

WHY ARE STATISTICS IMPORTANT?

Statistics are important because they give us a picture of where we stand in different areas and how we compare with others, both locally and on a European basis. Statistics often lie at the basis of important decisions that are made in different areas, whether the economy in general, employment or even EU funding. However, statistics must be accurate and reliable.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL STATISTICS

Malta is adopting the European System of Accounts (ESA) to compile its Gross Domestic Product (GDP). This project includes the adoption of a new classification for all Government finance transactions.

Preparations are underway to introduce the Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices (HICP). The HICP will provide internationally comparable Consumer Price Indices and Inflation Rates for Malta. Such inflation rates are important in assessing eligibility for membership of the single European currency, the Euro.

With the removal of certain customs procedures upon membership, a new trade statistics system known as INTRASTAT and EXTRASTAT will be introduced. INTRASTAT will provide trade data on intra-EU trade while EXTRASTAT will provide statistics on trade with non-EU countries. Technical assistance has been sought in this field.

The collection of tourism statistics is being changed to a survey system at exit points. The COS is carrying out its domestic tourism survey alongside the household budgetary survey.

BUSINESS STATISTICS

The compilation of statistics on the manufacturing and construction sectors, the wholesale and retail trades, and on hotels, restaurants and travel agencies are already in place and in line with EU requirements. Business data collection is expected to be widened to include the financial and insurance sectors before the end of the year. A Business Register has been compiled.

TRANSPORT AND ENERGY

Statistics on the transport of goods by air and sea are in line with EU standards, but not those on the transport of goods by land which will be in place in 2001. Statistics on energy are also being finalised.

AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES

New statistical enquiries on land-use and livestock have been launched. A register of all agricultural enterprises has also been compiled. In addition, the COS is in the process of compiling Economic Accounts for Agriculture (EEA), Input and Output Price Indices and Agriculture Labour Input indicators.

OTHER AREAS

The COS is also working on the compilation of statistics on other areas such as culture (including theatres, libraries, museums, musical groups, theatre groups among others) the audio-visual sector, research and development and the environment.

SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL STATISTICS

The COS already has an adequate range of statistical information on areas such as demography, health, traffic accidents and education. Data on migration, the labour force, including costs and earnings, as well as health and safety at work need some adjustment. With the help of Eurostat, the COS will adopt these changes by the end of 2002.

COMPARING OUR LEVEL OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Malta joined a European Comparison Programme for Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) purposes. The PPPs are used to help us compare our Gross Domestic Product (GDP) statistics - our level of economic development - to those of other EU Member States and Candidate Countries. This set of statistics is necessary in determining Malta's eligibility for EU funding.

COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE COS AND EUROSTAT

The European Union has a special agency for the collection and compilation of statistics. This agency is known as Eurostat. The EU also has a common system of statistical compilation in all Member States.

In Malta, we have the Central Office of Statistics of Malta (COS) which in the near future is expected to become the Malta Statistics Authority. In compiling statistics, the COS in Malta has already adopted a number of classification systems used in the EU. Others will be introduced by the end of 2002. The COS is being provided with technical support made available under the Malta-Eurostat Agreement on Statistical Cooperation. This agreement covers technical assistance, statistical training and other operational expenditures.