Montenegro Statistical Office
PD	Project Document
PIS	Partnership in Statistics
RBM	Results-based management
RBMF	Results-based monitoring framework
SBR	Statistical Business Register
SCB	Statistics Sweden
SEPA	Serbian Environmental Protection Agency
Sida	Swedish International Development Agency
SORS	Statistical Office of Republic of Serbia
SOSM	Statistical Office of Serbia and Montenegro
SPI	Service Price Index
SPPI	Service Production Price Indices
TOR	Terms of Reference
TUS	Time-use survey

Executive summary

This report presents the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation of the Sida-funded *Partnership in Statistics* cooperation between the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORS) and Statistics Sweden (SCB) conducted during the period September – November 2016. The project is currently in its fourth project-period 2013-2016; the previous project phases covered the period of 2002-2012. The budget of the current project is 9.5 MSEK with an additional component in the form of a grant to SORS for statistical surveys. A 12-month extension was granted in 2014 prolonging the project until November 2016.

The evaluation approach was structured around the OECD/DAC criteria by focussing on relevance, effectiveness, impact, sustainability and organizational learning. The evaluation draws on evidence from the review of relevant project documents, interviews and data collected during a field mission during October 16 – 28, 2016 including key informant interviews, stakeholder consultation, beneficiary interviews and focus groups discussions. The data has been validated through different sources of information received.

The development of a sustainable statistical system in Serbia has continued during the period of phase 4 of the project, certainly partly thanks to the assistance of Sida through SCB. However, though the project has achieved a certain number of results, all in all, it has not reached all of its initial objectives.

The speed and depth of development varied across project components. The most evident achievements were probably in those areas where activities had already started in previous phases. Differences prevailed in the progress of subject fields among SORS departments, though the training of staff members as part of the capacity building and their assignment to different departments has contributed considerably to the progress of the project components. This demonstrates the **relevance of the intervention**, namely the improvement and accumulation of knowledge of the staff and the effectiveness of it. The progress of the different components was stimulated by the dedication of the staff involved and by the improved coordination and communication between the partners. When that was not the case, it was mostly because of the concurrent implementation of other projects and the insufficient number of trained and qualified personnel available for project activities.

Regarding the project's **impact**, we may say that in this respect, the self-assessment by the beneficiaries and the feedback from some stakeholders and the international

donor community is positive. The perceived utility of statistics by data users – despite lack of baseline data in several areas available to measure impact – is certainly positive. As for the quality of the statistics produced and how they have been used, this is difficult to assess.

Regarding **sustainability**, whether the project outcomes and activities targeted to those outcomes are likely to continue after the program has finished depends on the component. Generally, only very few areas seem sustainable at this stage – price statistics, survey methods, time-use survey and BTS – while all other areas addressed by the project will need more assistance.

This is the fourth phase of the programme and thus the programme is a long-standing one. Among the **factors of success**, we should list:

1. The partners appreciate the cooperation with Sida, Sida's flexibility on project implementation and the possibility of tailoring activities to the partners' needs even in mid-course.
2. Most components in this project phase have been covered and addressed over the years. Over the years a lot has been done, the knowledge transfer has been considerable and its effects are visible and can be seen in the improvement of statistical production in Serbia, at least in terms of statistics reproduced by Eurostat for Serbia and conforming to their standards.
3. The presence of SCB experts funded by the PIS programme has provided a sense of continuity to the partners which has been appreciated the most, given the long experience of cooperation.
4. SCB experts have generally provided good expertise and assistance.
5. Given that the contractual relationship between Sida, SCB and SORS appears to have been defined only in broad terms, the actual and effective implementation of the activities was left to the initiative of the coordinators (BPO) and in response to the partner (SORS). The positive side of this was that progress on several activities resulted from the good will and engagement of the coordinators at BPO and their counterpart at SORS.

There are also hindrances and drawbacks to underline. The project – 46 months after its start date – is quite behind on several fronts, both in terms of **deliverables** and in terms of **budget** spent. Only part of the planned activities has been implemented, some outputs were not produced and some of the outcomes are not within reach. Among the most relevant **factors for a lack of success** (rather than failure) we should mention are:

1. Factors internal at SORS. The most relevant has always been the lack of personnel for specific activities, as the number of statisticians at SORS is limited and most of the project activities require their involvement. Being involved in their regular tasks and with other assistance projects, the availability of staff has often been a bottleneck for the smooth implementation of the project.
2. Factors internal at SCB. The most relevant factor, mirroring SORS, has been the availability of SCB experts when needed. This obviously bears on the capacity of SCB to commit realistically to the project and the utility of planning done by SCB and BPO.
3. Management by SCB and the Project Office in Belgrade (BPO). BPO, by acting as a facilitator of project activities and coordinator, should have taken the lead in proposing a much stricter discipline for both partners (SORS and SCB). The lack of an annual plan with a detailed calendar of activities made things worse, so that activities had to be delayed or cancelled. This was also a drawback.
4. Some sub-components, albeit important, have been perceived as less crucial to the success of the project delivery.
5. The Project Plan for the various components was drafted with full awareness of the complexity of the intervention considering the absorption capacity and lack of staff at SORS. However, outputs and goals were not operationalised well enough to be translated into effective project activities. Some objectives generally appear out of reach for what was initially a three-year project to be implemented.
6. The component on capacity building for general management may have received too low a priority in the project implementation. That component has neither delivered the targeted outputs nor contributed to achieving the desired outcomes. We do recognize the difficulties faced when introducing management level capacity building with intentions to change the management model, given the inherent resistance to change in general and specific difficulties in the case of SORS. However, as some of the drawbacks identified in this report show, they can be attributed to the human resource challenges faced as well as to the management of the large-scale inter-organizational ventures such as national level data collections. Having organisational changes on a top management level taking place, the exchange of experiences between the management of SCB and SORS should have provided less resistance and understanding of the benefits of a process oriented organisation.
7. One last drawback was the lack of performance monitoring by identifying progress indicators for both outputs and outcomes and its continuous monitoring, together with a project database where project statistics can be drawn for planning, reporting, analysis and evaluation. This resulted in difficulties in managing the project strategically under a normal project management approach. As a matter of fact, the management of the project was conducted in a rather

informal way. As described above the actual and effective implementation of the activities was left to the initiative of the coordinators (BPO) and in response to the partner (SORS). The negative side of this is that the whole project appears to have been rather improvised, subject to ups and downs and dependent on external events and demands.

The implementation plan, the list and time-line of activities, the deadlines for delivering the outputs, the reporting, the monitoring and the cross-checks, all appear somehow a bit too flexible and not strictly defined from the beginning.

Also, the lack of strict terms of budgeting and accounting, by single activity and not just by component, together with a generic results-based framework contributed, on one hand, to the strength of the project – its flexibility and adaptation to the circumstances – and on the other hand to its weakness – its slow delivery rate and lack of continuity.

Though the analysis of cost efficiency was beyond the scope of the evaluation, a cursory look at the budget figures reflects the management and organisational features and drawbacks highlighted above. It appears as if there was no clear information on the planned budget – by year, component *and* activity – and no information on how the budget was spent and disbursed. While we have no information on how the budget was spent, by component and activity, we know that of the SEK 9,484,000 that were planned in the original revised 2014 budget, SEK 7,455,000 had been spent until the third quarter of 2016, leaving some SEK 2,065,000 unspent for the last two months of activities, i.e. 21.4% of the total.

A good indicator of cost efficiency is usually whether the same results cannot be produced with smaller amounts of inputs and resources. In this sense, it could be said that the results that were achieved have used smaller amounts of inputs and yet, not all results have been achieved and a no-cost extension was needed. A further no-cost extension has been requested by BPO for an additional six months and there are activities planned for 2017, a further no-cost extension has not been granted. So, the issue is whether the budget, objectives and time-lines were realistic: the answer appears to be no, though we do not have any detailed elements to confirm that. In any case, we cannot say unequivocally whether the project was cost efficient or not.

On whether the project management model efficiency (or lack of) did create an administrative burden on SORS, it appears that it did not. All administrative burdens for the project management were left to the BPO (SCB) and SORS certainly did not suffer from this.

In short, the most significant drawbacks and highlights and the lessons to be drawn can be summarised as follows.

- The most evident drawback is that the project did not have, since the very beginning, a clear plan with milestones, target and progress indicators for all

outputs and a clear list and calendar of activities that would produce those outputs.

- There was no systematic monitoring of activities – to be reported against the original plan – no tracking of progress indicators and output accounting. Activities were listed annually – at the beginning of the annual cycle – only by component and type (study tours, missions, etc.) and topic. No information was reported on whether activities implied workshops, training lectures, training-on-the-job and coaching, mentoring, and so forth.
- The first lesson that can be drawn from this is that: there is no systematic monitoring and tracking, no information on what works what does not. What led to the delivery of those outputs? Was it a workshop or a study tour? What was its content? What led to the lack of achievement of those outcomes? Was it too the (too small) number of activities?
- In other words, both SCB and SORS did not implement what was recommended at the end of Phase 3. The project was still managed in a rather informal manner, with little use of the usual project planning and budgeting tools and little strategic prioritisation. The project monitoring did not pick this up. Since it was not clear what the overall project success would look like or how it would be achieved, it would be difficult to maintain over-sight of whether it was on track or not. The three annual reports seem not to report on this.
- The second lesson is that the capacity building model underlying the project logic is only good for delivering certain outputs and possibly only when there is some capacity to build on. There seems to have been a correlation between those areas where the objectives were achieved and the pre-existence of some capacity in the recipient staff structure.
- The third lesson is that the budgeting of the project was possibly not very precise – in the planning stage – and that the project's use of resources was not managed strategically to prioritise them on meeting the intended outcomes. If some of the planned results have been achieved with less funds (while others have not been achieved for other reasons), it means that the project was ill-budgeted. Providing cost summaries on an overall level is not an acceptable project accounting approach and in connection with reporting financial disbursements up to third quarter in the annual reports when the budget is made for calendar years.
- The fourth lesson calls for a questioning of the role of BPO as opposed to a different arrangement, with a Long-Term Advisor attached to SORS. It appears that in some instances a more specific, a technical role of advice and guidance would have been more profitable in some instances, as opposed to the simple arrangement of the expertise needed for the tasks at hand being sourced on an ad hoc basis.

Since various project components are not yet completed and the final outcomes are not yet in sight, a request for an extension would be recommended. True, a no-cost extension was already requested only a few months after the beginning of the project, due a late start and the delay in several activities. And yet, a further no-cost extension could potentially allow the completion of various activities that would make the accomplishments of the project broader and more significant.

As for the recommendations for future interventions, we can say that future programmes should be around enhancing sustainability, in line with Sida's strategic action in statistics in Serbia and in the region. We recommend:

1. A more precise identification of priorities and areas of intervention, which would ensure better delivery as well as availability of statistics in targeted areas.
2. In addition to workshops and study tours, training lectures, training on the job, coaching and mentoring on specific technical issues would also ensure greater effectiveness.
3. A more precise monitoring framework, with detailed list of activities, progress and target indicators, milestones, which would ensure better project effectiveness and impact.
4. The systematic tracking of activities with accurate annual planning and calendar, which would also ensure better project effectiveness and impact.
5. A more accurate budgeting by activity and type of intervention, which would ensure better project effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability.
6. Considering the advantages of a LTA vs. the current arrangement of a BPO, which would ensure better project effectiveness.
7. Connections and involvement of the whole statistical system: as this was not always in sight, a better coordination with institutional users of statistics and administrative data providers should be kept within the scope of assistance for better effectiveness.
8. Future cooperation on statistics with emphasis on population statistics and demographic and economic analysis and its compatibility with Sida Regional Result Strategy would ensure greater effectiveness.
9. A greater synergy with the current project of assistance to statistics at the regional level, which would greatly benefit from a project targeted at SORS as it has in the recent past.

1 Introduction

1.1 BACKGROUND

The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) has commissioned SIPU International AB to carry out an evaluation of two Sida-funded projects: the *Statistics Cooperation on the Western Balkan 2013-2016* and the *Partnership in Statistics*, a cooperation project between Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORS) and Statistics Sweden (SCB).

The evaluation includes two separate projects, both implemented by Statistics Sweden (SCB). This report focuses on the Partnership in Statistics (PIS) project. PIS started back in May 2004 as a cooperation between SCB and the Statistical Office of Serbia and Montenegro (SOSM), the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORS) and the Statistical Office of Montenegro (MONSTAT). The current project is the fourth phase of that cooperation between SORS and SCB and was planned to be implemented from December 2012 to November 2015. A no-cost extension was granted in 2014 for 12 months until November 2016 and another extension is under consideration. The cooperation project between SORS and SCB has a budget of 9.5 MSEK, with an additional component in the form of a grant to SORS for covering the cost of statistical surveys implemented by SORS, with a budget of 4.5 MSEK.

The cooperation with Serbia and the Western Balkans as a region is governed by the strategic guidelines contained in the *Results strategy for Sweden's Reform cooperation with Eastern Europe, the Western Balkans and Turkey 2014-2020*. However, both the above projects were initiated before this strategy came into effect. One significant impact of the results strategy was that Montenegro and Macedonia could enter the regional cooperation project (before 2014 they could participate at their own cost). The cooperation with Serbia for the current project phase was governed by Sida's *Strategy for development cooperation with Serbia January 2009 – December 2012*.

The evaluation was to be carried out by consultation of all the documentation, project reports and significant statistical outputs as well as a field trip to interview the beneficiaries and stakeholders. The field visit by the Team of Evaluators took place between the 16th and the 28th of October, 2016. This Report is therefore based on the results and findings of that field visit, together with the review of all the project documents and reports.

The Report presents an overall review of the progress of the various project components realized by SCB with SORS since the start of the project. Information in

this report was obtained from interviews with Sida representatives both in Stockholm and Belgrade, SCB project managers, officials, staff members and employees at SORS and with some stakeholders. The main findings indicate that the progress achieved in implementing the project's components is mixed. While some components have progressed well and on schedule, delivering the expected results, a few have made only some progress, as some activities have been delayed or have not been implemented as planned.

1.2 THE PARTNERSHIP IN STATISTICS PROGRAMME

Support to statistics through SCB has been given to SORS at least since 2004, with four different phases of the *Partnership in Statistics* (PIS) programme: 2004-2006, 2006-2008, 2009-2012, 2012-2015. During the implementation of the three previous project phases, the nature of the cooperation significantly changed – from assistance in general capacity building (improvement of IT and English language skills) and development of basic statistical areas (such as the Statistical Business Register - SBR) to assistance in analysing complex surveys such as the Child Confidence Index and provision of technical assistance on specific statistical issues. The three previous phases have produced various important results that have been recognised not only by the beneficiary, but also by the independent reviewers and Eurostat review missions.

Sida-funded cooperation in statistics started in 2001 with the three statistical offices: the Office of Serbia and Montenegro (SOSM), the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORS) and the Statistical Office of Montenegro (MONSTAT). After the constitutional changes, a new cooperation agreement between Sida, SCB and the three statistical offices of Serbia and Montenegro was signed in May 2004. The first project, then, lasted only until the end of 2005. Phase 2 started in 2006 with a partnership between SCB and SORS (after the dissolution of the state union between Serbia and Montenegro) and covered the three-year period 2006-2008. The project covered several areas with varying degrees of depth: agricultural statistics; economic statistics like the Statistical Business Register, structural business statistics, short-term economic statistics and regional national accounts; IT developments; survey methodology; accounting systems at SORS; together with specific assistance in areas like energy, gender, environmental statistics, price and earnings statistics. The project accommodated the changing institutional setup of statistics in Serbia, the design and approval of a new Statistical Law and the National Master Plan for Statistics, approved in 2006. The end-of-project external review - conducted by Ramboll in 2008 – was, overall, satisfactory. However, some critical comments were made concerning the *ad hoc* support provided by SCB on a variety of issues in response to requests coming from SORS from on so many different areas. The review made a few recommendations including the need for a clearer definition of goals and the project logic and a continuation of Sida's support beyond the year 2008. Several of the

shortcomings of the second phase were taken into account in the design of Phase 3, which started in April 2009.

Phase 3 built on the previous achievements and followed up in areas that had already been targeted and in line with priorities given by SORS development agenda, EU integration and Swedish cooperation guidelines. Thus, the project components selected for Phase 3 were: environmental statistics like waste statistics, emissions-to-air statistics, environmental expenditure and accounts (EEA); economic statistics like price statistics including agricultural price statistics and regional accounts; social and gender statistics like the time-use survey, quality-of-life indicators, socio-professional classifications and a Roma population pilot census; statistical methodology; general management and quality in statistics. The budget for Phase 3 was SEK 16,623,103 for all activities plus and an additional SEK 2,870,000 grant to cover the costs of the Roma pilot survey and the time-use survey (TUS).

1.3 RATIONALE FOR PIS PHASE 4 (PIS-4)

The partners of the cooperation in statistics for this PIS-4 project were again SORS and SCB, under Sida funding. The current project budget initially covered the period December 2012 – November 2015, and was extended to November 2016 with a decision approved by Sida in April 2014. The rationale for the current phase was illustrated in the Project Document (PD), which we may consider, for this evaluation, the Master Document. As a matter of fact, no other project design document is available. As it turns out, all project components and objectives were discussed and agreed with the partners during Phase 3, as declared by SCB officials and the Project Managers. The final report for phase 3 confirms that phase 4 was conceived as a pure follow-up project. Thus, phase 4 appears to be in all senses a continuation of the previous phase, as both the broad project components and the overall and specific objectives are quite similar.

The new project phase aimed at continuing assisting statistical development of SORS and the Serbian national Statistical System and reflecting needs identified in an assessment of the domestic and international requirements in statistics and the EU integration agenda. As stated by the SCB project managers, the Belgrade Project Office staff and the beneficiaries at SORS, the PD in its current form was formulated as a result of discussions carried out with beneficiaries and stakeholders and then finalised during a seminar on results-based management (RBM) held in December 2011. The PD was thus designed to comply with the development of official statistics in Serbia in accordance with EU and international standards in statistics. Key to this was reaching out to several other institutional partners and decision makers involved in the building up of the national Statistical System.

While the PD was designed with the objective of generating tangible statistical results at the institutional level and on a wider strategic level, its project components,

identified and set out in the document, were defined in line with: (i) SORS priority areas (like environmental statistics, economic statistics, etc.); (ii) recommendations from the Light Peer Review conducted at SORS in 2011 on general management and quality in statistics; and (iii) a number of Government strategies such as the “National Strategy on Improvement of the Position of Women and on Advancement of the Gender Equality”, to be addressed by the Time-Use Survey.

The **overall project objective** remained the same as that of the previous PIS phases: contributing to the development of a sustainable statistical system in Serbia that facilitates decision-making based on relevant and reliable statistical information that meets domestic demands, supports the monitoring of the Poverty Reduction Strategy process and complies with EU integration agenda.

The **specific project objective** was set to continue to support a few prioritized statistical areas (project components), to build statistical and institutional capacity in SORS, and to make statistics correspond to the country needs, EU and international regulations and standards in statistics. [we will see below more on the project objectives and purposes].

The **effectiveness** of the project, as stated in the PD, was to be ensured by adaptation of the support to the changing needs and to the absorption capacity of SORS, in coordination with other on-going projects so as to prevent overlaps and to make use of possible synergies. Five statistical areas – named components – were so identified for specific support in the form of capacity building:

- environmental statistics;
- economic statistics; price statistics;
- social and gender statistics: time use statistics;
- statistical methodology; and
- general management and quality in statistics.

Conversely, direct financial support to SORS -not to be managed by the SCB – was envisaged for the implementation of two surveys:

- Light Time Use Survey (LTUS);
- Business tendency survey (BTS),
- An additional one, added in due course: a survey of the use of ICT.

This set up was similar to the previous PIS phases. All the selected project components aligned with Swedish Government policy for Serbia and the existing country strategy.

Interventions in all areas mentioned above followed the assistance already put in place during the previous PIS phases, with the intention of building on the results achieved and take the development of those areas further ahead.

2 Rationale and purpose of the evaluation

2.1 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF THE EVALUATION

The **purpose** of the evaluation is to undertake a results-based – i.e. based on outputs and outcomes – **review** of the PIS-4 project (as introduced above). The **specific objective** is the overall outcome/output-based review of the progress of the various project components during Phase 4, considering both the results of the previous phases since the beginning of the Sida-financed SCB support to statistics in Serbia and the new priorities that might have arisen in the recent times. A **secondary objective** of this evaluation is to assess the needs and possibilities of extension of the current PIS-4 to include future cooperation on social statistics with emphasis on population statistics, demographic and economic analysis and its compatibility with Sida's Regional Results Strategy.

The primary readership of the evaluation will include Sida and the project partners, SCB and SORS. The results of the evaluation will be used by Sida as an external input for adjusting the programme as necessary. The project partners are also interested in this external input so as to appropriately change the project objectives and adjust its components and activity plans to possible new national priorities and areas of intervention as a result of recent policy changes.

As mentioned above, the current project is the fourth phase of the “Partnership in Statistics” between SORS and SCB. It was approved in November 2012 and was initially planned to be implemented from December 1, 2012 until November 30, 2015 (activity period). In April 2014, upon a request presented by SCB and SORS, Sida decided to approve a 12 months no-cost extension for the project – new finalization date is November 30, 2016. Therefore, the evaluation comes almost at the very end of all project activities.

The specific objectives of the review are to:

- Provide an in-depth assessment of the project results, its projected outputs and outcomes.
- Assess the relevance and effectiveness of the intervention. Special emphasis shall be put on project relevance for Serbia's EU accession and the ongoing negotiation process. As for cost-efficiency, remarks and comments will be made when possible.
- Assess the impact and the sustainability of the implemented actions and their outcomes reached so far.

- Assess the implementation model applied in the project far; evaluate expert support and project management provided by SCB (both at SCB HQ and at the Office in Belgrade). Special attention shall be given to the effectiveness and efficiency of the current implementation model.
- As the cooperation between SCB and SORS is an institutional capacity development project between two statistical institutes; the model(s) used for capacity development should be assessed. A specific issue is the absorption rate of the SORS and adherence to plan.

2.2 EVALUATION OBJECT AND SCOPE

The specific **object** of the evaluation are the PIS-4 project activities and results. The **scope** of the review is primarily to review progress in the five areas (components) covered by the PIS-4 project, now in its last year of activity and close to the end, to be done in accordance with standard Sida/DAC evaluation criteria. The review will also try to identify discrepancies between the planned and actual implementation of the project and propose possible areas of future intervention in light of the priorities arising out of the SORS Strategy for the next five years and from Sida Regional and Country Strategies on cooperation in statistics.

The PD that was drafted by SCB and SORS proposed that the new phase of cooperation should focus on the same thematic areas as the previous three-year project phase: environmental statistics, economic statistics, social and gender statistics, statistical methodology and general management and quality. In the PD, for the five components and their sub-components, outputs and activities are listed, together with several expected end-of-project results and the corresponding indicators of achievement/progress. Until now, three annual progress reports have been issued covering successive periods (one for 2013, one for 2014 and one for 2015). Each of the reports presented the results achieved annually and through the end of the period covered, together with the relative progress indicators when available.

As we are aiming at an output/outcome-based review, we need to examine how well the delivered outputs have or are stimulating *behavioural* change to achieve outcomes and thus contribute towards the intended impact. A first step is to examine the project logic and see how well the project documents specify the intervention logic from activities to outputs to outcomes and to impact.

2.3 THE PROJECT LOGIC

The project was set up so as to provide continuity of Sida's assistance to the establishment of a sustainable statistical system in Serbia. The intervention was defined so as to focus on a number of specific areas: environmental statistics, i.e. emissions-to-air statistics, material flow accounts, environmental expenditure and accounts, environmental tax revenues; specific economic statistics such as various

price indices and short-term business tendencies; gender-based statistics like time-use statistics; statistical methods related to survey design; management and quality in statistical production. The over-arching goals, the desired outcomes and expected outputs were defined together with the activities aimed at their achievement and the indicators of progress. However, as we will see below (in the **Findings Section**), in several cases the logic of the intervention was not clearly spelled out, as the link between planned activities, expected outputs and desired outcomes – the results chains – was somehow vaguely described, activities were not precisely defined and the indicators of progress often blurred or not clearly identified. For clarity of reading, we are hereby reporting the various elements of the project logic framework as they were originally defined, leaving the critique of their formulation to the Findings Sections.

In the five areas (components and sub-components illustrated below), various overall goals were defined, so as to target all activities towards the relative objectives. For each of the five components, several **specific outcomes** were outlined – divided into those affecting **institutional change**, those affecting **institutional effectiveness** and those aimed at **reaching institutional goals** – together with baseline output values and their relative target indicators (all originally listed in PD Annex 1 logical result framework).

The first component on environmental statistics was split into four sub-components: 1) emissions-to-air statistics; 2) material-flow accounts; 3) environmental expenditures and accounts (EEA); 4) environmental tax revenues. The **overall objective** of the first component was defined as *Implementation of environmental statistics and accounts component from programme of official statistics for 2011-2015*. The **key output-to-outcome relationship** for component 1 was identified as *the creation of a working group at SORS responsible for this component*.

The second component was split into two sub-components: price statistics (component 2.1) and business tendency and consumer survey (2.2). The **overall objective** of component 2.1 was defined as: *Improvement of Price statistics (Import Price Index (IMPI), Service Price index (SPI), input Price Index for Agriculture and energy prices) in line with the Programme of Official Statistics in the Period 2011 – 2015), section on Macroeconomic Statistics, Prices and decision on the methods to be used for more efficient collecting of prices (using data scanners).* The **key output-to-outcome relationship** for component 2.1 was identified as: *Price Statistics Unit not short of staff and good coordination of work among the units (National Accounts and Price Statistics, etc.).*

The **overall objective** of component 2.2 was defined as: *Obtaining qualitative information on current business situation and forecast short term developments in business operations of economic agents. The link with the SORS Strategy is in the development of the National Accounts.* The **key output-to-outcome relationship** for component 2.2 was identified as: *Project team at the Department European*

Integrations, Unit for ICT usage, is responsible for the organisation of the component.

The **overall objective** of component 3 was defined as: *Access to information on time distribution for the population, taking into account the gender aspects and differences between regions, urban and rural settlements via the light time-use survey.* The **key output-to-outcome relationship** for component 3 was identified as: *Communicating the results to the decision makers in order to contribute to Government's policies on gender equality and regional development.*

The **overall objective** of component 4 was defined as: *Development of survey methodology and its application in statistical surveys in order to keep them in line with Eurostat standards.* The **key output-to-outcome relationship** for component 2.1 was identified as: *Strengthening of the Survey Methodology Unit in order to respond to staff movements expected in the near future.*

The **overall objective** of component 5 was defined as: *Improved quality of statistical production – chapter 5.2 official 5-year program and strategy of SORS.* The **key output-to-outcome relationship** for component 5 was identified as: *A pre-requisite for component success is understanding, acceptance and endorsement from top management.*

For the additional component on use of ICT, which included an extra grant given to SORS for the survey field-work, neither the overall objective nor key output-to-outcome relationships were defined.

Various **expected outputs** and **activities** were then listed for each of the components and their outcomes. As we said above, the project logic was not described in detail and it is not clear how activities listed were assumed to deliver the outputs and outcomes identified. Take component 1, as an example. It is not clear how from (a) study visits, (b) short-term SCB expert missions to SORS, (c) meetings with government representatives and (d) participation to international meetings, outputs like “good” emissions-to-air statistics or “new” MFAs or skilled personnel for producing good statistics are going to be achieved. As we will argue below, this points to certain vagueness for what the project aimed to achieve on the ground and makes its effectiveness rather difficult to assess in the light of too generic a results chain and weak intervention logic.

2.4 EVALUATION QUESTIONS

In line with the TOR and the Sida/DAC criteria, the objectives of the evaluation are hereby translated into relevant and specific evaluation questions. The questions were addressed in the review, as explained in the next Section below (**Methodology**).

The following are the questions that the review addresses with respect to each DAC evaluation criterion. Responses to the questions are summarized in the Evaluation Framework in the Table below (**Annex 4**) and in the **Findings Section**.

2.4.1 Relevance.

- Q.1.1. To what extent was the PIS-4 project relevant vis-à-vis needs and priorities of statistics in Serbia, with a focus on EU integration.
- Q.1.2. Has the current PIS-4 managed to avoid the limitations of the previous phases or were the objectives and the expected results of the project are too ambitious?

2.4.2 Effectiveness.

- Q.2.1. Has the intervention achieved its overall and specific objectives and its planned results and annual targets and to what extent?
- Q.2.2. Were the right activities carried out to bring about the desired outcomes?
- Q.2.3. Was SCB assistance appropriate in supporting the project implementation? If not, are there immediate lessons learned to be applied?
- Q.2.4. Have project activities supported the development of SORS in a complementary and positive way?
- Q.2.5. Was the project management model effective to achieve the stated objectives?

The five questions allow us to evaluate whether the planned results – both in terms of outputs and outcomes – have been achieved. If not, we will try to identify the reasons for not doing so, even in those cases in which the achieved outputs still contributed to the development of statistics in Serbia.

2.4.3 Impact.

Given that SCB's bilateral cooperation in statistics with Serbia started in 2003, is it possibly to say something about impact with respect to:

- Q.3.1. What are the planned and unplanned long-term effects of the program on society – i.e. data users and beneficiaries – as a whole?
- Q.3.2. What observable measures or indicators can be identified (to evaluate impact)?
- Q.3.3. What has been the quality of the statistics produced and how has it been used?

To evaluate impact, attention should be given to the change from a simple Logical Framework tracking system for project implementation to a Results-Based Monitoring Framework.

2.4.4 Sustainability.

- Q.4.1. Are the PIS-4 project outcomes and activities targeted to those outcomes likely to continue after the program has finished?
- Q.4.2. Is SORS reasonably able to continue develop its organisation and activities?

- Q.4.3. To what extent are the achievements a result of institutional change in SORS' organisational structure, management, standard operational procedure as well as financial operating procedures to form lasting changes and improvements?

Questions about sustainability concern two related aspects: capacity and staffing, on one hand, and allocated financial resources, on the other hand.

2.4.5 Organizational learning.

- Q.5.1. What was the capacity development 'model' underlying the project implementation logic and the intended knowledge transfer put in place?
- Q.5.2. In a future project, should new components be considered and if so can the project remain within its stated overall objectives?
- Q.5.3. Should a future project focussing on different issues be considered by Sida if a new Country Strategy for Serbia gives room for it?
- Q.5.4. Is it recommended that Sida should fund a next and final project period 2017-2020?
- Q.5.5. If Sida will fund a next project phase 2017-2020, what could be the management set-up and content of the project?
- Q.5.6. How should it be organised, in order to be sustainable?
- Q.5.7. Can and should SCB continue as a long-term partner to SORS in this respect?
- Q.5.8. What were the main risks and what efforts have been made to minimize the effect of unforeseen risks that have arisen during implementation?

As the project is coming to an end, we have not looked at any question regarding which aspects or streams of activities could be adjusted or dropped in the current phase of PIS. This is obviously not going to happen, given that the current phase of the project is now ending. Instead, where relevant such findings and conclusions are considered in terms of lessons relevant for a possible future phase of support.

3 Methodology

3.1 SELECTION AND APPLICATION OF EVALUATION CRITERIA

As indicated above, following the TOR, this evaluation looks at the three main evaluation criteria of: **effectiveness** – were the right activities carried out giving rise to the right outputs aimed at the desired outcomes? –, **sustainability** – are the activities and their outcomes likely to be in place after the end of the project? – and **organisational learning** – organisational and practical lessons learned –. The effectiveness, sustainability and organisational learning of the project are assessed both globally and at the level of each specific component and sub-component.

As for **relevance** and **impact**, this being an “almost-final” review, a generalised assessment will be sought as to the overall effect of all the PIS project phases. Also, we will only give a cursory look at cost efficiency, in as much as budgeting and accounting might have affected project implementation (this will not be an assessment of the project efficiency in the proper sense).

The evaluation criteria of effectiveness, sustainability and organisational learning are assessed by a review of the sources of data and information which includes: all the project documentation, including periodic reports and mission reports; SORS’ planning documents, annual work-plans and strategic documents; the government policy documents concerning statistics and the main socio-economic strategic documents; Sida strategic policy documents in the area of statistics and covering Serbia.

A thorough, detailed and in-depth assessment of relevance, effectiveness, impact, sustainability and organisational learning would require a careful analysis of the statistics produced by the partners as a result of the project as well as a comparison with a baseline assessment carried out before the start of the project. As the time and scope allocated for this review are limited and as no baseline assessment is available, the documented review will thus have to rely on a more participatory approach, in which interviews with key informants provide the contextual background for the assessment.

The assessment of the documentation is thus integrated by the information gathered through interviews with key informants. The key informants identified are: the Department Heads directly involved in the project as well as SORS’ senior office staff; officials dealing with EU accession and application of EU requirements; stakeholders and data users (see the complete list in Annex 3).

3.2 LIMITATIONS FOR THE EVALUATION

Impact is difficult to evaluate, even considering all PIS project phases, as it goes beyond the actual scope of the review. Impact will be indirectly inferred from the partners' perception as well as the stakeholder opinions.

Also, although cost-efficiency is explicitly ruled out as an evaluation criterion – it would imply taking into account costs and financial data for the project – the actual budget utilisation and spending patterns will be briefly overviewed, as an indicator of progress in activity implementation. Yet, the limitations of looking at cost data from this perspective only are evident, as a thorough financial examination should be made to assess efficiency.

As for effectiveness, a detailed analysis would have to take a detailed look at the statistics produced as an effect of project activities and see if they have improved or changed and their quality has shown any visible enhancement.

A final limitation of the review to keep in mind is that the management of the field visit – given the short notice, the short time allowed and the various difficulties on the ground in having meetings – will necessarily affect the depth of the review main conclusions. This review is mainly based on the reports made available to the evaluators, the timely provision of all the information concerning participation, content and format of all project activities. Unfortunately, not all the necessary information was provided to the evaluators in a complete fashion, which is a strong limitation for a thorough review of the project results and how the project was implemented.

Limitations in understanding how the project was designed in a complex context and how the project logic was reflected in the way activities were implemented to achieve the desired outcomes have affected the evaluators' ability to draw conclusions and make recommendations.

Also, proper formulation of results, measures for baseline values for the indicators, definition of intermediate indicator values and tracking of progress by the project management system will be fundamental for a correct evaluation of how key output-to-outcome relationships were put in place. The lack of such correct framework will severely limit the evaluation. Below, we will thus present whatever evaluation assessment was made possible by the existing project monitoring system, with the activities, outputs and outcomes whereby listed. The lack of properly measurable indicators and a weak project monitoring system have made the evaluation exercise not properly founded.

4 Findings

This Section is organized in two main subsections as follows. In subsection 4.1, we briefly illustrate our findings with regards to the project design, plan, organisation, management and implementation to date. In subsection 4.2, we present the responses to the evaluation questions introduced above in Section 2.4 and our assessment based on those responses.

Thus, in what follows, we first discuss how the project was designed, planned and organised (4.1), reviewing and criticising the project objectives and scope (4.1.1), how it was structured into its main areas of intervention (the five project components) (4.1.2), how it was managed and implemented from the point of view of the contractor (4.1.3) and the partners and the stakeholders (4.1.4). Then, we review the main findings considering the evaluation questions presented above (4.2).

In substance, while sub-section 4.1. summarise the main findings of the review of the project documents as well as the results of our appraisal on the ground, section 4.2 frames the findings more formally in terms of evaluation criteria. In evaluating a project of support of this nature, it is always important to weigh formal evaluation criteria against more practical features of convenience and relevance – like political support and the continuity of technical assistance – that might go beyond the strict objectives of the intervention.

In what follows, each of the main points will be discussed in depth, while leaving a summary of the main findings to highlighted boxed, for clarity of reading.

4.1 FINDINGS ON PROJECT DESIGN, PLAN, ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

Project documentation was limited. There is no written documentation of the project design phase and there is only one document, called *Project Document*, dated September 2012,¹ in addition to the Phase 3 Final Project Report highlighting some

¹ The document is entitled *Partnership in Statistics A cooperation project between the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia and Statistics Sweden – Project plan for the fourth phase: October 2012 –*

recommendations for the next phase. As it turns out, per our interviews with the current and former project managers at SCB, the whole design of the project was accomplished through coordinated discussions with the partners during Phase 3. Yet, the Project Document appears to be rather generic and the results-based matrix outlining desired outcomes, expected outputs and planned activities seems to be still incomplete – particularly as far as the chain from activities to results is concerned.

4.1.1 The project objectives and scope

Finding 1: The intended results set out in the initial project documentation are not robust and useful, if assessed against commonly held standards for definition of project outputs, outcomes and development of credible and useful indicators. In addition, the assumptions for why activities identified in the PD would lead to the intended outputs and outcomes is not described in sufficient detail. We find no evidence that these weaknesses were addressed during project implementation.

For each component, the Project Plan had an **Overall Objective** – how the component contributes to the overall project objective – and a **Key Relationship Output-to-Outcome** – how does output contributes to the desired outcome –. In principle, two *types of outputs* were listed for each component: those corresponding to the so-called *individual objectives* (referred to as *learning*) and those called *institutional outputs* (referred to as *products*). Indicators were generally listed for the outputs. As for the outcomes, three *types of outcomes* were listed: one relating to *institutional change*, one related to *institutional effectiveness* and one related to the *achievement of institutional goals*.

In line with the RBM approach, all the project planned activities, expected outputs, desired outcomes and specific objectives, the existing (baseline) conditions and the end-of-project desired achievements (targets), including the relative progress indicators, should have been defined in the so-called Results Performance Framework Matrix (Results Matrix, in short). Here below, we discuss these various facets of the approach, and the way they were presented in the Project Plan. In the Recommendation Section, we elaborate more on the re-definition of objectives, outcomes and outputs

On the overall objective, the specific objective and the scope of the project

The PIS-4 **overall objective** was "to contribute to the development of a sustainable statistical system in Serbia that facilitates decision-making based on relevant and reliable statistical information that meets domestic demands, supports the monitoring of the Poverty Reduction Strategy process and complies with EU integration agenda." However, how the achievement of such overall objective was going to be measured was not stated. Besides, the PD did not specify a global specific objective for the project as a whole. **Specific objectives** were defined for each component, as recalled above: implementation of environmental statistics and accounts (component 1); improvement of price statistics (component 2.1); obtaining qualitative information on current business situation and forecast short-term developments in business operations of economic agents (component 2.2); access to information on time distribution for the population, taking into account the gender aspects and differences between regions, urban and rural settlements (component 3); development of survey methodology and its application in statistical surveys in order to bring it in line with the Eurostat standards (component 4); improved quality of statistical production, which is related to the chapter 5.2 of the official 5-year programme and strategy of SORS.

The wording and structure of the objectives does not indicate the nature of change expected in the statistics institutes as a result of the project. Obviously, the lack of clarity and the extent to which the objectives adequately set out outcomes is bound to have an impact on the effectiveness of the project.

The **scope** of the PIS-4 project is defined in the PD under *project components*, whereby one specific objective has been set for each component.

Again, the wording is not adequate, as these look more like *activities* rather than *outcomes*. Besides, no targets are set for them and no clear and measurable indicators are defined for measuring progress towards those targets. As it stands, it is difficult to evaluate the degree of progress in those areas. Additionally, the potential achievement of these activities is not under the direct control of neither the donor (Sida) nor the lead consultant (SCB). Similarly to the overall and the specific objectives, activities targeted to results in the various areas should be defined along similar lines (to be discussed with the partners) and the wording should be changed (see below the Recommendation Section for an example).

Desired outcomes for each component were not always properly identified. No targets were set for them and no indicators were defined for measuring progress towards those targets. Hence, it is difficult to evaluate the degree of progress in some areas.

On the indicators (in context of RBM)

Properly defined indicators were seldom identified for outcomes and impact – and the lack thereof obviously has a bearing on what this evaluation can achieve and how. When defined, indicators appear to be end-of-project indicators (targets), rather than progress indicators.

As a general criterion and for each component, one key evaluation tool is to assess to what degree has each indicator been achieved and how much of the outputs has been obtained to achieve the desired outcomes. For this, quantitative outputs indicators are generally needed to assess progress. However, it is not clear from the Project Document how and what indicator tracking system has been envisaged. As it turns out, indicators are mainly about activities and outputs and do not always provide suitable information to demonstrate progress towards outcomes and the overall objective. This implies that more thought will be needed as to how to measure the progress towards outcomes.

In sum, our assessment is that most of the indicators listed are end-of-project target indicators. To measure progress on each component, actual indicators of the progress made are needed. Such indicators would reflect more tangibly the final achievements of the current project term and they would give an indication for future interventions, enabling the project implementers to understand why end indicators stated in the project plan were not achieved. Moreover, the matrix should have elaborated on a theory of change how these end-of-project indicators should be reached. The theory-of-change specification would further assist the process evaluation as different paths of reaching the goals could be investigated.

On risks and assumptions

The Project PD listed the a number of risks and assumptions facing the project: a) political risks, if the government slows down on the EU integration process; b) continuing budgetary restrictions due to the economic downturn and cuts in public administration size; c) potential overlapping with other projects, particularly IPA-funded ones, and inadequate coordination of donor support; d) census operations slowing down other SORS activities; e) changes in top management at SORS; f) SORS absorption capacity; g) contemporaneous availability of SCB consultants and SORS staff; h) sustainability of results beyond the project duration; i) improper disbursement of funds; j) staff turnover at SORS.

In our opinion, such definition of the risks is not too accurate and the assumptions indicated in the PD for a successful project implementation are somehow generic. As a matter of fact, those are the common risks facing any technical assistance project, and a more careful assessment would have given the project more realism and precision. Risks and underlying assumptions for success should be carefully assessed as a "yardstick" against which to measure whether an objective has not been reached because of some lack or shortcomings in the project implementation or because of some external constraint. Failure to properly assess risks and assumptions results in

the impossibility to understand why a project might fail to reach the desired objectives.

Absorption capacity, for instance, must be measured in terms of specific activities and competencies. The same hold for staff turnover and staff dedication, the contemporaneous availability of experts and personnel involved. Besides, managerial and organisational constraints are not even mentioned.

Risks and assumptions and how to mitigate their impact should have stressed absorption capacity and availability of SCB experts in line with the agreed calendar. What planning was put in place to mitigate those risks is not clear.

4.1.2 The project main areas of intervention

The project covers **five main components**, including various sub-components (and an additional component), as listed above.

All the components follow SORS 2011-2015 Programme and the recommendations in the previous project phase final report. They also appear to be in line with EU integration priorities.

In what follows below, the main findings in terms of the various components and subcomponents will be highlighted in terms of:

- how much the activities contribute to the attainment of the expected outputs towards the achievement of the desired outcomes;
- how well and specifically defined are the activities in the various components;
- how encompassing are the components in terms of the scope of the project and its objectives;
- overall assessment.

Component 1: Environmental statistics

- This component included three sub-components: emissions-to-air statistics (1.1), material flow accounts (1.2) and environmental expenditures and accounts (1.3). The fourth sub-component on environmental tax revenues was taken out almost from the beginning due to “the impossibility of obtaining data from the Ministry of Finance”, as reported in the first Annual Project Report. The three subcomponents had one only overall objective and one key output-to-outcome relationship:
- **Overall Objective:** Implementation of environmental statistics and accounts component from programme of official statistics for 2011-2015.

- **Key output-to-outcome relationship:** Creation of a working group at SORS responsible for this component.

As an overall objective, this looks inadequate defined – it was the same in the previous PIS phase. What is not clear in this case is what the specific outcome of this phase was supposed to be [an outcome is a behavioural or performance change resulting from the outputs]. Also, an indicator measuring progress towards this output (a quantitative target) is needed, together with indicators measuring progress in achieving the outcomes. Finally, the cancellation of one sub-component from the plan for the reasons reported above could have been explored in advance by establishing the feasibility and partnership with the Tax Authority.

Component 2.1: Price statistics

- **Overall Objective:** Improvement of Price statistics (Import Price Index (IMPI), Service Price index (SPI), input Price Index for Agriculture and energy prices) in line with the Programme of Official Statistics in the Period 2011 – 2015), section on Macroeconomic Statistics, Prices and decision on the methods to be used for more efficient collecting of prices (using data scanners).
- **Key output-to-outcome relationship:** Price Statistics Unit not short of staff and good coordination of work among the units (National Accounts and Price Statistics, etc.).

The objective is not entirely complete, as the outcome of this component should probably include that SORS complies with international and EU standards. The key output for this outcome should be re-defined accordingly. Quantitative target output and outcome indicators for this component are also missing.

Component 2.2: Business tendency and consumer survey

- **Overall Objective:** Obtaining qualitative information on current business situation and forecast short term developments in business operations of economic agents. The link with the SORS Strategy is in the development of the National Accounts.
- **Key output-to-outcome relationship:** Project team at the Department European Integrations, Unit for ICT usage, is responsible for the organisation of the component.

The objective is not entirely complete, as the outcome of this component should probably include that SORS complies with international and EU standards. The key output for this outcome should be re-defined accordingly.

Component 3: Social and gender statistics

- **Overall Objective:** Access to information on time distribution for the population, taking into account the gender aspects and differences between regions, urban and rural settlements via the light time use survey.
- **Key output-to-outcome relationship:** Communicating the results to the decision makers to contribute to Government's policies on gender equality and regional development.

The objective should be reworded, as the outcome of this component should be that of obtaining an insight on how people use their time, thus highlighting gender differences in the use of time. The key output for this outcome should be re-defined accordingly.

Component 4: Statistical methodology

- **Overall Objective:** Development of survey methodology and its application in statistical surveys to keep them in line with Eurostat standards.
- **Key output-to-outcome relationship:** Strengthening of the Survey Methodology Unit in order to respond to staff movements expected in the near future.

The objective should be reworded, as the outcome of this component should also be the introduction of survey methodologies according to international and EU standards. The key output for this outcome should be re-defined accordingly. Quantitative target output and outcome indicators for this component are also missing.

Component 5: General management and quality

- **Overall Objective:** Improved quality of statistical production – chapter 5.2 official 5-year program and strategy of SORS.
- **Key output-to-outcome relationship:** A pre-requisite for component success is understanding, acceptance and endorsement from top management.

The objective should be reworded, as the outcome of this component should be the introduction of specific management and quality standards. The key output for this outcome should be re-defined accordingly. Quantitative target output and outcome indicators for this component are also missing.

Additional Component: Survey on use of ICT and “green” ICT

- This component was added after the beginning of the project (and so it does not appear in the original Project Plan), when a request for a 12-months no-cost extension was presented by the project management to Sida. For this extra component, both an overall and a specific objective were defined, but no key output-to-outcome relationship was indicated.
- **Overall Objective:** Measuring the use and attitudes to ICT in schools in Serbia in accordance with the Digital Agenda for Europe (DAE) and EU2020 goals.
- **Specific Objective:** Inclusion of the "Green ICT" module in the regular survey programme at SORS from 2015.

The objectives, as well as the quantitative target outputs and outcome indicators were clearly defined. However, no key output-to-outcome relationship was indicated.

4.1.3 The project organisation and management and the client-implementer-beneficiary contractual relationship

Finding 2: Accountabilities and who would be accountable for delivery of what was not entirely clear between the three main parties - Sida, SORS and SCB. This was clearly shown by the failure to set up reporting on the basis that SCB was accountable for delivery of certain outputs, but these would only contribute to the intended outcomes. We find no evidence that the project has been managed to deliver the outcomes, based on transparent consideration of monitoring data and understanding/consideration of how these might contribute to delivery of the outcomes or even were the most relevant outputs. This in turn reflected a lack of application of the formal project planning and budgeting approaches that one would normally expect to observe in a project.

An important aspect of understanding how the partnership programme could reach its final goals is also the chain of responsibility for the delivery of results. The contractual relationships for delivery of outcomes against the payment supplied by the donor are one aspect of this chain. In the case of this project, a tripartite contractual relationship was put into place: one between Sida and SCB, the other between SCB and SORS, and the third between Sida and SORS. This is a common phenomenon in any development cooperation area. There is a common responsibility

shared, in this case between SORS and SCB, for the delivery of results. But the contractual reality did not convey this clearly. There were contracts established between Sida and SORS and between SIDA and SCB, but the linkage between SCB and SORS was not as clear. Evidently, SCB did not take responsibility for the grant provided to SORS despite the fact they provided TA for the accomplishment of the surveys, Sida was under the impression that the grant and the service contract linked SORS and SCB together for a mutual responsibility for accomplishing the objectives and thus should be reported on mutually. SCB was obliged to provide services to SORS but were they responsible for the outcome? It does not seem so. So the question becomes “what exactly was the responsibility and goals of SCB” in terms of output/outcome.²

The goals for the project implementer (SCB) as they are defined in the RBM matrix and the TOR are not directly under the responsibility of SCB, but rather largely dependent on SORS to implement the set changes. It is difficult to assess the effectiveness and impact of the programme, whereby the main trigger for successful implementation of the final result is out of scope and control of the intervention itself. The key outcome indicators would be better defined as emanating from the activities of the SCB rather than the overarching goals as specified in the current work plan.

In most cases, the success of the intervention seems to be based on the actual production of standardised statistics of quality, in line with given standards. This, obviously, does not depend on SCB (Sida's contractor) but rather on SORS. The project might be well delivering on its objectives and according to the plans and yet the statistics to be produced as a result of those project activities, which depend on other factors beyond the project, might not be up to the expected standards. Take, for instance, the example of environmental statistics: as it appears, a lot of the planned activities took place and yet, according to many of the staff members involved and the stakeholders consulted, full-fledged environmental statistics may be a long way ahead.

A special note should be given to the management of the grants. Like in the previous phases, some surveys to be implemented by SORS have been supported by additional funds for the field work. For this project phase, three surveys have been funded through grants (in addition to the project budget): the business tendency and consumer survey, the time-use survey and the use of ICT survey. Contractually, it

² This aspect was also mentioned in the previous phase review report.

appears that the grant was to be managed by SORS, under its own responsibility. And yet, not only several activities in the project were targeted to those specific surveys – in the form of additional support through training and technical assistance – but the survey results were part of the actual reporting to Sida on the project.

In the end, this contractual arrangement is confusing, as it is not clear where the responsibility lies. The grants and the activities they supported should have been part of a separate report with specific objectives and targets.

A main office in Belgrade was set up so as to take care of the organisation and management of the project. The Belgrade Project Office (BPO) was thus to be the interface between SCB in Sweden, the Sida office at the Swedish Embassy in Belgrade and SORS. All activities, project planning and reporting, budgeting and accounting was thus to be managed by BPO. As it turned out, the management of the project was rather ad hoc and lacked a systematic structure. The current set-up has contributed to the somewhat weak project management of the project. There was no steering committee, the BPO coordinator was having informal discussions primarily with SORS top management and this did not improve the timely implementation of activities. A Long-Term Advisor would have contributed, possibly, to a stronger project management, in this respect.

Also, as mentioned above, the contractual relationship between Sida, SCB and SORS appears to have been defined only in broad terms: a lot of the actual and effective implementation of the activities was left to the initiative of the coordinators and on the response of the partner. From our partial point of view, resulting from our inquiry and review of the project documents and reports and our mission results on the ground, there seems to have been a certain degree of improvised, common-sense, factual follow-up of coordinators and counterparts on the actual roll-out of activities, rather than a punctual and scrupulous adhesion to the agreed work-plan, with its deadlines and expected deliverables.

To evaluate how and what the project delivered *in practice* is made difficult by these shortcomings and by the way things developed on the ground. The project did deliver and – given the difficulties brought by external constraints and events – it delivered somehow positively. The beneficiaries were satisfied in the end. And yet, the management has been too loose to deserve a completely positive mark. This is also reflected in the budget and the accounting of project activity costs. Expenses are not divided by component nor by activity but simply by administrative type – fees, reimburses, etc. – . There is no tracking of actual expenses versus their planned forecast, no use of budget as a programming tool. Obviously, for a technical assistance project, what counts is that objectives are achieved and beneficiaries are satisfied. However, it is also of utmost importance how those objectives are reached, whether the planned resources are being utilised the way they were supposed to, whether activities are taking more or less resources than planned, and so forth.

If part of the responsibility for this lies with the implementer, SCB, and its operating arm on the ground, BPO, it is also true that it was the Project Document with its Results-based framework that contributed to it, together with a lack of a stricter contractual framework between Sida and SCB. That at the end of the project, we do not have a clear and detailed idea of how the budget was allocated and spent is not acceptable. The budget is a management tool, an indicator of how the project is faring, a monitoring tool, and it should be used as such. Without it, even the possibility to properly evaluate the project, here and now, is impaired.

4.2 RESPONSES TO THE EVALUATION QUESTIONS

As discussed above, the evaluation questions formulated with the regard to the criteria of relevance, effectiveness, impact, sustainability and organisational learning could only be addressed – properly speaking – if desired outcomes and expected outputs, i.e. the project results, had been correctly formulated and the progress indicators accordingly defined. As it turns out, results have not always been properly formulated, baseline values for the indicators have not been measured everywhere, intermediate indicator values have not been defined and progress has generally not been tracked by the project management system. In most cases, the overall objectives and the key output-to-outcome relationships should be properly reworded. As we said, this is a serious limitation of the project implementation.

In what follows, we will thus present whatever evaluation assessment was made possible by the existing project monitoring system – with the activities, outputs and outcomes whereby listed –. For each component, we will use the monitoring system and terminology that has been adopted by the project and we will thus refer to the *two types of outputs* that have been identified – one concerning *individual objectives (learning)*, the other regarding *institutional outputs (production)* – and the *three levels of outcomes* – one related to the immediate *institutional change*, the second related to *institutional effectiveness* and the third related to long-term ***institutional goals*** –.

In various cases, it appears that indicators are misleading or inadequately defined, outputs are missing or vaguely defined, and outcomes are too general. What is mostly important for this evaluation is that in very few cases **objectively verifiable indicators** have been specified and measured. Some propositions and suggestions on how to improve the results framework and the indicator system are presented in the Recommendations Section below.

The detailed responses to the evaluation questions are presented in Annex 4. Here below we can summarise our assessment as follows.

4.2.1 Relevance

Question 1.1. To what extent was the PIS-4 project relevant vis-à-vis needs and priorities of statistics in Serbia, with a focus on EU integration.

In terms of fit with Serbian national policies and statistical strategies, it appears that the PIS-4 project was generally relevant, in the opinion of key stakeholders interviewed. Specifically, it appears that the following components were seen as generally relevant to Serbian stakeholders:

- component 1.2 (MFA for environmental data),
- component 1.3 (EEA),
- component 2.1 (price statistics) and
- component 2.2 (BTS).

Conversely, PIS-4 was moderately relevant for:

- component 1.1 (emissions-to-air statistics have been taken over by SEPA),
- component 3 (time-use survey for gender statistics is not a EU-accession requirement but is in the Serbia National Strategy for gender equality),
- component 4 (statistical methods)
- component 5 (management and quality)
- additional component on use of ICT

In terms of fit with Sida's policies, it appears that the PIS-4 project was in line with Sida Country Strategy for Serbia.

Question 1.2. Has the current project phase managed to avoid the limitations of the previous phases or were the objectives and the expected results too ambitious?

The review of the previous phase of support to SORS stressed that there was a need for SCB to prioritise more clearly among different objectives and a need for SORS to ensure the appropriate commitment of resources and staff to accomplish the objectives. Swedish support tended to be very flexible and to be provided in an ad hoc manner, thus responding to "the needs" of SORS. The risk of such an approach was that either activities would be initiated, when needed and the necessary supporting resources were not available or that activities would be funded at the cost of not adequately funding higher priority and relevant activities.

As to whether the current PIS-4 managed to avoid the limitations of the previous phases or whether the objectives and the expected results of the project were too ambitious, there seems to have been a lack of realism and consideration of the overall context of statistical production targeted to EU integration – focus was partly on statistical areas that are not considered as priority ones (like Time-Use Survey, Business Tendency Survey, Environmental statistics already covered by the Serbian Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA)).

There was very little systematic tracking and monitoring of the activities, content, number of participants and SORS offices and departments involved, results and outputs, costs and use of resources. Once the general project components and subcomponents were defined, experts were recruited to address single issues, deliver workshops and trainings and provide technical assistance. Little systematic tracking and monitoring was done of each individual activity, the counterparts involved and their level of involvement, the actual transfer of knowledge achieved by each activity: ultimately, the effectiveness and appropriateness of each individual activity was not kept under scrutiny. Often, the involvement of experts coming from SCB was conditional to their availability and responded to some on-demand requests from SORS, instead of following a strict plan of activities decided on an annual basis. As for the results, the only monitoring came from a listing of the statistical outputs produced by SORS, by passing any judgement about their quality, the efficacy of the knowledge transfer received. If, say, the purpose was to have a “new” price index available, it seems that the only criterion followed to keep track of activities was a “check” on the list of outputs produced by SORS, no matter what the content and the quality of that output was.

We may say that the implementation plan, the list and time-line of activities (generically defined), the deadlines for delivering the outputs, the reporting, the monitoring and the cross-checks, the accounting and the financial reporting were slack and not strictly defined. The lack of formality for the management, the implementation and the monitoring – which in a way contributes to make Sida's cooperation vis-à-vis the partners looks “flexible”, “accommodating” and “understanding” – has made the overall development of the project appear to be variable and unplanned. No specific precise monitoring was produced to keep track of how much was delivered vis-à-vis the resources used to achieve the results.

True, the whole PIS project phase 4, almost since the very beginning, was influenced by unforeseen demands which would so swallow human and organisational resources. The delay in activities that led to a request for a 12-months no-cost extension after only a few months was an example of such operating conditions. Also, the lack of a well-defined results-based monitoring framework to stick to – with proper intermediate indicators and clearly defined outputs, with milestones and benchmarks – has made it possible for the project to develop as it did basically adapting to the circumstances and following the wandering path resulting from outside events. The whole project was a sequence of stops-and-go, long waiting for the availability of experts and the availability of internal resources on the partner's side, coordination issues among the three partners and the project management, need to re-focus and start again.

Notwithstanding a seminar organised for the proper definition of the objectives, the desired outcomes, the expected outputs and the activities – the results-based monitoring framework (RBMF) – there was no real change in behaviour, from either side: the actual project monitoring framework remained as vaguely defined as it had

been and no change in practices was to be seen. So, the annual activity plans changed in due course, due to a number of reasons, and in the end what was monitored was the outputs, not so much how those were achieved.

4.2.2 Effectiveness

There were four questions regarding effectiveness.

Question 2.1 Has the intervention achieved its overall and specific objectives and its planned results and annual targets and to what extent?

Here, we summarize our assessment regarding expected **outputs** - both those related to **individual objectives (learning)** and those related to **institutional outputs (production)** – and the **outcomes** related to **institutional change, institutional effectiveness** and the **reaching for institutional goals** for the various components and subcomponents separately. Outputs and outcomes, together with a summary of our assessment, are listed below in Annex 4. Also, as we said above, no assessment is possible on this regarding the Additional Component on Survey on use of ICT, as no institutional outcomes were indicated for that component.

Component 1

As for Component 1 – Environmental statistics – while the PD Result-Based Monitoring Framework had all expected outputs and outcomes with their relative target indicators listed for all the three subcomponents at once, the annual progress project reports present a RBM Framework detailed by subcomponent. Here is our assessment regarding Q.2.1 for Component 1 overall.

As for the **expected outputs**:

- Some training has been conducted planned, but it is difficult to judge whether staff are skilled and operational.
- Emissions-to-air statistics have been published. However, responsibility for producing these statistics has been taken over by SEPA. The question is whether this was foreseeable and avoidable or a better coordination between SORS and SEPA, fostered by the project, could have led to a different outcome and/or different planning. As we remarked above, after Phase 3 it was recognised that for PIS 4 to be successful, it would need to coordinate more with others. This is evidence that it didn't.
- Report on development priorities and people trained (a planned output to be released in 2013) not yet available.
- Agreements on how to apply MFA and EEA methods have not been possible to verify: progress reports only mention data compilation methods improved and applied and mission reports mention suggestions for applications.

- No information available on breakdown of tax revenues statistics, a planned output.

As for the **outcomes related to institutional change**:

- New methods in the specific areas have been generally approved. However, no information is available on their use and applicability.
- No information on pilot studies on emission-to-air available.
- Availability of international comparable data on MFAs for Serbia has not been verified, but has been mentioned to have been covered in a separate publication by SCB experts.

As for the **outcomes related to institutional effectiveness**:

- Better and more comprehensive reports on emissions-to-air was produced only once, then responsibility was taken over by SEPA. Again, the question is whether this was foreseeable and avoidable or a better coordination between SORS and SEPA, fostered by the project, could have led to a different outcome and/or different planning.
- Data on MFA, EEA are not yet fully compliant with EU standards, however they are regularly sent to Eurostat (a planned outcome). The EU progress report 2016 states that “Environmental statistics are partially produced”.
- No information is available of discussion with stakeholders on the purpose and use of environmental statistics.

As for the **outcomes related to the effectiveness of reaching institutional goals**:

- Serbia MFA and EEA statistics are now sent to Eurostat, as planned.
- EW-MFA data is used for calculation of two SDIs for domestic material consumption³.
- No information is available on data user satisfaction surveys.

Overall assessment regarding Q.2.1 for Component 1. The project has been moderately effective in some areas; some outputs have been produced and some of the outcomes such as MFAs have been reached. The overall effectiveness has therefore been mixed.

³ Material flow indicators of the Republic of Serbia, 2015

Component 2.1

Our assessment regarding Q.2.1 for Component 2.1 – Price statistics – is as follows.

As for the **expected outputs**:

- Improved price indices (IMPI; SPPI, EPPI) complying with EU standards are now published by SORS as planned.
- Experimental price indices (SPPI, transport prices and agricultural input prices) have been published as planned. These are “one-off” (experimental) price indicators that will have to be worked out in the statistical planning of SORS.
- Report on development priorities and people trained (a planned output to be released in 2013) is not available.
- Staff members have been trained in EU methodology regarding price statistics (such as new weights in agricultural price indices).

As for the **outcomes related to institutional change**:

- New methods in the specific areas have been generally applied, as desired.
- Awareness of pros and cons of using scanners for price collection has been raised. In this regard, it is not clear how such awareness was measured.

As for the **outcomes related to institutional effectiveness**:

- Revised deflators using newly calculated price indices have been adopted for GDP estimates as planned.

As for the **outcomes related to the effectiveness of reaching institutional goals**:

- No information is available on new price statistics data user satisfaction surveys.
- The 2014 Eurostat Compliance monitoring round reflected that SORS has made progress with the implementation of agricultural prices. Other prices statistics are not fully verified.

Overall assessment regarding Q.2.1 for Component 2.1. The project has been effective in all the targeted areas; outputs have been produced and some of the outcomes have been reached. The overall effectiveness has therefore been moderately good.

Component 2.2

Our assessment regarding Q.2.1 for Component 2.2 – Business tendency and consumer surveys (BTS) – is as follows. It should be remembered that this component was supporting activities carried independently by SORS under the additional grant.

As for the **expected outputs**:

- Six planned new business trends indicators are regularly published as planned. However, this aggregate information is not detailed: no information is available as to which indicators are now produced.
- Interviewers for the BTS have been trained as planned.
- A composite index has been produced (though not seasonally adjusted), as planned.
- Statisticians have not been trained in trend analysis as planned (according to Progress Report 2015 target is 4)
- Evidence of use of indicators from other sources is not available.
- CATI centre has not been upgraded as planned yet (according to the 2015 annual project report).

As for the **outcomes related to institutional change**:

- New survey methods (CATI, CAWI) have been introduced as planned (though the CATI centre has not yet been upgraded).
- No evidence is available on whether the new methodology regarding BTS was verified by experts, as planned.
- No evidence is available on data analysis being regularly circulated among users. (For the BTS data it explained by short time series)

As for the **outcomes related to institutional effectiveness**:

- Survey results submitted to EC DGFIN as planned.
- No evidence has been provided on availability of national indicator for GDP forecast, except for Economic Sentiment Indicator without seasonal adjusted data.

As for the **outcomes related to the effectiveness of reaching institutional goals**:

- No information is available on use of data by stakeholders.
- No information available on negotiations with EC DGFIN on BTS funding.

Overall assessment regarding Q.2.1 for Component 2.2. The project has been effective in some areas only; some outputs have been produced and some of the outcomes have been reached. The overall effectiveness has therefore been moderate.

Component 3.

Our assessment regarding Q.2.1 for Component 3 – Social and gender statistics: Time-Use Survey (TUS) and time-use statistics – is as follows. It should be reminded that this component was supporting activities carried independently by SORS under the additional grant.

As for the **expected outputs**:

- 10 SORS statisticians have been trained in TUS methodology as planned.
- Software for data entry and data processing for LTUS developed by 6 SORS staff as planned.
- 36 interviewers for LTUS trained by 6 SORS staff, as planned
- LTUS fieldwork implemented in 2340 households, thanks to Sida grant attached to the project.
- LTUS data processed and analysed by 20 SORS staff, as planned.
- First LTUS results published in one press release on SORS website.

As for the **outcomes related to institutional change**:

- SORS staff appear able to conduct LTUS with no external technical assistance.
- Publication of LTUS results is in line with expected standards.
- Gender disaggregated statistics was produced by SORS in the Women and Men publication as resulting from TUS implementation.

As for the **outcomes related to institutional effectiveness**:

- No evidence of use of data on paid and unpaid work in other statistics regularly produced by SORS. Results from introduction of TUS appears not to have spread to other departments.
- No evidence available on dissemination and use by users of LTUS results.

As for the **outcomes related to the effectiveness of reaching institutional goals**:

- Some evidence available on use of LTUS results related to gender by other Institutional bodies and policy maker instances.
- Potential for full scale TUS has been built in terms of capacity, but financial constraints hinder further rollout. Introduction of TUS appears to be subject to availability of external funding.

Overall assessment regarding Q.2.1 for Component 3. The project has been effective in all the targeted areas; outputs have been produced and some of the outcomes have been reached. The overall effectiveness has therefore been moderately good. However, the introduction of TUS appears to be dependent on external funding and it has not yet been subsumed in the regular multiannual planning of SORS.

Component 4.

Our assessment regarding Q.2.1 for Component 4 – Statistical methodology – is as follows.

As for the **expected outputs**:

- 20 staff have been trained in survey methodology (STAC course) as planned, mainly targeted towards younger staff. However, it is difficult to judge the effects of the training.
- All staff with less than 5 years of experience in the sampling unit have been trained in various aspects of survey methodology. In this case, too, it is difficult to judge the effects of the training.
- Several different business surveys based on new or improved sampling methods were implemented by 2016.
- No evidence is available on the creation of a “frozen” version of a Business Register – a baseline one – for maintenance.

As for the **outcomes related to institutional change**:

- New methods are being introduced because of intervention.
- Response rates in business surveys around 80% have been achieved, possibly thanks to the project action.
- No evidence is available on use of full Business Register, that was possibly upgraded thanks to the project action.
- No quality indicators are available to judge the quality of newly produced statistics in line with the newly introduced methodology.

As for the **outcomes related to institutional effectiveness**:

- Greater efficiency of work (in survey implementation) was one of the desired outcomes. This is difficult to assess: self-assessment of beneficiaries, in this regards, is positive.
- No evidence is available of reduction in burden and work effectiveness at SORS.

As for the **outcomes related to the effectiveness of reaching institutional goals**:

- The surveys implemented are based on random samples in compliance with EU standards on current survey methods, e.g. business, household and agricultural.
- No evidence is available on improved data quality, however the EU Sectorial review was conducted in October 2015 and the final report has not been published yet.

Overall assessment regarding Q.2.1 for Component 4. The project seems to have been somehow effective in contributing in introducing new methodologies and approaches, particularly in the management and treatment of survey data and in upgrading the business register; some outputs have been produced and some of the outcomes have been reached. At the institutional level, outcomes are more difficult to gauge. The overall effectiveness has therefore been moderate.

Component 5.

Our assessment regarding Q.2.1 for Component 5 – General management and quality – is as follows.

As for the **expected outputs**:

- Top management and staff have been exposed to training in quality management as planned. However, it is difficult to assess whether skills have been absorbed and staff are “familiar” with the Quality Management system.
- The organisational plan with changes has not been adopted as planned.
- Quality report – and quality indicators – are being adopted but not as regularly and as fully as planned.

As for the **outcomes related to institutional change**:

- Whether a “better” or improved organisation at SORS has been introduced is difficult to assess. We have no evidence available, neither from the Multi-annual Statistical Plan nor from any other source.
- Whether “new” standards and procedures have been introduced is difficult to assess. We have no evidence available, nor any confirmation from interviews with SORS management and staff.
- ‘Number of’ and ‘percentage of’ – indicated in the PD as target indicators – are not indicators: a number must be specified to measure targets and progress achieved!
- No Organisational Changes Plan has been implemented by SORS as planned. This, by the way, is the same indicator as under 1B – expected outputs.

As for the **outcomes related to institutional effectiveness**:

- Effectiveness is difficult to assess in terms of shortened periods dedicated to tasks and standardised quality (a desired outcome). In this respect, self-assessment of beneficiaries is positive.
- ‘Number of’ and ‘percentage of’ – indicated in the PD as target indicators – are not indicators: a number must be specified to measure targets and progress achieved!
- ‘Less time’ is an indicator (in the PD) that cannot be compared without a baseline value.

As for the **outcomes related to the effectiveness of reaching institutional goals**:

- No evidence is available on satisfaction by users and SORS staff.
- No evidence is available on harmonisation with Eurostat standards and implementation of recommendations. Self-assessment by SORS management and staff is mixed.
- No evidence is available of positive reviews by monitoring missions. Self-assessment by SORS management and staff is mixed.

- No evidence is available on ‘rise’ in numbers (as a desired outcome) – a target value should have been specified to measure progress against baseline values.

Overall assessment regarding Q.2.1 for Component 5. The project seems to have been effective only in exposing SORS management and staff to new management methodologies and approaches to quality; organisational plan and quality reports have not been produced as planned; whether outcomes related to institutional change or effectiveness have been achieved is difficult to assess and no evidence is available. At the institutional level, outcomes are difficult to gauge. The overall effectiveness has therefore been quite limited in this case.

Question 2.2. Have the right activities carried out to bring about the desired outcomes?

Here, we summarize our assessment regarding the desired project **outcomes**, the **output planned** to achieve those outcomes and the **activities planned** to produce those outputs for the various components and subcomponents separately.

Component 1.1.

Regarding Component 1.1 – Environmental Statistics: Emissions to air statistics – here is our assessment regarding outcomes, outputs to achieve them and activities giving rise to those outputs.

- Outputs have generally been targeted to bring about the desired outcomes.
- Project design was weak. Activities as listed in PD were too general – not clear purpose of study visits nor that of “missions from SCB”, whether for training sessions or workshops – also, not clear which activities would produce what outputs.
- It is not clear how those activities would then generate the expected outputs.
- Some of the outputs – e.g. “publishing better quality indicators” – look more like outcomes. A better wording could have been: “x number of improved indicators published”.
- Most notably, not all planned outputs have been achieved.

Overall assessment regarding Q.2.2 for Component 1.1. The activities listed in the PD were too generic. There is no clear activity-to-output-to-outcome relationship in most cases. Ultimately, it is not clear what specific activities led to what output in order to achieve which outcomes.

Component 1.2.

Regarding Component 1.2 – Environmental Statistics: Material Flow Accounts (MFAs) – here is our assessment regarding outcomes, outputs to achieve them and activities giving rise to those outputs.

- Outputs have generally been targeted to bring about the desired outcomes.

- Project design was poor. Activities as listed in PD were too general. It is not clear what the purpose of the study visits was nor that of “missions from SCB”, whether for training sessions or workshops.
- Also, it is not clear which activities would produce what outputs.
- Not all outputs have been achieved: maybe activities were not properly designed to produce those outputs.

Overall assessment regarding Q.2.2 for Component 1.2. The overall assessment is similar to the one above for Component 1.1: the activities listed in the PD were too generic. There is no clear activity-to-output-to-outcome relationship in most cases. Ultimately, it is not clear what specific activities led to what output in order to achieve which outcomes.

Component 1.3.

Regarding Component 1.3 – Environmental Statistics: Environmental Expenditures and Accounts (EEAs) – here is our assessment regarding outcomes, outputs to achieve them and activities giving rise to those outputs.

- Outputs have generally more or less been targeted to bring about the desired outcomes.
- Once again, the project design was weak. It is not clear what the purpose of the study visits was nor that of “missions from SCB”, whether for training sessions or workshops.
- Also, it is not clear which activities would produce what outputs.
- Not all outputs have been achieved: maybe activities were not properly designed to produce those outputs.

Overall assessment regarding Q.2.2 for Component 1.3. The overall assessment is similar to the ones above for Components 1.1 and 1.2: the activities listed in the PD were too generic. There is no clear activity-to-output-to-outcome relationship in most cases. Ultimately, it is not clear what specific activities led to what output in order to achieve which outcomes.

Component 2.1.

Regarding Component 2.1. – Price Statistics – here is our assessment regarding outcomes, outputs to achieve them and activities giving rise to those outputs.

- Outputs have generally more or less been targeted to bring about the desired outcomes.
- Yet, it is not clear how the activities listed in the PD would lead to the expected outputs: how would activities like “Seminars and meetings with stakeholders – one per year including final meetings to present results” or “Remote expert assistance during Implementation of the work plan” or “Study tours” or, finally,

how “Participation at workshops and meetings organised by international organizations” would lead to the expected outputs.

- In particular, as activities are not clearly defined, it is not clear which activities would produce what outputs.
- Not all outputs have been achieved: so, maybe activities were not properly designed to produce those outputs.

Overall assessment regarding Q.2.2 for Component 2.1. The overall assessment is similar to the ones above for Components 1: the activities listed in the PD were too generic. There is no clear activity-to-output-to-outcome relationship in most cases. Ultimately, it is not clear what specific activities led to what output in order to achieve which outcomes.

Component 2.2.

Regarding Component 2.2. – Business Tendency and Consumer Surveys (BTS) – here is our assessment regarding outcomes, outputs to achieve them and activities giving rise to those outputs. It should be reminded that this component was supporting activities carried independently by SORS under the additional grant.

- Outputs have generally been targeted to bring about the desired outcomes, though outcomes are not clearly defined – e.g. what are the “six new indicators”?
- Project design was not too specific. Activities as listed in PD were fine, though not clear which activities would produce what outputs. As the desired outcome was clear, what kind of training was envisaged? On which topics? What kind of “additional surveys” would be implemented?
- In some cases, outputs have not been achieved: composite index, staff trained on trend analysis.
- Workshops with stakeholders are not mentioned in the activity list.
- Data entry application is not mentioned in activity list.
- The CATI centre has not been upgraded as planned.

Overall assessment regarding Q.2.2 for Component 2.2. The overall assessment is positive: the activities listed in the PD were finely targeted, though it is not clear what activities would produce which outputs. Activities were not clearly defined: it is not clear what training, on which topics and what additional surveys would be introduced.

Component 3.

Regarding Component 3 – Time-Use Survey (TUS) – here is our assessment regarding outcomes, outputs to achieve them and activities giving rise to those outputs. It should be reminded that this component was supporting activities carried independently by SORS under the additional grant.

- Outputs have generally been targeted to bring about the desired outcomes, which assume building up on existing advancements in implementation of Time-Use Surveys.
- Project design was clear. Activities listed in PD were fine.
- Some outputs have been achieved (B, C, D). Conversely, activities targeted to outputs E, F, and G were delayed and not completed.
- Implementation and release of Light TUS results not achieved.

Overall assessment regarding Q.2.2 for Component 3. The overall assessment is positive: the activities listed in the PD were finely targeted and clearly defined.

Component 4.

Regarding Component 3 – Statistical methodology – here is our assessment regarding outcomes, outputs to achieve them and activities giving rise to those outputs.

- Desired outcomes were not clearly defined. The business survey’s sampling error and response rate probably refer to the availability of certain statistical features in output releases. It is not clear what “revised methodologies” for which “key surveys” would be kept in line with EU standards.
- Statistics in Action courses aimed at training staff of survey methodology (Output D): would that provide general survey methodology basics or something more specifically targeted?
- What “number of business surveys” are referred to in Output E?
- All activities have been completed (according to latest annual project report). However, no information is available on the content of such activities. Also, it is not clear what kind of activities would lead to “trained staff” – Training courses? Workshops? – and to an upgraded Business Register to be used in business surveys – training on the job? Technical assistance?

Overall assessment regarding Q.2.2 for Component 4. The overall assessment is mixed: though some of the outputs have been achieved, it is not clear how those would lead to the desired outcomes. Nor it is clear what activities would produce the expected outputs.

Component 5.

Regarding Component 4 – General management and quality – here is our assessment regarding outcomes, outputs to achieve them and activities giving rise to those outputs.

- Outcomes were not always well defined. Outcome 5.A refers to data user satisfaction – was there a data user survey? Outcome 5.B refers to an “organisational changes plan”, but it is not clear what the plan is. Outcomes 5.C and 5.D are not specific: what numbers are they referring to?

- Output 5.E refers to data user surveys, which are evidently implemented (where about?).
- Output 5.F refers to an “organisational changes plan” to be adopted and approved (by SORS, presumably), but it does not explain what the plan is about.
- Activities are generally targeted to outputs (but it is not clear what activity 5.K is about).
- Most activities have not been completed or have been delayed (according to annual project reports), with the exception of those leading to Output 5.J. However, it is not clear which activities led to this output, and what its actual content has been.

Overall assessment regarding Q.2.2 for Component 5. The overall assessment is mixed: desired outcomes were not properly specified or not specific. Some of the outputs have been achieved. Activities were somehow well targeted to produce the expected outputs.

Additional Component on use of ICT.

Our assessment regarding Q.2.2 for the extra Component – Survey on use of ICT, including Green ICT module – is as follows. It should be reminded that this component was supporting activities carried independently by SORS under the additional grant.

- Outcomes are well defined.
- Outputs are defined in terms of activities.
- Activities are generally targeted to outputs.
- Most activities have been completed. However, as such it appears that they were part of the Grant agreement rather than being part of the project implementation under BPO and SCB responsibility.

Overall assessment regarding Q.2.2 for the Additional Component. The overall assessment is good: desired outcomes were properly specified. The outputs have been achieved. Activities were well targeted to produce the expected outputs.

Question 2.3. Was SCB assistance appropriate in supporting the project implementation? If not, are there immediate lessons learned to be applied?

- Assistance was generally perceived as technically appropriate in terms of effectiveness of the knowledge transfer, from the point of view of the desired outcomes to be achieved and the expected outputs.
- However, not all activities were completed and not all planned outputs have been delivered, and this was generally not because of SCB support’s lack of appropriateness.
- The project has generally been behind on its work plan, mostly because:

1. Mismatch in the availability of SCB experts and availability of dedicated SORS staff.
2. SORS absorption capacity and availability of staff.
- Components 5 has not been sufficiently engaging for beneficiaries. Possibly its goals would have to be revised.

Question 2.4. Have project activities supported the development of SORS in a complementary and positive way?

- The key project activities – workshops, study visits – have been somehow effective in supporting the development of capacity at SORS.
- However, some of the activities have been implemented in areas not perceived as “core”. This may impair sustainability (see below).

Question 2.5. Was the project management model effective to achieve the stated objectives?

- The project management model was based on SCB relying on a project office based in Belgrade (BPO), which coordinated all activities and was the interface between SCB and SORS. The involvement of SORS in managing the project was somewhat limited. Thus, not all stated objectives were not achieved as they were probably beyond the direct control of the project management (see more below, under Organisational Learning).

4.2.3 Impact

In this respect, the self-assessment by beneficiaries and feedback from stakeholders and international donor community is positive. A good indicator of impact is the perceived utility of statistics by data users. Unfortunately, no baseline data is available to measure impact. As for the quality of the statistics produced and how has it been used, this is difficult to assess.

Question 3.1. What are the planned and unplanned long-term effects of the program on society – data users and beneficiaries – as a whole?

- Positive effects will be felt in the area of environmental statistics – an area in which SORS will need to invest more in the future, by improving its cooperation with the National Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA).
- Also, permanent positive effects will be felt in the area of price statistics and business tendency surveys, where the changes brought by the project were consistent and considerable.
- Some permanent effects will also be felt in the area of statistical methodology, where some capacity has been developed thanks to the project.

Question 3.2. What observable measures or indicators can be identified (to evaluate impact)?

- A good indicator of impact will be the perceived utility of price statistics, environmental statistics and business (short-term) statistics by data users.
- Unfortunately, no baseline data are available to measure impact.

Question 3.3. What has been the quality of the statistics produced and how has it been used?

- Difficult to assess. Need full-fledged review.

4.2.4 Sustainability

Question 4.1. Are the project outcomes and activities targeted to those outcomes likely to continue after the program has finished?

Whether the PIS-4 project outcomes and activities targeted to those outcomes are likely to continue after the program has finished depends on the component.

Component 1.1. Emissions-to-air statistics

- Changes have been introduced and statistics are complying with SMIS database.
- Work on emissions-to-air statistics has been interrupted, taken over by SEPA. Yet, institutional framework of cooperation between SORS and SEPA is needed.
- Capacity at SORS has now been developed. Work on component is now sustainable.

Component 1.2. MFAs

- Changes have been introduced and MFA statistics are now being regularly published and sent to Eurostat.
- Capacity at SORS has now been developed.
- Work is still incomplete, particularly on Sustainable Indicators. Work on component is not yet sustainable. Mandatory part appears complete, voluntary reporting remains. Certain SDI's have been developed.

Component 1.3. EEAs

- Changes have been introduced, but work on EU-compliant data is still incomplete.
- Satellite accounts have been developed, but are still experimental.
- Capacity at SORS has been developed, but more assistance is needed. Work on component is not yet sustainable.

Component 2.1. Price statistics

- Changes have been introduced in the planned new price indices and EU-compliant data are now regularly published.
- Capacity at SORS has now been developed. Work on component is now sustainable.

Component 2.2. Business tendency and consumer surveys

- New survey has now been introduced and EU-compliant results are now regularly published.
- Capacity at SORS has now been developed. Work on component is now sustainable.

Component 3. Time-use survey

- Light TUS has now been introduced but fieldwork needs to be completed.
- Capacity at SORS has now been developed but financial assistance is still needed for sustainability.

Component 4. Statistical methodology

- Improvements in calculation of business survey sampling errors and response rates have now been introduced.
- Capacity at SORS has now been developed. In targeted areas, sustainability has been achieved.

Component 5. General management and quality

- Data user satisfaction not yet achieved.
- Organisational changes plan not yet implemented.
- Work on quality reports attached to surveys has been done, but more is needed.
- Capacity at SORS has now been developed. Work on component is not yet sustainable and more assistance is needed.

Additional Component. Survey on use of ICT

- ICT survey has been done, but whether it was a one-off survey it remains to be decided.
- Capacity at SORS has now been developed but financial assistance is still needed for sustainability.

Overall assessment regarding Q.4.1. The overall assessment is moderately good. Some activities will be continued, as statistical production in some of the targeted statistical areas is going to continue. Some other areas would need more assistance to continue. Financial sustainability appears to be an issue for the survey field work.

Question 4.2. Is SORS reasonably able to continue develop its organisation and activities?

- SORS appears to be reasonably able to continue to develop its organisation and activities only in selected areas – price statistics, BTS, some environmental

statistics – but more work is generally needed in order to make SORS able to continue to develop as an organization. There is a national IPA support as well as IPA Multi-beneficiary support that will provide support to SORS. The organisational is regarded by Eurostat to be able to drive its own development.

Question 4.3. To what extent are the achievements a result of institutional change in SORS' organisational structure, management, standard operational procedure as well as financial operating procedures to form lasting changes and improvements?

- The project achievements were the result of selected interventions in targeted areas. No institutional change was generally introduced as a result of the project intervention.
- Long-term sustainability is therefore questionable. IPA support will be available for SORS to continue to implement institutional changes primarily to reach the requirements of EU membership.

4.2.5 Organisational learning

The questions regarding organisational learning should be formulated – differently from what was done both in the Call-off proposal and in the Inception Report – having in mind that the project has almost come to an end. Though this was not conceived as such, in this respect this appears to be like a *final* evaluation review – i.e. a review of a project that is finished, where all activities have been closed and the project final *results* can be compared with what was planned. Though the project has not yet come to an end – several activities have to be concluded and accounted for also from the budgetary point of view – we should consider that there is no room, at this stage, for any change not only in the objectives but also in the expected outcomes and the ways to achieve them. This warning is particularly relevant when we look at the issues related to organisational learning and the lessons learnt.

In this subsection, we will therefore analyse the responses to those questions concerning the lessons learnt from the project implementation logic that was adopted, the areas of intervention that were targeted and the types of intervention that were used: which lessons should we learn not so much for the current project but for eventual future programmes.

Question 5.1. What was the capacity development 'model' underlying the project implementation logic and the intended knowledge transfer put in place?

- The *capacity development model* underlying the project implementation logic was fundamentally based on what may be called “indirect” transfer of knowledge: participation to workshops by the beneficiary, together with study visits and some hands-on (albeit limited) technical assistance given by experts from SCB on the ground. This model seems to have worked in some cases and components, like price statistics, business tendency survey, and some environmental statistics. When it did not work in full it was either because the involvement of SORS was not thorough and systematic enough or because considerably more assistance would have been needed.

- The model of “workshops plus study visits plus activities on demand” may work when there is a potential already developed and an emergent need. If coordination and the matching of availability of experts and the recipients is not guaranteed, it may fail to deliver and lead to the desired results. In our case, it appears that SCB has been diligent enough to bring in expertise from the outside when it was not available inside or was not part of SCB core competence. There appear to be areas where more specific technical assistance would be needed and a further project phase would certainly be of help. However, it also appears that there are areas and specific issues for which the capacity development model that has been applied in this case is not fit. Either because the issues at hand would require specific, advanced technical assistance – not available on demand – or because the effectiveness of training and the building of capacity would require almost a “beginning from scratch” (and would take too long), it seems that the model that has been used in this case would not be the most proper one for those areas. Workshops or study visits can only contribute to a knowledge transfer limited in scope and not effective in cases where a more “hands-on” and specific, systematic and in-depth assistance would be needed.

Question 5.2. In a future programme, should new components be considered and if so can the project remain within its stated overall objectives?⁴

- The current project phase 2012-2015 (extended to 2016) is the fourth phase of the Partnership in Statistics between Sida and SORS that started in 2005. The components and areas of intervention chosen for the current phase were already included in the previous phase 2009-2012. More specifically, in the previous phase, environmental statistics covered emissions-to-air statistics and environmental expenditures and accounts (in addition to waste statistics); economic statistics covered similar price statistics (in addition to regional accounts and indicators); social and gender statistics covered the time-use survey (in addition to quality of life indicators, socio-professional classifications, Roma population pilot census); statistical methodology included sampling and survey methods; general management and quality covered similar issues like results-based management, quality in statistical reporting. Thus, the current phase was in all senses a continuation of the previous one.
- Considering that while there are areas where advancements have been made and positive, permanent results have been achieved, in other areas progress is still

⁴ In the inception report, we had a question on organizational learning concerning which aspects in the current project should be changed or dropped? That question has now been dropped, as there no purpose of asking what aspects could be changed in the *current* project.

lagging and the desired outcomes have not been reached, there would be room for further assistance in some of the same components, or at least for re-designing the intervention in those areas. However, given the progress made in areas like price statistics or business surveys, new components could be added. What SORS top management and staff have shown in the interviews is that in most areas targeted by IPA-funded assistance there are specific issues that remain unattended. The complementarity in assistance to SORS should be sought not so much at the level of macro components – National Accounts are targeted by IPA funds, Environmental statistics are then targeted by Sida funds – but at a more micro level: e.g. what components of National Accounts are not targeted by IPA projects? Rather than Sida and the EC carving out separate areas and possibly not reaching critical mass in several of them it would be better if both focused on a few priority areas and then combined their strengths to ensure higher probability of success.

- Therefore, a new project should certainly focus on those areas that still need more assistance, where the “job done is unfinished”. New components should be considered only in as much as they are well framed within the National Strategy of SORS and its strategy of international cooperation with donors. All of that can still fit within the current project overall stated objectives of building capacity at SORS within the framework of EU integration and aspiration to complying to EU standards.

Question 5.3. Should a future program focussing on different issues be considered by Sida if a new Country Strategy for Serbia gives room for it?

- Various areas within SORS certainly need assistance, even considering the support provided by the EU with IPA funding. There are issues that are not covered by IPA projects even within the realm of given statistical areas where IPA funds do provide assistance. A better coordination, rather than too rigid division of labour with IPA assistance would be more fruitful. For instance, instead of covering completely new issues, it would possibly more effective to concentrate on those priority areas that are considered for SORS fundamental in terms of compliance with EU standards.

Question 5.4. Is it recommended that Sida funds a next and final project period 2017-2020?

- As shown above, there are areas where the objectives have not been achieved and the desired outcomes have not been reached. More assistance would be needed and should certainly be considered for those areas and components. However, this is the fourth phase of a program that already in the previous phase covered similar areas and components.
- Adding to this, should Sweden aspire to continue to be on the forefront of exporting our expertise in statistics perhaps there are better places where Sida funding and the scarce resources of SCB could be put to better use for the

betterment of economic growth and alleviation of poverty. Most likely the regional cooperation will still be available for SORS where support to non-IPA areas will be provided.

- So, in our opinion, it is not recommended that Sida funds a next and final project period 2017-2020, while consider whether there is a more relevant and effective potential use of funds allocated within Sida to delivery of its Serbia strategy.

Question 5.5. If Sida will fund a next project phase 2017-2020, what could be the management set-up and content of the project?

- As we have tried to argument above, the management setup for the project was not always up to what was to be expected. There are two sides of this. On one hand, though the arrangement of the project management direction through a regional office (BPO) seems to have been effective, the lack of clear management and monitoring rules and a more precise accounting system led to various possible drawbacks. From a possible overspending of resources (or even under-spending in some cases), to delays and changes in the timing of activities, to changes in plans due to unplanned accommodations to the beneficiaries' requests: these were all factors that make monitoring project implementation quite difficult. On the other hand, the main contractor (SCB) did not apparently require stricter control over budgeting, disbursements and compliance with time-tables and plans. Instead it placed a premium on accommodating requests and demands in homage to the "flexibility" so praised by the beneficiaries, although this made the actual development of the project unpredictable and the follow-up on each activity difficult.
- The project started a few months later than planned, activities were delayed and postponed, outputs were not produced as planned. This could have happened because of poor management: if the project had had a more formal planning approach in place, then the project managers might have been able to manage the delays attributed to the impossibility of matching the availability of SCB experts with that of staff and statisticians at SORS. This highlights a certainly lack of flexibility of the main contractor to accommodate the beneficiary's requests on time and according to the planned schedule as well as a certain limited absorption capacity on the beneficiary's side. The inability of sticking to the agreed time table with the required expertise makes a change in the management setup advisable. A new project phase could have a different management set up, as well as a new main contractor, which has not always proved able to accommodate SORS' needs and strategy.
- As for the content, there are areas that remain uncovered, outputs that should be produced by SORS with standards that have to improve and that would require more capacity development in the next few years. If the Serbian Government will ever loosen its tight policy of downsizing the public sector – favouring the "refurbishing" and restructuring of several public services – SORS will have a

new wave of employees lacking experience, expertise and qualifications in a lot of different areas.

Question 5.6. How should a future programme be organised, in order to be sustainable?

- Give the current limited staff capacity at SORS, and given all the assistance that it has received in the recent years – most notably from the EU and Sida – a future programme should be organised with a much lighter organisational structure and with a focus on a limited number of components and topics, so as to finally accomplish the objectives that have not been achieved in the previous phases. The programme could have a partner that provides more specific and targeted technical assistance and the project should be driven by SORS through a service contract with the contractor.

Question 5.7. Can and should SCB continue as a long-term partner to SORS in this respect?

- The partnership between SCB and SORS now dates back to 2005, but even before that there was cooperation among Swedish Statistics and the Statistical Office of Serbia and Montenegro. So, certainly SCB could continue as a long-term partner to SORS. However, as delays and cancellations of activities occurred – due to lack of availability of SCB experts – and as there were topics on which SCB could not provide the required knowledge transfer, a different partner could provide a fresher contribution to the capacity development of SORS and possibly a more business like relationship would evolve.
- Experts could be hired on the market according to specific terms of reference and a precise calendar of activities.

Question 5.8. What were the main risks and what efforts have been made to minimize the effect of unforeseen risks that have arisen during implementation?

- The project main risks that were taken into consideration at the beginning – during the project design phase – were those related to staffing and absorption capacity at SORS, to be matched by availability of experts from SCB. Such risks have only been mitigated by a request for a 12-months no-cost extension already a few months after the start of the project. However, the request only mitigated the risk and no other serious measure was taken to minimise the risk and avoid repetitions.
- There were no other relevant unforeseen risks, if we exclude a better cooperation with SEPA on environmental statistics that was seen since the beginning a crucial factor of success in the progress on that component and that, however, did not receive the needed attention by both SORS and SCB. If that cooperation had been properly addressed both in institutional and practical terms, maybe the accomplishments in the areas of environmental statistics could have been greater.

5 Conclusions

The development of a sustainable statistical system in Serbia continued to progress during the period of phase 4 of the project. This was certainly partly thanks to the assistance of Sida through SCB. On the other hand, although the project has achieved a certain number of results, all in all, we can only say that it is relatively far from the initial objectives. Progress has been made in several areas but it is short of the probable desired achievements, bearing in mind the concurrent implementation of other projects and the insufficient number of trained and qualified personnel available for project activities.

The speed and depth of development varied across the five project components. The most evident achievements were probably in those areas where activities had already started in previous phases. Differences prevailed in the progress of subject fields among SORS departments. In any case, the training of staff members as part of the capacity building and their assignment to different departments has contributed considerably to the development of the project components. This demonstrates the relevance of the intervention, namely the improvement and accumulation of knowledge of the staff, and the effectiveness of it. The progress of the different components was stimulated by the dedication of the staff involved and by the improved coordination and communication between the partners.

Since various project components are not yet completed and the final outcomes are not yet in sight, a request for an extension would be recommended. True, a no-cost extension was already requested only a few months after the beginning of the project, due a late start and the delay in several activities. And yet, a further no-cost extension could potentially allow the completion of various activities that would make the accomplishments of the project broader and more significant.

Regarding the project's impact, we may say that in this respect, the self-assessment by the beneficiaries and the feedback from some stakeholders and the international donor community is positive. A good indicator of impact will be the perceived utility of statistics by data users. Even though there is no baseline data available to measure impact, we can only say that the current perception is that eventually it will be positive. As for the quality of the statistics produced and how they have been used, this is difficult to assess.

With regard to sustainability, whether the project outcomes and activities targeted to those outcomes are likely to continue after the program has finished depends on the component. Generally, only very few areas seem sustainable at this stage – price

statistics, survey methods, time-use survey and BTS – while all other areas addressed by the project will definitely need more assistance.

5.1 FACTORS OF SUCCESS AND FAILURE

This is the fourth phase of the programme and thus the programme is a long-standing one. Among the factors of **success** we should list:

1. The partners appreciate the cooperation with Sida, Sida's flexibility on project implementation and the possibility of tailoring activities to the partners' needs even in mid course.
2. Most components and areas of intervention have been covered and addressed over the years. In this sense, over the years a lot has been done, the knowledge transfer has been considerable and its effects are visible and can be seen in the improvement of statistical production in Serbia, at least in terms of statistics reproduced by Eurostat for Serbia and conforming to their standards.
3. The presence of SCB experts funded by the PIS programme has provided a sense of continuity to the partners which has been appreciated the most, given the long experience of cooperation.
4. Project experts have generally provided good expertise and assistance.

Yet, there are hindrances and drawbacks. The project – 46 months after its start date – is quite behind on several fronts, both in terms of **deliverables** and in terms of **budget** spent. Only part of the planned activities has been implemented, some outputs were not produced and some of the outcomes are definitely not within reach. Among the most relevant factors for a lack of success (rather than failure) we should mention are:

1. Factors internal at SORS. The most relevant has always been the lack of personnel for specific activities. The number of statisticians at SORS is limited and most of the project activities require their involvement. Being involved in their regular tasks and with other assistance projects, the availability of staff has often been a bottleneck for the smooth implementation of the project.
2. Factors internal at SCB. The most relevant, mirroring SORS, has been the availability of experts when needed. This obviously bears on the capacity of SCB to commit realistically to the project and the utility of planning done by SCB and BPO.
3. Management by SCB and the Project Office in Belgrade. BPO, by acting as a facilitator of project activities and coordinator in stricter sense, should have taken the lead in proposing a much stricter discipline for both partners (SORS and

SCB). The lack of an annual plan with a detailed calendar of activities made things worse, so that activities had to be delayed or cancelled. This was also a factor in the lack of success.

4. Some sub-components, albeit important, have been perceived as less crucial to the success of the project delivery.
5. The choice of objectives in some cases appears to have been unrealistic, which takes us back to the generic design and planning highlighted above. E.g. environmental statistics – a lot of the issues concerning jurisdiction and responsibilities of the data collection appear to be unsolvable. The relationship with SEPA as well as that with the Ministry of Finance appear to have been at the origin of the cancellation of one project sub-component and the interruption of activities on another sub-component, and this was a challenge already known at the start of the project phase 4.
6. The Project Plan for the various components was drafted with full awareness of the complexity of the intervention in light of the absorption capacity and lack of staff at SORS. However, outputs and goals were not operationalised well enough to be translated into effective project activities. Some objectives generally appear out of reach for what was initially a three-year project to be implemented.
7. The component on capacity building for general management may have received too low a priority in the project implementation. It has neither produced the targeted outputs nor contributed to achieving the desired outcomes. We do recognize the difficulties faced when introducing management level capacity building with intentions to change the management model, given the inherent resistance to change in general and specific difficulties in the case of SORS. However, some of the drawbacks identified in this report can be attributed to the human resource challenges faced as well as to the management of the large-scale inter-organizational ventures such as national level data collections. When organisational changes on a top management level should take place, the exchange of experiences between the management of SCB and SORS might have provided less of resistance and better understanding of the benefits of a process oriented organisation.
8. The lack of performance monitoring by identifying progress indicators for both outputs and outcomes and monitoring continuously, building a project database where project statistics can be drawn for planning, for reporting, for analysis, and for evaluation. This meant that it would have been difficult to manage the project strategically given the normal project management approaches.

5.2 OTHER STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

The management of the project was conducted in a rather informal way. Given that the contractual relationship between Sida, SCB and SORS appears to have been defined only in broad terms, the actual and effective implementation of the activities was left to the initiative of the coordinators (BPO) and in response to the partner (SORS).

The positive side of this was that several activities resulted from the good will and engagement of the coordinators and the counterparts. The negative side is that the whole project appears to have been rather improvised, subject to ups and downs and dependent on external events and demands.

The implementation plan, the list and time-line of activities, the deadlines for delivering the outputs, the reporting, the monitoring and the cross-checks, all were somehow loose and not strictly defined.

Also, the lack of strict terms of budgeting and accounting, by single activity and not just by component, together with a generic and somehow blurred results-based framework contributed, on one hand, to the strength of the project – its flexibility and adaptation to the circumstances – and on the other hand to its weakness – its slow delivery rate and lack of continuity.

It appears as if there was no clear information on the planned budget – by year, component *and* activity – and no information on how the budget was spent and disbursed.

Though the analysis of cost efficiency was beyond the scope of the evaluation, a cursory look at the budget figures reflects the management and organisational features and drawbacks highlighted above. It appears as if there was no clear information on the planned budget – by year, component *and* activity – and no information on how the budget was spent and disbursed. Some information has been provided to us, and yet it is not evident whether it refers to planned or executed budget figures. We will only mention here below some of the main issues that we have been able to dig out and we believe are worth flagging.

1. The project had an initial budget of SEK 10,134,000 to be spent over a bit more than three calendar years (2012-2015) as follows: SEK 688,000 in 2012, SEK 3,442,000 in 2013, SEK 3,772,000 in 2014 and SEK 2,233,000 in 2015. This budget was to be spent in the various components as: SEK 1,157,000 for component 1; SEK 1,157,000 for component 2.1; SEK 807,000 for component 2.2; SEK 762,000 for component 3; SEK 1,620,000 for component 4; SEK 1,506,000 for component 5 and SEK 2,425,000 for project management and other costs.

2. After the no-cost extension to November 2016 was granted in 2014, a new budget was drafted. The new budget had no expenses foreseen for 2012 (there had been none), SEK 1,806,000 for 2013 (52% of the original plan), SEK 2,897,000 for 2014 (77% of original), SEK 2,634,000 for 2015 (24% more than originally planned) and SEK 2,146,000 for 2016 – with an overall reduction of the total for of SEK 650,000 to be added to the grant given to SORS.
3. While the general management costs were increased of about SEK 520,000, all other costs on the various components were reduced.
4. We have no information on how the budget was spent, by component and activity. In the one piece of information that we have been able to collect, of the SEK 9,484,000 that were planned in the original revised 2014 budget, SEK 7,455,000 had been spent until the third quarter of 2016, leaving some SEK 2,065,000 unspent for the last two months of activities, i.e. 21.4% of the total.
5. A good indicator of cost efficiency is usually whether the same results cannot be produced with smaller amounts of inputs and resources. In this sense, it could be said that the results that were achieved have used smaller amounts of inputs and yet, not all results have been achieved and a no-cost extension was needed. A further no-cost extension has been requested by BPO for some more months and there are even activities planned for 2017, but a further no-cost extension has not been granted. So, the issue whether the budget, objectives and time-lines were realistic: the answer appears to no, though we do not have any detailed elements to confirm that. In any case, we cannot say unequivocally whether the project was cost efficient or not.
6. On whether the project management model efficiency (or lack of) did create an administrative burden on SORS, we can possibly say that it did not. All administrative burdens for the project management were left to the BPO and SORS certainly did not suffer from this.

5.3 LESSONS LEARNT

In short, the most significant drawbacks and highlights and the lessons to be drawn can be summarised as follows.

- The most evident drawback is that the project did not have, since the very beginning, a clear plan with milestones, target and progress indicators for all outputs and a clear list and calendar of activities that would produce those outputs.
- There was no systematic monitoring of activities – to be reported against the original plan – no tracking of progress indicators and output accounting. Activities were listed annually – at the beginning of the annual cycle – only by

component and type (study tours, missions, etc.) and topic. No information was reported on whether activities implied workshops, training lectures, training-on-the-job and coaching, mentoring, and so forth.

- The first lesson that can be drawn from this is that: no systematic monitoring and tracking, no information on what works what does not. What led to the delivery of those outputs? Was it a workshop or a study tour? What led to the lack of achievement of those outcomes? Was it too the (too small) number of activities?
- In other words, both SCB and SORS did not implement what was recommended at the end of Phase 3. The project was still managed in a rather informal manner, with little use of the usual project planning and budgeting tools and little strategic prioritisation. The project monitoring did not pick this up. Since it was not clear what project success would look like or how it would be achieved, it would be difficult to maintain over-sight of whether on track or not. The three annual reports seem not to report on this.
- The second lesson is probably that the capacity building model underlying the project logic is only good for delivering certain outputs and possibly only when there is some capacity to build on. There seems to have been a correlation between those areas where the objectives were achieved and the pre-existence of some capacity in the recipient staff structure.
- The third lesson is that the budgeting of the project was possibly not very precise – in the planning stage – and that the project's use of resources was not managed strategically to prioritise them on meeting the intended outcomes. If some of the planned results have been achieved with less funds (while others have not been achieved for other reasons), it means that the project was over-budgeted. Providing cost summaries on an overall level is not an acceptable project accounting approach and also in connection with reporting financial disbursements up to third quarter in the annual reports when the budget is made for calendar years.
- The fourth lesson calls for a questioning of the role of BPO as opposed to a Long-Term Advisor attached to SORS. It appears that in some instances a more specific, technical role of advice and guidance would have been more profitable in some instances, as opposed to the simple arrangement of the expertise needed for the tasks at hand being sourced on an ad hoc basis.

6 Recommendations

Since various project components are not yet completed and the final outcomes are not yet in sight, a request for an extension would be recommended. True, a no-cost extension was already requested only a few months after the beginning of the project, due a late start and the delay in several activities. And yet, a further no-cost extension could potentially allow the completion of various activities that would make the accomplishments of the project broader and more significant.

Having said that we believe there is little room for future interventions along the same strategic lines, here are a few recommendations to the benefits of future interventions and/or no-cost extensions. Future interventions should be around enhancing sustainability, in line with Sida's strategic action in statistics in Serbia and in the region. Therefore, we recommend:

1. A more precise identification of priorities and areas of intervention, which would ensure better delivery as well as availability of statistics in targeted areas.
2. In addition to workshops and study tours, training lectures, training on the job, coaching and mentoring on specific technical issues would also ensure greater effectiveness.
3. A more precise monitoring framework, with detailed list of activities, progress and target indicators, milestones, which would ensure better project effectiveness and impact.
4. The systematic tracking of activities with accurate annual planning and calendar, which would also ensure better project effectiveness and impact.
5. A more accurate budgeting by activity and type of intervention, which would ensure better project effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability.
6. Considering the advantages of a LTA vs. the current arrangement of a BPO, which would ensure better project effectiveness.
7. Further involvement of the whole statistical system: as this was not always in sight, a better coordination with institutional users of statistics and administrative data providers should be kept within the scope of assistance for better effectiveness.

8. Future cooperation on statistics with emphasis on population statistics and demographic and economic analysis and its compatibility with Sida Regional Result Strategy would ensure greater effectiveness.
9. A greater synergy with the current project of assistance to statistics at the regional level, which would greatly benefit from a project targeted at SORS as it has in the recent past.

Annex 1 – Terms of Reference

Terms of Reference for the evaluation of The Regional Statistics Cooperation on the Western Balkans 2013-2016 and Partnership in Statistics: A cooperation project between Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORS) and Statistics Sweden (SCB)

Date: 2016-06-23

Case number: 16/000601

1. Background

1.1 Regional cooperation

Sida has since late 2002 supported regional statistics cooperation in the Western Balkans, with Statistics Sweden (SCB) as the responsible authority for the implementation. SCB opened a regional office in Belgrade 2003 in order to facilitate the handling of the regional project as well as the bilateral projects in the region. Presently, Sida supports bilateral projects with SCB as institutional partner in Albania, Kosovo and Serbia. The partner to SCB in the region project is a non-formal Regional Statistics Committee, where each participating national statistics institute has one seat and SCB also holds one seat. The chairperson of the committee is rotating among the Western Balkans representatives from Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia. The project is aimed for competence development focused on five components: the Regional Statistics Committee, statistics methodology, the statistics summer school, environmental statistics and gender statistics. The overall objective is ‘developed statistical systems in the region supported by sound statistical methods and practices in line with EU standards’. The present phase of the regional project is based on the project document Regional cooperation project in the South Eastern Europe, project plan for the period 2013-2016, 26 November 2012, slightly revised in the Inception report 2013-2016 Draft 3, 15 May 2013, with a total budget of SEK 27 583 000.

The only other regional development cooperation programme in statistics is the Eurostat EU/IPA-funded programme. Regarding bilateral programmes, Eurostat is by far the biggest donor, with substantial programmes in all the six Western Balkans countries involved in the Sida-funded regional programme. Other donors include the IMF, UNICEF and World Bank.

Sida has decided to carry out an independent evaluation of the regional statistics project in 2016 in order to get deeper information on the results of the project and to get advice on a possible next phase of the project for the period 2017-2020.

1.2 Bilateral statistics cooperation Serbia-Sweden

“Partnership in statistics” project started back in 2004 as cooperation between Statistics Sweden (SCB) and local statistical institutes. At that time support provided by Sweden worked on capacity building of the following statistical institutes: Statistical Office of Serbia and Montenegro (SOSM), Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORS) and Statistical Office of Montenegro (MONSTAT). After the finalization of the first phase (in 2008) and the phase out of Sweden’s bilateral support to Montenegro, cooperation was continued only with SORS.

During the first two phases of bilateral cooperation, the type of support provided by SCB was dominantly in the area of ‘general capacity building’ of SORS: improvement of IT and even English language skills and rather basic statistical tools, such as Statistical Business Register. SORS’ improved capacity brought cooperation and partnership to a higher level. This was reflected in a stronger ownership of SORS and cooperation that is more demand-driven and leads to assisting SORS in conducting and analysing rather complex statistical surveys such as the Child Confidence Index or Time Use Survey (TUS).

Current project is the fourth phase of “Partnership in Statistics” between SORS and SCB. It was approved in November 2012 and was initially planned to be implemented from December 1, 2012 until November 30, 2015 (activity period). In July 2014, upon a request presented by SCB and SORS, Sida decided to approve a 12 months no-cost extension for the project – new finalization date is November 30, 2016. Total budget for the contribution amounts 13 999 000 SEK divided into two components: 1) SCB component – covering technical assistance provided by Statistics Sweden, amounting 9 484 000 SEK and 2) SORS component – covering cost of statistical surveys implemented by SORS and amounting 4 515 000 SEK. For the two components, Sida has signed cooperation agreements with SCB and SORS (respectively).

The project document that was developed by SCB and SORS proposed the new phase of cooperation to focus on the same thematic areas as the previous three-year project: environmental statistics, economic statistics, social and gender statistics, statistical methodology and general management and quality. The overall objective of the project is to contribute to the development of a sustainable statistical system in Serbia that facilitates decision-making based on relevant and reliable statistical information that meets domestic demands, supports monitoring of the Poverty Reduction Strategy process and complies with the EU integration agenda. The project is organized around the following components and specific objectives linked to them:

1. Environmental statistics and accounts: Implementation of environmental statistics and accounts from programme of official statistics for 2011-2015.
2. Economic statistics - price statistics; Business tendency and consumer surveys: Improvement of Price statistics, Service Price Index, input Price Index for Agriculture and Energy prices; Obtaining qualitative information on current

business situation and forecast short-term development in business operations for economic agents.

3. Social statistics – time use statistics: Access to information on time distribution for the population, taking into account the gender aspects and differences between regional, urban and rural settlements.
4. Statistical methodology: Development of survey methodology and its application in statistical surveys in order to keep them in line with Eurostat standards.
5. General management and quality: Improvement quality of statistical production in line with chapter 5.2 of official 5-years program and strategy of SORS.

Sida's appraisal of the proposal concluded that the project was designed to build on the results of the previous phase and increased capacities of SORS. It was assessed that SORS was rather well functioning institution implementing number of surveys that are completely in line with the EU standards. The assessment also identified a need for further development and capacity building but also drew attention to SORS' limited absorption capacities due to heavy workload and engagement in other donor funded projects: IPA national and regional and Sweden funded regional project. This risk has unfortunately materialized - limited absorption capacities of SORS have during the first two years of project implementation caused delays that called for extension of the contribution (12 months no cost extension).

The last progress report submitted to Sida in December 2015 concludes that 2015 was 'a turbulent year for SORS' which ended up in a fewer activities implemented than originally planned. The report stated that targets in the areas of environmental economic accounts have been reached, as well as some in the area of statistical methodology.

2. Evaluation Purpose and Objective

2.1 Regional cooperation

The first overall objective of the evaluation is to find out which results the project has been delivering during the period from February 2008 to the end of 2015 in relation to the foreseen objectives in the project documents 2008-2012 and 2013-2016, but also discuss within a broader framework how the project have supported the overall official statistics development in the participating countries and in relation to their desired EU approximation. The main focus shall be on the second phase, 2013-2016. The second overall objective is to give advice on how to design a possible next and final project period of Sida support to regional statistics cooperation on the Western Balkans for the period 2017-2020, on the basis of sustainable results and continued EU approximation within the framework of the Results strategy for Sweden's reform cooperation with Eastern Europe, the Western Balkans and Turkey 2014-2020.

2.2 Bilateral cooperation Serbia-Sweden

Purpose of the review is to safeguard the use of Swedish Government funding and an efficient implementation of the project. The Assignment is expected to assess

progress towards projected outputs and outcomes and probability of reaching sustainable results once the project is finalized.

The review has following main objectives:

- Provide an in-depth assessment of the project results, its projected outputs and outcomes.
- Analyse relevance, effectiveness and efficiency. Special emphasis shall be put on project's relevance for Serbia's EU accession and the ongoing negotiations process.
- Assess sustainability of outputs and outcomes reached so far.
- Assess the implementation model applied in the project so far; evaluate expert support and project management provided by SCB (SCB HQ and the Regional office in Belgrade). Special emphases shall be put on the following aspect: effectiveness and efficiency of the current implementation model.
- As the cooperation between SCB and SORS is an institutional capacity development project between two statistical institutes; assess the model(s) used for capacity development.

Based on the assessment of project achievements, appraisal of SORS' capacities and assessment of needs that will arise from and during the EU negotiation process, give recommendations to Sida regarding possible continuation of support to statistics in Serbia.

3. Scope and Delimitations

3.1 Regional cooperation

The evaluation shall inform about the contribution from the Sida funded regional statistics project during the period 2008-2015 to each of the national statistics institutes in the six participating countries on the Western Balkans as well as about effects on the regional cooperation in official statistics.

3.2 Bilateral cooperation Serbia-Sweden

The review mission shall collect and analyse reports and documents with the main focus on project documentation and reports produced by SORS and SCB. The consultant is expected to visit Belgrade to discuss the project with the representatives of the SORS, the SCB Regional Office and Embassy of Sweden. Interviews shall also take place with relevant staff and management at SCB in Stockholm. Meetings and interviews shall cover other stakeholders such as other donors and international organizations (EU and possibly UN), users of statistics in Serbia such as Serbian organizations and institutions (e.g. Tax Office).

4. Organisation, Management and Stakeholders

4.1 Regional cooperation

The evaluation team will meet with Sida in Stockholm, with SCB in Stockholm and Belgrade, with the Regional Statistics Committee in its autumn meeting in 2016. The team will also meet with most of the national statistics institutes in the six participating countries. Before the visits to the countries, coordination and planning with the respective representative in the Regional Statistics Committee shall be carried out.

The team will further meet with Eurostat in Luxembourg.

The draft evaluation report for the regional project will be sent to Sida and SCB in Stockholm and Belgrade for comments. SCB will forward to the Regional Statistics Committee for their comments.

The evaluation consultant company will apply its normal quality assurance for evaluation assignments.

4.2 Bilateral cooperation Serbia-Sweden

The evaluation team will meet with the Swedish Embassy in Belgrade, with SCB in Stockholm and Belgrade and with the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORS).

The draft evaluation report for the bilateral project Serbia-Sweden will be sent to the Swedish Embassy in Belgrade, to SCB in Stockholm and to SORS for their comments.

5. Evaluation Questions and Criteria

5.1 Regional cooperation

Describe to which degree the overall objective of the project has been achieved?

Describe if and how the other objectives of the project have been achieved?

Describe if and how the project activities have supported the development of the NSIs in a complementary and positive way?

Describe if and how the project activities have positively complemented other development partners activities, and especially the Eurostat as the main donor, in the statistical area in the participating countries?

Describe if and how the participating National Statistics Institutes have taken an active role in the implementation of the project?

Describe if and how the SCB specialists have contributed in the different activities to achieve the project objectives?

Describe and assess the capacity development model(s) for the project.
Describe the main risks and what efforts have been made to minimize the effect of unforeseen risks that have arisen during implementation?

What are the main lessons learned from this contribution as a Sida funded regional project in Western Balkan?

Is it recommended that Sida should fund a next and final project period 2017-2020?

If Sida will fund a final project phase 2017-2020, what could be the management set-up and content of the project? And how should it be organised, in order to be sustainable?

5.2 Bilateral cooperation Serbia-Sweden

The information gathered and analysed shall cover:

- Assessment of relevance of the project vis-à-vis the needs and priorities of statistics in Serbia, with the main focus on EU integrations.
- A description of achievements as compared to overall and annual targets.
- An assessment of the capacity development model(s) used for transfer of knowledge and development of competence within SORS.
- Efficiency and cost effectiveness – are there more cost effective methods of achieving the same results? Could the same results be produced with smaller amounts of inputs/resources or could the same input/resources produce a larger output?
- The sustainability of project outputs and outcomes, both from an organizational and financial perspective.
- Assessment of the programme management model⁵ with emphasis on its effectiveness and efficiency.
- The degree to which extent the project has taken into consideration possible external and internal risks. What efforts have been made to minimize the effect of unforeseen risks that have arisen during implementation?

⁵ Normally SCB has a long-term Advisor/Expert placed at the National Statistical Institute (NSI) for working closely together with NSI management in implementing the project. In the Serbia/SORS case the management model of the project cooperation has been different.

6. Conclusions, Recommendation and Lessons Learned

The evaluation shall give conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned mainly related to the overall objectives of the evaluation, stated in chapter two of these ToR.

7. Approach and Methodology

The evaluation shall conform to OECD/DAC's quality standards. The approach and method of the evaluation will be proposed by the evaluation consultant in the inception report and discussed with Sida and the Swedish Embassy in Belgrade in an early stage of the evaluation period.

8. Time Schedule

The evaluation is supposed to start around August/September 2016 and continue to October 2016. A draft inception report covering both projects to be evaluated is expected to be delivered to Sida and the Swedish Embassy in Belgrade towards the mid of September, including a specific work plan and timing for the activities to be included. The field work is expected to be carried out in the period September, and will include a meeting with the Regional Statistics Committee in September 2016. The draft report for the regional project will be delivered to Sida and SCB latest 30th of September 2016 and the final report, after receiving comments on the draft report, the 15th of October 2016.

The draft report for the bilateral project Serbia-Sweden will be delivered to the Swedish Embassy, SCB and SORS latest 30th of September and the final report, after receiving comments on the draft report, the 15th of October 2016.

The time plan can be subject for negotiation and agreed upon in writing.

9. Reporting and Communication

All reporting will be in the English language. The terminology of the OECD/DAC Glossary on Evaluation and Results-Based Management should be adhered to. The methodology used must be described and explained in the final report. All limitations shall be made explicit in the reports and the consequences of these limitations shall be discussed.

A draft inception report covering both projects to be evaluated will be presented to Sida and the Swedish Embassy in Serbia in August 2016, including a work plan with a time schedule. A meeting with Sida and the Swedish Embassy in Belgrade to discuss the inception report will be held.

A draft final report for the regional project will be presented to Sida and SCB latest the 30th of September 2016 and a workshop with Sida and SCB will be organised shortly thereafter. If possible, a workshop with the Regional Statistics Committee will be held in October 2016. After receiving written comments, the final report will be presented to Sida latest the 15th of October 2016.

A draft final report for the bilateral project Serbia-Sweden will be presented to the Swedish Embassy in Serbia, SCB and SORS latest the 30th of September 2016.

After receiving written comments, the final report will be presented to the Swedish Embassy in Belgrade latest 15th of October 2016.

10. Resources

The evaluation is not expected to exceed 18 working weeks and the total cost should be limited to SEK 900 000.

11. Evaluation Team Qualification

Sida estimate the assignment to be carried out by three (3) consultants.

One member of the team must have 5 years continuous documented international experience of carrying out evaluations in the public sector.

The team must have 5 years of international documented experience of development of national statistical institutions (NSI's), preferably with experience from Eastern Europe/Western Balkans and EU approximation process.

One member of the team must have documented statistical experience from the Western Balkans.

One member of the team must have 5 years documented knowledge about Swedish government agencies and their role in the Swedish international development cooperation (its structure and content).

All members shall be professionally fluent in the English language, both written and spoken, have an adequate academic background and must be independent of the evaluated activities and have no stake in the outcome of the evaluation.

12. References

Project documents, annual reports, final report for the regional project 2008-2012 etc, EU Progress Report for the countries in the Western Balkans.

For the bilateral project in Serbia: project document, annual progress reports and the EU Progress Report for Serbia for 2015.

Annex 2 – List of documents

[In alphabetic order – text names of original files modified for sake of clarity]
Agreement between Sida and Statistics Sweden (SCB)
Agreement SCB-SORS
Amendment to the agreement SCB
Amendment to the agreement SORS
EU Commission Progress Report On Serbia - 2014 Report
EU Commission Progress Report On Serbia - 2015 Report
Evaluation Report on SORS and Monstat 2005-06-07
Light Peer Review for Serbia
PIS-3 PROJECT DOCUMENT 2009-2011- final version
PIS-4 Annex 1 – Budget 2012-2015 final version September
PIS-4 Budget follow-up 2012-2015
PIS-4 project activity attendance 2013-2017
PIS-4 project activity implementation 2013-2017
PIS-4 project activity plan 2013-2017
PIS-4 Project Annual Progress Report 2015
PIS-4 Project Annual PROGRESS REPORT NOVEMBER 2012 - DECEMBER 2013
PIS-4 Project Annual PROGRESS REPORT NOVEMBER 2013 - DECEMBER 2014
PIS-4 PROJECT DOCUMENT 2012-2015 final version September
PIS-4 Results monitoring framework 2012-2015
PIS-4 Summary of detailed budget
Results strategy for Western Balkan 2014-2020
Review of SCB's support to SORS 2006-2008
Review of statistics Sweden's support to SORS 2006-2008
SORS Appendix – budget for direct grants
SORS BTS and LTUS grant – project proposal
SORS Programme of Official Statistics 2011-2015
SORS Programme of Official Statistics 2016-2020
SORS Survey on use of ICT grant – project proposal
SORS systems audit assessment report draft revised
Terms of Reference BPO project coordinator 2013 Dragan Ignjatovic

Annex 3 – List of interviewees

Name	Organization
Cecilia Bisgen Jansson	Sida
Thomas Kjellsson	Sida
Pernilla Trädgårdh	SCB ICO
Fredrik Bood	SCB BPO
Jessica Forsman	SCB ICO
Dragan Ignatovic	SCB BPO
Jasmina Protec	SCB BPO
Snezana Vojcic	Embassy of Sweden Belgrade
Biljana Popovic	European Commission Delegation to Serbia
Slavko Kapuran	SORS - Ass. Director for Intl Relations and EU Integration
Mira Nikic	SORS - Assistant Director for Development
Olga Melovski Trpinac	SORS - Head of Methodology Unit
Marija Karasevic	SORS - Methodology Unit
Vanja Vojsk	SORS - Quality Group, Intl Relations
Natasa Cvektovic	SORS - General Management
Tatjana Stanojevic– Miladinovic	SORS - Head of Price Department
Dusanka Dostanic	SORS - Environmental statistics
Ana Vignjevic	SORS - Environmental statistics
Dragana Djokovic Papic	SORS - Head, Dept. for Social Standards and Indicators
Vladimir Sutic	SORS - Head of Unit for ICT usage and BTS
Vesna Zaijc	SORS - Unit for LTUS
Mirjana Bacilovic	SORS - Satellite Accounts Division, MFA
Miodrag Cerovina	SORS - Statistical Business Register
Ivan Sekulovic	Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit, PM's Office
Dragoslav Milosic	Tax Administration – IT department
Nadojsa Redzic	Serbia Environment Protection Agency

Annex 4 – Evaluation questions and assessment/responses

Questions	Indicators and assessment criteria			
Relevance	Response/Assessment			
Q.1.1. To what extent was the project relevant vis-à-vis needs and priorities of statistics in Serbia, with a focus on EU integration.	- In terms of fit with Serbian national policies and statistical strategies, it appears that the PIS-4 project was generally relevant. Specifically, it appears that PIS-4 was <u>very relevant</u> for: - components 1.2 (MFA for environmental data), - component 1.3 (EEA), - component 2.1 (price statistics) and - component 2.2 (BTS). - Conversely, PIS-4 was <u>moderately relevant</u> for: - component 1.1 (emissions-to-air statistics have been taken over by SEPA), - component 3 (time-use survey for gender statistics was not a EU requirement), - component 4 (statistical methods) - Conversely, PIS-4 was <u>scarcely relevant</u> for: - component 5 (management and quality). - In terms of fit with Sida's policies, it appears that the PIS-4 project was in line with Sida Country Strategy for Serbia.			
Q.1.2. Has the current project phase managed to avoid the limitations of the previous phases or were the objectives and the expected results too ambitious?	- There seems to have been a lack of realism and consideration of the overall context of statistical production targeted to EU integration – focus was partly on statistical areas that are not considered as priority ones (like Time-Use Survey, Business Tendency Survey, Environmental statistics already covered by SEPA) - SHOULD LOOK AT PREVIOUS REVIEW AND SEE WHAT WAS HIGHLIGHTED AS RELEVANT FOR FUTURE INTERVENTION .			
Effectiveness	Response/Assessment			
Q.2.1. Has the intervention achieved its overall and specific objectives and its planned	Listed OUTPUTS (TARGET OBJECTIVES) and their INDICATORS for each sub-component (as listed in Project Document) – our ASSESSMENT in row below	Listed OUTCOMES (OBJECTIVES) and their INDICATORS for each sub-component (as listed in Project Document) – our ASSESSMENT in row below		

Questions	Indicators and assessment criteria			
results and annual targets and to what extent?				
Component 1. Environmental Statistics	1A. INDIVIDUAL OBJECTIVES (LEARNING) 1. Ability to assess current situation at SORS on emissions to air, MFA, EEA, Tax Revenues. 2. Staff is trained for preparing and improving emissions-to-air statistics and MFA and EEA methodology (as with the group “Coal and Other Solid Energy Materials”) INDICATORS: - Report on current situation listing development priorities and people trained produced by early 2013. 1B. INSTITUTIONAL OUTPUTS (PRODUCTION) – OBJECTIVES: 1. Regular publishing of good quality data on emissions-to-air. 2. New version of methodology for Tax Revenues and MFA (including use of sand and gravel, coal and other solid fuels, metal ores, etc.) INDICATORS: - Agreement on MFA, EEA methodology issues reached and verified by the consultants - Detailed breakdown of tax revenues by NACE rev.2 completed by 2014 - Pilot study for emissions to air completed by 2013 - Publishing more and better quality indicators in emissions-to-air statistics by 2014.	2. INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE 1. New methodology on emissions to air statistics, MFA and pilot studies introduced. 2. Improving data collection for MFA (to include use of coal, gravel and sand, metal ores, etc. and use of new data sources). 3. Improving methodology on EEA including definition of scope of tax revenues. 4. Starting with new type of analysis and estimates for MFA (use of sand and gravel in construction industry, metal ores, etc.). INDICATORS: - New methodologies (MFA, emissions to air, EEA, tax revenues, etc.) approved by top management and in use from late 2013 - Reports on pilot studies completed by early 2014 - Increasing amount of input data for MFA produced (from Geological Institute, etc.) enabling comparison with data coming from countries like Serbia by late 2014.	3. INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS 1. Producing more comprehensive reports on emission to air from: waste, manufacturing, energy sector, from agriculture. 2. Regular publishing of data on MFA, environmental expenditure and accounts. 3. Introducing new data sources for collecting data (Geological Institute, etc). 4. Improved data analysis for government bodies and research institutes. 5. Creation of working groups with stakeholders to facilitate access to new data sources. 6. MFA data constitute a part of the sustainable development indicators from 2014. INDICATORS: - More comprehensive reports on emission to air (from: waste, manufacturing, energy section and agriculture) produced by late 2014. - Data on MFA, EEA highly compliant with EU standards regularly published by early 2015. - Working groups with	4. REACHING INSTITUTIONAL GOALS 1. More comprehensive reports on emissions to air (from: waste, manufacturing, energy section and agriculture) produced by late 2014. 2. Data on MFA, environmental expenditure and accounts highly compliant with EU standards regularly published by early 2015. 3. Working groups with stakeholders created and data analysis discussed at meetings by late 2013. INDICATORS: - Internationally comparable data on emissions to air and EEA for Serbia in Eurostat’s database by late 2014. - MFA data used for calculation of sustainable development indicators (SDIs) from 2014. - Better results from user satisfaction surveys from 2014.

Questions	Indicators and assessment criteria			
			stakeholders created and data analysis discussed at meetings by late 2013.	
	ASSESSMENT • Some training has been conducted – but it is difficult to judge whether staff is skilled and operational • Emissions-to-air statistics have been first published – then task has been taken over by SEPA • Report on developments priorities and people trained (to be released in 2013) not available • Agreement on MFA and EEA methods not available – progress report mentions data compilation methods improved and applied • No information available on breakdown of tax revenues statistics	ASSESSMENT • New methods in the specific areas have been generally approved – no information available on their use and applicability • No information on pilot studies on emission-to-air available • Availability of international comparable data on MFA for Serbia has not been verified, but has been mentioned to have been covered in a separate publication by SCB experts.	ASSESSMENT • Better and more comprehensive reports on emissions-to-air was produced only once, then task has been taken over by SEPA • Though data on MFA, EEA are not yet compliant with EU standards, they are regularly sent to Eurostat • No information available on discussion with stakeholders on use and purpose of environmental statistics.	ASSESSMENT • Serbia MFA and EEA statistics are now acquired by Eurostat, as planned • MFA data not yet used for calculation of SDIs. • No information available on data user satisfaction surveys
Component 2.1 Price Statistics	1A. INDIVIDUAL OBJECTIVES (LEARNING) 1. Improved knowledge and methodologies used to calculate price indices, e.g.: Import Price Indices (IMPI) Service Production Price Indices (SPPI), Agricultural Prices Indices (API), Energy Production Price Indices (EPPI) INDICATORS: • All staff trained in new methods (such as new weights in API) and capable of conducting the surveys independently by late 2013. 1B. INSTITUTIONAL OUTPUTS (PRODUCTION) – OBJECTIVES: 1. Production of new/improved experimental indicators for Price Indices such as, e.g.	2. INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE 1. Development of efficient methods for compiling a variety of price indices, e.g. IMPI, SPPI, Input price index for agriculture 2. Development of methods for compiling energy prices in line with Eurostat/IEA methodology 3. Development of strategy for using scanner data for price collection for CPI and HICP. INDICATORS: • Improved price collection methods for calculating various indices developed and implemented from 2014. • Strategy for using scanners for	3. INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS 1. Improved quality of price indices using the best practices suggested by experts in this field. 2. Production of improved price indices that are used by other SORS units (e.g. National Accounts) as deflators. INDICATORS: • Positive reviews by EU-commissioned assessment missions. • Improved GDP estimates and better revision of GDP figures for Serbia by introduction of revised deflators from 2014	4. REACHING INSTITUTIONAL GOALS 1. Availability of new indicators for policy making. 2. Regular reporting to Eurostat on full set of price indicators. 3. Price statistics reach high compliance with EU standards in Sida-funded interventions (IMPI, SPPI, energy price, etc.). 4. Ability to satisfy different user needs in the field of Price statistics. INDICATORS: • Members of the users working group (WG) on price statistics

Questions	Indicators and assessment criteria			
	IMPI, SPPI, API. 2. Production of EPPI and reporting to Eurostat. 3. Revised methodologies introduced in relevant prices surveys and staff trained. 4. Publishing of remaining indices (IMPI, SPPI, EPPI) that are high quality from 2015. INDICATORS: • New/improved price indices in terms of compliance with EU standards regularly published from 2015. • Experimental price indices calculated from 2014.	price collection developed and approved by top management by late 2014.		informed about improvements from 2014. • Good results from user satisfaction surveys. • Sida-funded assistance in price statistics reviewed as highly compliant with EU standards at Eurostat's SMIS database from 2015.
	ASSESSMENT • Improved price indices (IMPI; SPPI, EPPI) complying with EU standards are published as planned • Experimental price indices (SPPI, transport prices and agricultural input prices) have been published as planned • Report on developments priorities and people trained (to be released in 2013) not available • Staff members have been trained in EU methodology regarding price statistics (such as new weights in agricultural price indices)	ASSESSMENT • New methods in the specific areas have been generally applied • Awareness of pros and cons of using scanners for price collection has been raised	ASSESSMENT • Revised deflators using newly calculated price indices have been adopted for GDP estimates as planned	ASSESSMENT • No information is available on data user satisfaction surveys • The 2014 Eurostat Compliance monitoring round reflected that SORS has made progress with the implementation of agricultural prices. Other prices statistics are not fully verified

Questions	Indicators and assessment criteria			
Component 2.2 Business Tendency and Consumer Survey (BTS)	1A. INDIVIDUAL OBJECTIVES (LEARNING) 1. Implementation of new surveys in business confidence (retail trade survey, construction survey and industry), part of the business confidence (BC) group. INDICATORS: • Staff members trained by 2013: - 5 statisticians trained in trend analysis; - 30 interviewers trained (including a pool of reserves) in use of Blaise software; - One IT expert trained. 1B. INSTITUTIONAL OUTPUTS (PRODUCTION) – OBJECTIVES: 1. Production of a long-enough time series of results (36 months period) and disseminate BC indicators on the regular bases. 2. Acquiring new knowledge in conducting complex surveys and producing composite indices. 3. Enlarging the CATI centre and regularly use Blaise software from November 2012. INDICATORS: • 3 additional BC surveys (industry, construction and retail trade) implemented from 2013. • Use of indicators from other sources (quarterly GDP, industrial production) for comparison with GDP figures and for revision purposes from mid-2014.	2. INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE 1. Improved methodology introduced (in line with DG ECFIN guidelines). 2. New type of economic trend analyses introduced 3. Changes introduced in organization capacity (quick collection of data) with new CATI survey methods. 4. Cooperation over the survey results with DG ECFIN introduced. INDICATORS: • Improved methodology verified by international experts and introduced from early 2013. • Introducing the new way of the collecting data (CATI, CAWI) from mid-2013. • Data analysis regularly circulated to internal and external users from second half of 2014 (after end of 36-month survey period).	3. INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS 1. Quick monthly BC indicators produced to estimate current GDP and short-term GDP forecast (after 36-month period). 2. Better coordination and use among various surveys in business statistics. 3. Compliance with EU standards defined by DG ECFIN. INDICATORS: • Indicators (ESI, CI, BCI) in line with EU standards – as defined by DG ECFIN – published monthly from 2014. • National indicator for GDP forecast published monthly from second half of 2014. • BTS results submitted to DG ECFIN from January 2013.	4. REACHING INSTITUTIONAL GOALS 1. Permanent consultations with main stakeholders (NB, MFIN, MERR...) and getting the feedback for checking and improving existing methodology and indicators. 2. Improving data quality. 3. Establishing cooperation with DG ECFIN in relation to financing BTS beyond 2015 with EU funds. INDICATORS: • Data analysis is performed with stakeholders (as of 2014), together with regular check of data quality. • Negotiations with DG ECFIN about future funding for BTS ongoing (from 2014).

Questions	Indicators and assessment criteria			
	ASSESSMENT • Statisticians have not been trained in trend analysis as planned • Interviewers trained as planned • Composite index has been produced (though not seasonally adjusted) • Six new BC indicators are regularly published as planned • Evidence of use of indicators from other sources not available • CATI centre has not been upgraded as planned yet	ASSESSMENT • No evidence on new methodology being verified by experts • New survey methods (CATI, CAWI) have been introduced as planned • No evidence available on data analysis being regularly circulated among users	ASSESSMENT • Survey results submitted to EC DGFIN as planned • No evidence provided on availability of national indicator for GDP forecast	ASSESSMENT • No information is available on data use by stakeholders • No information available on negotiations with EC DGFIN on BTS funding
Component 3. Social and gender statistics – Time-Use Survey (TUS) and time-use statistics	1A. INDIVIDUAL OBJECTIVES (LEARNING) 1. Mastering the methodology for conducting the Light TUS (LTUS). 2. Development of data entry software and data processing for the LTUS; 3. Training of interviewers organised on time. INDICATORS: • Staff members in survey unit possess the necessary methodological knowledge to conduct the LTUS. • LTUS methodology agreed, adopted and staff trained by mid-2013. • Interviewers fully trained for LTUS by late 2013. • Software solutions for LTUS developed and implemented by early 2014. 1B. INSTITUTIONAL OUTPUTS (PRODUCTION) – OBJECTIVES: 1. Successful rollout of the LTUS from early 2014 to early 2015. INDICATORS:	2. INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE 1. Acquiring knowledge on additional aspect of providing time-use data. 2. Producing more data disaggregated by gender. 3. Producing more data on paid and unpaid work. INDICATORS: • SORS staff capable of conducting the LTUS independently. • Publication with LTUS results produced in line with modern and user-friendly data presentation methods (including data on paid and unpaid work and other gender segregated data) by early 2015.	3. INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS 1. Increasing the number of the gender-related indicators. 2. To fulfil gaps in the official statistics as contribution to the national economy by production of data on unpaid work. 3. SORS staff to communicate LTUS data to internal (National Accounts, etc.) and external users (public sector and NGOs). INDICATORS: • LTUS results used by other relevant departments at SORS (National Accounts, etc.) from 2015.	4. REACHING INSTITUTIONAL GOALS 1. Bridging time gap to the next full-scale TUS. 2. Providing data for monitoring the situation on gender differences in the society. 3. Providing data for implementation of public policy, in particular in areas of employment, social security, child care, labour market, health and education. INDICATORS: • LTUS data communicated to the relevant users from public sector and the civil society, preferably during user/producer workshops. • LTUS results presented by at least 3 major daily newspapers and national TV.

Questions	Indicators and assessment criteria			
	• LTUS field work completed on time and data collected by March 2014.			
	ASSESSMENT • 10 SORS statisticians have been trained in TUS methodology as planned. • Software for data entry and data processing for LTUS developed by 6 SORS staff as planned. • 36 interviewers for LTUS trained by 6 SORS staff • LTUS fieldwork implemented in 2340 households • LTUS data processed and analysed by 20 SORS staff • First LTUS results published in one press release on SORS website.	ASSESSMENT • SORS staff apparently able to conduct LTUS with no external assistance • Publication of LTUS results is in line with expected standards • Gender disaggregated statistics was produced by SORS in the Women and Men publication.	ASSESSMENT • No evidence of use of data on paid and unpaid work in other statistics regularly produced by SORS • No evidence available on dissemination and use by users of LTUS results	ASSESSMENT • Some evidence available on use of LTUS results related to gender by other Institutional bodies • Potential for full scale TUS has been built in terms of capacity, but financial constraints and availability of resources still pending
Component 4. Statistical methodology	1A. INDIVIDUAL OBJECTIVES (LEARNING) 1. Development of newly recruited/young staff by enabling them to attend methodology training courses (STAC, survey methodology, etc.). INDICATORS: • Around 20 recently recruited/young staff trained in survey methodology by attending STAC course during 2014. • Young/new staff in the Unit trained in various aspects of methodology (estimation, non-response, outliers, estimation of errors of indices, exploration of the auxiliary information, etc.) during 2013/14. 1B. INSTITUTIONAL OUTPUTS (PRODUCTION) – OBJECTIVES: 1. Improvements related to sampling in	2. INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE 1. New sampling methodology introduced. 2. Starting with new type of BR usage from 2014. 3. Change in organizational capacity (quicker data collection). 4. Response rate in business surveys stabilizes at about 80% from 2014. INDICATORS: • Introducing the new sampling and data collection methods starting from 2013. • BR brought to its full use by gradual introduction of necessary changes during 2013/14.	3. INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS 1. Improved efficiency of work. 2. Better coordination and usages among various statistical surveys. 3. Faster data processing and publication. INDICATORS: • Less time spent on editing and correcting errors. • Achieving a steady response rate at around 80% (or better) in business surveys and quicker response times as a result of more evenly spread reporting burden from 2014.	4. REACHING INSTITUTIONAL GOALS 1. Reduction of the burden of reporting units by avoiding multiple surveying of same respondents. 2. Compliance with EU standards in statistical methodology. 3. Improved data quality for users. INDICATORS: • Better results of user satisfaction surveys. • Good reviews from assessment missions especially those commissioned by Eurostat.

Questions	Indicators and assessment criteria			
	business surveys (introduction of co-ordination and sample rotation, etc.) introduced gradually during 2013/14. 2.Improvements to business register (BR). INDICATORS: • Application of new sampling techniques in at least two business surveys from 2014 (and four by 2016). • Ability to create “frozen” version of the BR and to do maintenance of the permanent random numbers from 2013.			
	ASSESSMENT • 20 staff trained in survey methodology (STAC course) as planned, mainly younger staff – but difficult to judge the effects of the training • All staff with less than 5 years of experience in sampling unit trained in various aspects of survey methodology – but difficult to judge the effects of the training. • Number of four business surveys based on new or improved sampling methods achieved by 2016 • No evidence available on “frozen” version of BR for maintenance	ASSESSMENT • New methods are being introduced because of intervention – difficult to assess quality • Response rates in business surveys around 80% achieved • No evidence available on use of full BR • No quality indicators available to judge quality of statistics	ASSESSMENT • Efficiency difficult to assess – self-assessment of beneficiaries is positive • No evidence of reduction in burden and work effectiveness	ASSESSMENT • No evidence available on compliance with EU standards on survey methods • No evidence available on improved data quality (no mention in Eurostat reports)
Component 5. General management and quality	1A. INDIVIDUAL OBJECTIVES (LEARNING) 1.Top management familiar with all aspects of implementation of the QM system. INDICATORS: • Trained top management and staff in 3 levels; operative unit (5 people), department representatives (about 20) and others (2) by late 2013.	2. INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE 1. Better organisation at SORS (communication with staff, staff better informed, etc.) 2. Introduction and implementation of new and improved standards and procedures. 3. Introduction of quality indicators and monitoring of statistical	3. INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS 1. Better productivity at SORS and shortened period of statistical production and increased human capacity (1) 2. Standardized data production and more working time gained for other activities.	4. REACHING INSTITUTIONAL GOALS 1. Greater satisfaction of end users, and of staff. 2. More confidence in SORS by users. 3. Decision making of end users based on better quality and completely reliable data.

Questions	Indicators and assessment criteria			
	1B. INSTITUTIONAL OUTPUTS (PRODUCTION) – OBJECTIVES: 1. Adoption of action plan for implementation of quality management in 3 components: a) organizational changes (1), b) quality indicators (3), and c) quality reports (4) INDICATORS: • Organisational changes plan adopted and approved by early 2014. • Defined quality indicators for statistical processes (3) by late 2013. • Implementation of “Quality report in statistical surveys” (4) from 2014.	production (3). 4. To perform a review of business processes by December 2013 and their redesign by end of 2014. 5. To introduce a revised performance assessment by end of 2013. INDICATORS: • Number of new and improved procedures per period, number of new and improved standards per period) (1,2). • Percentage of new indicators per statistical survey/area. • Number of quality reports introduced per period. • Implementation of the organisational changes plan by 2014.	3. Better and standardised quality of statistical indicators (2,3) 4. Completeness of statistical reports (4) 5. To improve the means of user interaction by end of 2014 INDICATORS: • Total of days gained as consequence of shortened period of production and publication calculated from 2014. • Number of employee working days included in planned projects from 2014. • Less time spent on dealing with user requests.	4. Harmonisation with EUROSTAT standards and implementation of recommendations from Eurostat commissioned reports as per the schedule adopted. INDICATORS: • User and staff satisfaction indices reach values of 4 and 90% respectively by 2015. • Number of visitors to the web site rise by year. • Number of requests for data and indicators rise by year. • Positive reviews by monitoring missions especially by those commissioned by Eurostat.
	ASSESSMENT • Top management and staff trained in quality management as planned – difficult to assess whether skills have been absorbed and staff is “familiar” with QM system • Organisational plan with changes has not been adopted as planned • Quality report – and quality indicators – are being adopted but not as planned	ASSESSMENT • “Better” organisation at SORS difficult to assess – no evidence available • “New” standards and procedures difficult assess – no evidence available • ‘Number of’ and ‘percentage of’ are not indicators: a number must be specified to measure targets and progress achieved! • No organisational changes plan implemented as planned (this is the same indicator as under 1B)	ASSESSMENT • Effectiveness difficult to assess in terms of shortened periods dedicated to tasks and standardised quality – self-assessment of beneficiaries is positive • ‘Number of’ is not an indicator: a number must be specified to measure targets and progress achieved! • ‘Less time’ cannot be compared without a baseline value	ASSESSMENT • No evidence available on satisfaction • No evidence available on harmonisation with Eurostat standards • No evidence available of positive reviews by monitoring missions • No evidence available on ‘rise’ in numbers – target should have been specified to measure progress against baseline values
Additional Component. Surveys on the use of	1A. INDIVIDUAL OBJECTIVES (LEARNING)	2. INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE Not available	3. INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS	4. REACHING INSTITUTIONAL GOALS

Questions	Indicators and assessment criteria			
ITC including the "Green ITC" module	Not available INDICATORS: - Not available 1B. INSTITUTIONAL OUTPUTS (PRODUCTION) – OBJECTIVES: Not available INDICATORS: - Not available	INDICATORS: Not available	Not available INDICATORS: Not available	Not available INDICATORS: Not available
	ASSESSMENT No assessment possible	ASSESSMENT No assessment possible	ASSESSMENT No assessment possible	ASSESSMENT No assessment possible
Q.2.2. Have the right activities carried out to bring about the desired outcomes?	Listed OUTPUTS	Our assessment on ACTIVITIES listed in Project Progress Reports		
Component 1.1 Environmental Statistics – Emissions to air statistics	OUTCOMES A. Updating/enlarged database by CLRTAP/UNFCCC requests until 2015/16. B. Developed cooperation (instruments for validation) with other producers and users of emissions-to-air statistics. OUTPUTS FROM ACTIVITIES C. Publishing of more and better quality indicators in emissions-to-air statistics. D. Five of SORS staff trained on emissions-to-air methodology E. Working groups with stakeholders created. F. Extended calculation of emissions-to-air coverage (enlarged data base with additional sectors responsible for emissions to air) ACTIVITIES PLANNED G. Short term missions from SCB.	- Outputs have generally been targeted to bring about the desired outcomes. - Project design was weak. Activities as listed in PD were too general – not clear purpose of study visits nor that of “missions from SCB”, whether for training sessions or workshops – also, not clear which activities would produce what outputs. - Not clear how listed activities would then generate the expected outputs. - Not all outputs have been achieved.		

Questions	Indicators and assessment criteria	
	H. Study visits to Sweden. I. Meetings with representatives from government bodies. J. Participation at international meetings.	
Component 1.2 Environmental Statistics – Material Flow Accounts (MFAs)	OUTCOMES A. Inclusion of MFA into the annual and 5 year plan of the SORS B. Data on MFA fully compliant with the EU requirements OUTPUTS FROM ACTIVITIES C. Calculation methods improved and applied D. Publication on MFA based indicators E. MFA data disseminated in the SORS database F. Requested data sent to Eurostat G. MFA and Sustainable development indicators based on MFA calculated ACTIVITIES PLANNED H. Short term missions from SCB. I. Study visits to Sweden. J. Meetings with representatives from government bodies. K. Participation at international meetings.	• Outputs have generally been targeted to bring about the desired outcomes. • Project design was weak. Activities as listed in PD were too general – not clear purpose of study visits nor that of “missions from SCB”, whether for training sessions or workshops – also, not clear which activities would produce what outputs. • Not clear how listed activities would then generate the expected outputs. • Not all outputs have been achieved.
Component 1.3 Environmental Statistics – Environmental Expenditures and Accounts (EEAs)	OUTCOMES A. Experimental production of emissions to air accounts used for internal purposes (testing the methodology, etc.) B. Data on environmental expenditure, compliant with the EU regulations, available for internal	• Outputs have generally been targeted to bring about the desired outcomes. • Project design was weak. Activities as listed in PD were too general – not clear purpose of study visits nor that of “missions from SCB”, whether for training sessions or workshops – also, not clear which activities would produce what outputs. • Not clear how listed activities would then generate the expected outputs. • Not all outputs have been achieved.

Questions	Indicators and assessment criteria	
	(contribution to national accounts), domestic (for policy makers) and international (requirements to Eurostat) use OUTPUTS FROM ACTIVITIES C. Two of SORS staff trained in methodology on air emissions accounts D. Data compilation methods improved and applied E. Publication on satellite accounts for emissions to air released F. Data regularly collected and available in the SORS database G. Requested data sent to Eurostat ACTIVITIES PLANNED H. Short term missions from SCB. I. Study visits to Sweden. J. Meetings with representatives from government bodies. K. Participation at international meetings.	
Component 2.1 Price statistics	OUTCOMES A. Regular reporting to Eurostat on full set of price indicators (IMPI, SPPI, PP) with high compliance B. Indices are used by other statistical units (mostly NA) as deflators in calculation of economic indicators (such as GDP) C. Strategy about using scanners for price collection developed and approved by top management OUTPUTS FROM ACTIVITIES D. Survey instruments adopted by relevant SORS bodies	• Outputs have generally been targeted to bring about the desired outcomes. • Project design was poor. Activities as listed in PD were too general – not clear purpose of study visits nor that of “missions from SCB”, whether for training sessions or workshops – also, not clear which activities would produce what outputs. • Not clear how listed activities would then generate the expected outputs. • Most outputs have been achieved.

Questions	Indicators and assessment criteria	
	E. Staff trained in EU methodology in relation to price statistics (such as new weights in agricultural price indices) F. Experimental indices (for SPPI, transport and agriculture) published G. New price indicators published regularly H. Staff aware of all pros and cons in relation to using scanners for price collection ACTIVITIES PLANNED I. Short term missions from SCB. J. Seminars and meetings with stakeholders – one per year including final meetings to present results. K. Remote expert assistance during Implementation of the work plan. L. Study visit to NSI of EU countries – sharing best practices. M. Participation at workshops and meetings organised by international organizations.	
Component 2.2 Business Tendency and Consumer Surveys (BTS)	OUTCOMES A. Production of 6 new indicators B. Collection efficiency (interviewers/days) C. Introducing new type of economic trend analyses in collaboration with other stakeholders (such as NBS and ministries) D. Survey results submitted to DG ECFIN from early 2013 OUTPUTS FROM ACTIVITIES	• Outputs have generally been targeted to bring about the desired outcomes, though outcomes are not clearly defined – e.g. what are the “six new indicators”? • Project design was not too specific. Activities as listed in PD were fine, though not clear which activities would produce what outputs. What kind of training was envisaged? On which topics? What kind of “additional surveys” would be implemented? • In some cases, outputs have not been achieved: composite index, staff trained on trend analysis • Workshops with stakeholders are not mentioned in activity lists • Data entry application not mentioned in activity lists • CATI centre has not been upgraded

Questions	Indicators and assessment criteria	
	E. Additional surveys implemented (Industry, Construction, Retail Trade) F. CATI centre upgraded G. Trained interviewers H. Composite index produced using improved methodology I. SORS staff trained in economic trend analysis and complex surveys technique ACTIVITIES PLANNED J. Study visits. K. Preparing the questionnaire. L. Building new CATI centre. M. Data entry application. N. Training of statisticians. O. Training of interviewers. P. Guidelines for interviews. Q. Workshop with stakeholders.	
Component 3. Social statistics – Time-Use Survey (TUS)	OUTCOMES A. Major existing TUS measures updated. OUTPUTS FROM ACTIVITIES B. Methodology for conducting Light TUS mastered by 10 SORS staff C. Software for data entry and data processing for LTUS developed by 6 SORS staff D. 36 interviewers for Light TUS trained by 6 SORS staff E. Light TUS fieldwork done in 2340 households F. Light TUS data processed and analysed by 20 SORS staff G. First Light TUS results	• Outputs have generally been targeted to bring about the desired outcomes, which assume building up on existing advancements in implementation of Time-Use Surveys • Project design was specific. Activities as listed in PD were fine. • Some outputs have been achieved (B, C, D). • Activities targeted to outputs E, F, and G were delayed and not completed. • Implementation and release of Light TUS results not achieved.

Questions	Indicators and assessment criteria	
	published in 1 press release on SORS website ACTIVITIES PLANNED H. Preparation of the methodology for the Light Time Use Survey. I. Preparation of the survey questionnaires and guide for interviewers. J. Training of interviewers. K. Conducting Light Time Use Survey (LTUS). L. Data processing and analysing of LTUS data. M. Missions from experts from SCB.	
Component 4. Statistical methodology	OUTCOMES A. Business survey's sampling error B. Business survey's response rate C. Keeping revised methodologies for key surveys in line with EU standards OUTPUTS FROM ACTIVITIES D. 20 staff trained in survey methodology (STAC course) E. All staff under 5 years of experience in sampling unit trained in various aspects of survey methodology. F. Number of business surveys with new or improved sampling methods applied. G. Use of improved Business Register in all sampling stages for business surveys. ACTIVITIES PLANNED H. Study visits.	• Outcomes are not well defined. The business survey's sampling error and response rate probably refer to availability of statistics in output releases. Not clear what "revised methodologies" for which "key surveys" would be kept in line with EU standards. • Statistics in Action courses aimed at training staff of survey methodology (Output D): general survey methodology basics or something more specifically targeted? • What "number of business surveys" are referred to in Output E? • All activities have been completed (according to Progress Reports). However, no information is available on the content of such activities.

Questions	Indicators and assessment criteria	
	I. Short term expert missions from SCB J. Provision of journals, books and software. K. Attendance at relevant seminars (STAC, survey methodology, etc.). L. Comparisons between existing national statistics and EU regulations.	
Component 5. General management and quality	OUTCOMES A. User satisfaction index improved: relevance, accuracy, timeliness and punctuality, coherence, comparability, accessibility and clarity. B. Implementation of the organisational changes plan C. Number of quality reports produced /ratio to surveys conducted D. Number of visitors to the web site rise by year OUTPUTS FROM ACTIVITIES E. Analysis and dissemination of user survey results. F. Organisational changes plan adopted and approved. G. Total user satisfaction index (8 aspects) developed. H. Quality report becomes a standard output from statistical surveys. I. Systematic product documentation by EU standard. J. Trained top management and staff in 3 levels; operative unit (5 people), department representatives (about 20) and others (2). ACTIVITIES PLANNED K. Training on different levels (1) L. Preparation of Action plan for	• Outcomes are not always well defined. Outcome 5.A refers to data user satisfaction – is there a data user survey? Outcome 5.B refers to an “organisational changes plan”, but it is not clear what the plan is. Outcomes 5.C and 5.D are not specific: what numbers are they referring to? • Output 5.E refers to data user surveys, which are evidently implemented (where about?). • Output 5.F refers to an “organisational changes plan” to be adopted and approved (by SORS, presumably), but it does not explain what the plan is about. • Activities are generally targeted to outputs (but it is not clear what activity 5.K is about). • Most activities have not been completed or have been delayed (according to Progress Reports), with the exception of those leading to Output 5.J. However, it is not clear which activities led to this output, and what its actual content has been.

Questions	Indicators and assessment criteria	
	quality management (QM) (2,3,4). M. Analysing EU practise (EUROSTAT countries) (2,3,4). N. Selection and definition of quality indicators (5). O. Preparation of guidelines for quality reports in all surveys (6). P. Preparation of general guidelines Q. SIDA/SCB support for missions and visits.	
Additional Component. Surveys on the use of ICT including the "Green ICT" module	OUTCOMES A. Broadening the range of the ICT survey by including the "Green ICT" module. B. Contribution to the Serbian Government's strategy in relation to pillars VI and VII of the Digital Agenda for Europe (DAE) C. Providing Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Energy and Environment with accurate data on the use of ICT in schools and local authorities and its environmental aspects. D. Providing relevant governmental institutions and other departments at SORS with the data to be used in strategies and projects on sustainable development. E. Implementation of the organisational changes plan F. Number of quality reports produced /ratio to surveys conducted G. Number of visitors to the web site rise by year	• Outcomes are well defined. • Outputs are defined in terms of activities • Activities are generally targeted to outputs • Most activities have been completed. However, as such it appears that they were part of the Grant agreement rather than being part of the project implementation under BPO and SCB responsibility

Questions	Indicators and assessment criteria	
	OUTPUTS FROM ACTIVITIES H. Training of the interviewers I. The survey methodology mastered by 3 staff and applied J. Survey fieldwork completed K. Survey data published and analysed L. Requested data sent to the relevant Government institutions ACTIVITIES PLANNED M. Training of the interviewers N. Training on survey methodology O. Survey fieldwork P. Publication of survey results	
Q.2.3. Was SCB assistance appropriate in supporting the project implementation? If not, are there immediate lessons learned to be applied?		• Assistance was generally perceived as technically appropriate in terms of effectiveness of the knowledge transfer, from the point of view of the desired outcomes to be achieved and the expected outputs. • However, not all activities were completed and not all planned outputs have been delivered, and this was generally not because of SCB support's lack of appropriateness. • The project has generally been behind on its work plan, mostly because: • Mismatch in the availability of SCB experts and availability of dedicated SORS staff • SORS absorption capacity and availability of staff • Components 5 has not been sufficiently engaging for beneficiaries – need revise goals
Q.2.4. Have project activities supported the development of SORS in a complementary and positive way?		• The key project activities – workshops, study visits – have been somehow effective in supporting the development of capacity at SORS • However, some of the activities have been implemented in areas not perceived as “core”
Q.2.5. Was the project management model effective to achieve the stated objectives?		• The project management model was based on SCB relying on a project office based in Belgrade (BPO), which coordinated all activities and was the interface between SCB and SORS. The involvement of SORS in managing the project was somewhat limited. Thus, not all stated objectives were not achieved as they were probably beyond the direct control of the project management.

Questions	Indicators and assessment criteria
Impact	Response/Assessment
Q.3.1. What are the planned and unplanned long-term effects of the program on society – i.e. data users and beneficiaries – as a whole?	- Positive effects will be felt in the area of environmental statistics – an area in which SORS will need to invest more in the future, by improving its cooperation with the National Environmental Protection Agency. - Also, permanent positive effects will be felt in the area of price statistics and business tendency surveys, where the changes brought by the project were consistent and considerable. - Some permanent effects will also be felt in the area of statistical methodology, where some capacity has been developed thanks to the project.
Q.3.2. What observable measures or indicators can be identified (to evaluate impact)?	Good indicator of impact will be the perceived utility of price statistics, environmental statistics and business (short-term) statistics by data users. Unfortunately, no baseline data available to measure impact.
Q.3.3. What has been the quality of the statistics produced and how has it been used?	Difficult to assess. Need full-fledged review.
Sustainability	Response/Assessment
Q.4.1. Are the project outcomes and activities targeted to those outcomes likely to continue after the program has finished?	It depends on the component:
Component 1.1. Emissions-to-air statistics	- Changes have been introduced and statistics complied with SMIS database. - Work on emissions-to-air statistics has been interrupted, taken over by EPA. Yet, institutional framework of cooperation between SORS and EPA is needed. - Capacity at SORS has now been developed. Work on component is now sustainable.
Component 1.2. MFAs	- Changes have been introduced and MFA statistics are now being regularly published and sent to Eurostat. - Capacity at SORS has now been developed. - Work is still incomplete, particularly on Sustainable Indicators. Work on component is not yet sustainable. Mandatory part appears complete, voluntary reporting remains. Certain SDI's have been developed.
Component 1.3. EEAs	- Changes have been introduced, but work on EU-compliant data is still incomplete. - Satellite accounts have been developed, but are still experimental. - Capacity at SORS has been developed, but more assistance is needed. Work on component is not yet sustainable.
Component 2.1. Price statistics	- Changes have been introduced in the planned new price indices and EU-compliant data are now regularly published. - Capacity at SORS has now been developed. Work on component is now sustainable.
Component 2.2. Business tendency and consumer surveys	- New survey has now been introduced and EU-compliant results are now regularly published. - Capacity at SORS has now been developed. Work on component is now sustainable.
Component 3. Time-use survey	- Light TUS has now been introduced but fieldwork needs to be completed. - Capacity at SORS has now been developed but financial assistance is still needed for sustainability.

Questions	Indicators and assessment criteria
Component 4. Statistical methodology	- Improvements in calculation of business survey sampling errors and response rates have now been introduced. - Capacity at SORS has now been developed. In targeted areas, sustainability has been achieved.
Component 5. General management and quality	- Data user satisfaction not yet achieved. - Organisational changes plan not yet implemented. - Work on quality reports attached to surveys has been done, but more is needed. - Capacity at SORS has now been developed. Work on component is not yet sustainable and more assistance is needed.
Additional Component. Survey on use of ICT	- ICT survey has been done, but whether it was a one-off survey it remains to be decided. - Capacity at SORS has now been developed but financial assistance is still needed for sustainability.
Q.4.2. Is SORS reasonably able to continue develop its organisation and activities?	Only in selected areas – price statistics, BTS, some environmental statistics – but more work is generally needed in order to make SORS able to continue develop its organization.
Q.4.3. To what extent are the achievements a result of institutional change in SORS' organisational structure, management, standard operational procedure as well as financial operating procedures to form lasting changes and improvements?	- The project achievements were the result of selected interventions in targeted areas. - No institutional change was generally introduced as a result of the project intervention.
Organizational learning	Response/Assessment
Q.5.1. What was the capacity development 'model' underlying the project implementation logic and the intended knowledge transfer put in place?	- The capacity development model underlying the project implementation logic was fundamentally based on what may be called "indirect" transfer of knowledge: participation to workshops by the beneficiary, together with study visits and some hands-on (albeit limited) technical assistance given by experts from SCB on the ground. This model seems to have worked in some cases and components, like price statistics, business tendency survey, some environmental statistics. When it did not work in full it was either because the involvement of SORS was not as thorough and systematic or because considerable more assistance would be needed. - The model of workshops + study visits "on demand" may work when there is a potential already developed and an emergent need. If coordination and the matching of availability of experts and the recipients is not guaranteed, it may fail to deliver and lead to the desired results.
Q.5.2. Should new components be considered and if so can the project remain within its stated overall objectives?	A new project should certainly focus on those areas that still need more assistance, when the "job done is unfinished". New components should be considered only in as much as they are well framed within the National Strategy of SORS.

Questions	Indicators and assessment criteria
Q.5.3. Should a future program focussing on different issues be considered by Sida if a new Country Strategy for Serbia gives room for it?	• Various areas within SORS certainly need assistance, even considering the support provided by the EU with IPA funding. There are issues that are not covered by IPA projects even within the realm of given statistical areas where IPA funds do provide assistance. A better coordination, rather than a too rigid division of labour with IPA assistance would be more fruitful. For instance, instead of opening up to completely new issues, it would possibly more effective to concentrate on those priority areas that are considered for SORS fundamental in terms of compliance with EU standards.
Q.5.4. Is it recommended that Sida should fund a next and final project period 2017-2020?	• More assistance should certainly be considered for those areas and components where the objectives of the project have not been achieved.
Q.5.5. If Sida will fund a next project phase 2017-2020, what could be the management set-up and content of the project?	• A new project could have a different management set up, as well as a new main contractor, which has not always proved flexible to accommodate SORS' needs and strategy.
Q.5.6. How should it be organised, in order to be sustainable?	• The project could have a partner that provides more specific and targeted technical assistance. •
Q.5.7. Can and should SCB continue as a long-term partner to SORS in this respect?	• Overall SCB has proved not too flexible in terms of expertise and timing of the intervention. • Experts should be hired on the market
Q.5.8. What were the main risks and what efforts have been made to minimize the effect of unforeseen risks that have arisen during implementation?	• The project •



Evaluation of the Sida-funded Partnership in Statistics: A cooperation project between Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORS) and Statistics Sweden (SCB)

The evaluation focused on the OECD/DAC criteria relevance, effectiveness, impact, sustainability and organizational learning. This report presents the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation of the Sida-funded Partnership in Statistics cooperation between the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORS) and Statistics Sweden (SCB) conducted during the period September – November 2016.

There are some factors of success: Sida's flexibility on project implementation and the possibility of tailoring activities to the partners' needs; The presence of SCB experts has provided a sense of continuity to the partners and SCB have generally provided good expertise.

There are also hindrances and drawbacks including: The project is quite behind on several fronts, both in terms of deliverables and in terms of budget spent; Lack of personnel for specific activities and the availability of SCB experts when needed; The lack of an annual plan with a detailed calendar has led to activities to be delayed or cancelled and; No systematic monitoring of activities

Recommendations: A more precise identification of priorities and areas of intervention; More precise monitoring framework; Systematic tracking of activities with accurate annual planning and calendar; and Greater synergy with the current project of assistance to statistics at the regional level, which would greatly benefit from a project targeted at SORS as it has in the recent past.