

## **First World Statistics Day: 20.10.2010**

### **Statistics are Produced for Every Member of Society as a Public Good**

By George Chr. Georgiou  
Director  
Statistical Service of Cyprus

The 20<sup>th</sup> of October, 2010 has been declared by the United Nations, the first World Statistics Day; a day to celebrate the many contributions and achievements of official statistics. Ban Ki-Moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations, has urged the world leaders to make this historic World Statistics Day a success by acknowledging and celebrating the role of statistics in the social and economic development of our societies and by dedicating further efforts and resources to strengthening national statistical capacity. The UN feel that this day acknowledges the service provided by the global statistical system at national and international level, and hope that it will help strengthen the awareness and trust of the general public in official statistics

Today in our societies and governments official statistics are playing an increasing role. In a broad sense user needs exercise the pressure for the production of statistical information, because statistics are used in today's society not only for all kinds of evidence-based policy-making and monitoring of policy implementation, but also for decision at business level, for research purposes as well as to inform society about ongoing developments. Of course statistics are produced for every member of society as a public good, but it is equally true, that governments and political decision makers are an important target for us, that is for statistical agencies, to provide them with a high quality statistical information service.

Ever since the day of the foundation of the Republic of Cyprus, the Statistical Service has been restructured and reorganised several times, in an effort to adapt to the new order of things. The most recent restructuring process took place during the preparatory procedures for accession to the EU, when the Department of Statistics and Research, as the Service was called at the time, was responsible for the harmonization of the Statistical System of Cyprus with the European Statistical System. The difficult task was successfully completed and the overall process resulted

in an increased interest in official statistics. Statistics gradually became a daily reference and the Statistical Service of Cyprus began to play a more important role in society. High quality statistical data are now readily available and are routinely used in public debate, policy formulation and business decisions.

Official statistics are of vital importance in policy making and planning, helping users to obtain an overall picture of specific areas of interest. The role of statistics becomes even more essential in periods of economic slowdown, such as the one we are currently going through, since they serve as a tool to monitor the course of the economy by quantifying what is observed around us. It could therefore be argued that official statistics form a powerful tool, utilised for the eventual improvement of the quality of life, thus benefiting society as a whole.

The goal of the Statistical Service of Cyprus is not only the mere publication of official statistics. We have always aimed to produce useful and meaningful, high-quality statistics and publish them on a timely basis, taking into account the users' needs. Over the years, we have always strived to produce high-quality statistics, remaining impartial and objective, employing sound methodological techniques and maintaining our integrity. In the framework of this policy, CYSTAT has adopted the European Statistics Code of Practice, thus committing to an approach towards high-quality statistics. This reaffirms the core values of service, integrity and professionalism of the Statistical Service of Cyprus.

The European Statistics Code of Practice defines amongst other things, principles on professional independence, quality commitment, statistical confidentiality, impartiality and objectivity, sound methodology, appropriate statistical procedures, non-excessive burden on respondents, cost effectiveness, accuracy and reliability, timeliness and punctuality. At CYSTAT we work hard so that all procedures followed for the production of statistics are governed by these principles.

Of course, the production of high-quality statistics would never be feasible without the cooperation of the data providers. The increased demand in statistics, especially through this period of economic recession, requires that we request data from households or enterprises on a

frequent basis, thus, increasing the respondent burden. However, at CYSTAT we are doing our best to decrease this burden, by merging surveys with similar variables, by sending trained interviewers to obtain the data instead of requesting them directly from the respondents and by using more administrative sources where possible and available.

Nonetheless, the truth is that without the valuable cooperation of the respondents, the work of CYSTAT in publishing high-quality statistics on time would be much more difficult. Furthermore, I would like to stress the fact that in many cases, especially for the collection of economic data, the task of providing the data falls on the accountants or audit firms of the individuals or enterprises in the sample. Their cooperation so far has been invaluable, enabling the collection of accurate and reliable data. Therefore, I would like to emphasize the importance of their continued participation in surveys conducted by the Statistical Service of Cyprus. This is greatly appreciated and above all, it serves the public interest.

Continuous technological developments and new needs for statistical information make the work of CYSTAT more and more demanding. Thus, CYSTAT has to continuously evolve, redesigning the methodologies used according to the new technological advancements. At this point, I would like to briefly refer to the forthcoming Census of Population ,which will be conducted with the 1<sup>st</sup> of October 2011 as the reference day and the innovations being introduced with it. Firstly, an integrated digitalised system of all the streets in the Government controlled areas of Cyprus and secondly, the use of netbooks and an electronic questionnaire for the collection of the data. Of course, it would be an omission not to refer to the website of the Statistical Service of Cyprus, which is upgraded on a regular basis so that it becomes more user-friendly and useful.

Lastly, I would like to extend our commitment to all users of official statistics that they will always benefit through the quality of our work.