

INTERNATIONAL
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**STATISTICS
DENMARK**

STATISTICS FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Statistics Denmark has over the past nine years implemented three EU Twinning projects in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In April 2020, we completed the third project called "Support to the reform of the statistics system in Bosnia and Herzegovina". The project was implemented over 27 months from January 2018 to April 2020.

The aim of the project was to strengthen the statistical system in Bosnia and Herzegovina and to increase the number of statistics harmonised with EU standards.

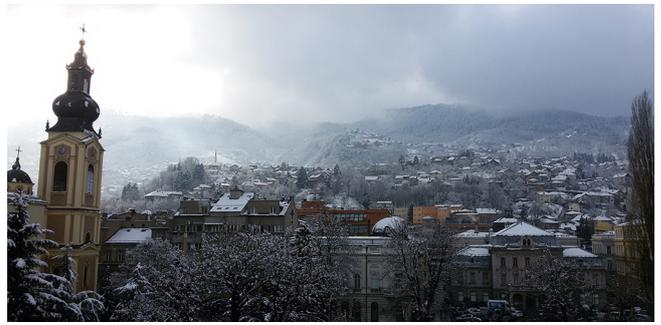
The beneficiary institutions were:

- Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BHAS)
- Central Bank of Bosnia and Herzegovina (CBBH)
- Institute for Statistics of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FIS)
- Republika Srpska Institute of Statistics of (RSIS)

In total, 72 expert missions to Bosnia and Herzegovina and 9 study visits to EU member states were implemented by 50 experts from the national statistical institutions of Denmark, Croatia, Finland and France. Likewise, a large number of staff from the beneficiary institutions was actively involved in the project.

The results of the project are manifold but to name some of them:

- An experimental version of regional accounts, which follows EU guidelines, was produced. This also means that indicators on for example the GDP have been calculated to show economic activity and income conditions in the regions of Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- A 5-year development plan on how to improve the statistical business register was developed in order to meet future requirements of the EU and to improve the information available in the current register. Work was also undertaken regarding large and complex enterprise groups such as profiling and linking legal units.



Sarajevo, the view from our office. Photo: Statistics Denmark

- Bosnia and Herzegovina had never before produced the index on producer prices in civil engineering construction of main roads, highways, tunnels and bridges. The data was collected and the index was produced and published with the support of the project.
- Likewise, Bosnia and Herzegovina had never before produced the price index for the service industry "Architectural and engineering activities and other technical consultancies". This index was also produced and published with the support of the project.
- The project has supported the production of statistics on tourism of residents in Bosnia and Herzegovina e.g. information on the most visited countries, length of the holiday and means of transportation.
- Together with the Central Bank, a Quality Report on Balance of Payment to the European Statistical System was produced. Furthermore, quarterly statistics on international investment positions was published for the first time.
- A mapping exercise was conducted to identify the availability of administrative data which can be used for the production of statistics in the future. Also, efforts were made to use more administrative data for the annual structural business statistics in order to reduce the reporting burden on companies.
- Finally, staff from all four beneficiary institutions received training in the use of R for processing of data.

For more information about the project and its results, please [click here](#).

WHEN WE ALL CHANGED - EXPERIENCES FROM MOVING OUR WORK ONLINE

On the evening on March 11 2020, the Danish Prime Minister announced that all government employees not involved in critical tasks should work from home due to the COVID-19 pandemic. For the last 20 years, the International Consulting unit at Statistics Denmark has perfected a methodology based on short-term working visits by experts to the countries we work with. Suddenly, the most important task was cancellation of activities, air tickets and hotel reservations. Then slowly emerged the realization that we had to learn how to work "remote" for a foreseeable future. However, neither our partners nor we could re-start our capacity building activities immediately. The first priority was for the day-to-day statistical production to continue. The second priority was to ensure that new and experimental statistics to follow the consequences of the COVID-19 was made available. This meant that capacity building activities were not a priority for Statistics Denmark nor the countries we work with.

But slowly the required equipment became available and everyone adapted one way or the other to the new normal of working remotely, and we started having expert "missions" using Zoom as the collaboration tool. Colleagues across countries began meeting each other again, not in meeting rooms but connecting from living room to living room. Or connecting from their own homes in Denmark to meeting rooms at our partners as they returned to their office buildings before we did.

The travel restrictions and the use of Zoom have certainly disrupted our previous working methodology. Earlier we had intensive four or five working days in the countries and a break of two to three months until the next activity. Now we implement our activities in many different formats from online meetings every second or third day over several weeks to three days in a row but with much shorter working days. One lesson is that online meetings have to be much shorter than real life meetings. We have also learned that we can obtain professional results, especially if people know each other from meetings in real life. Starting new projects or activities with people who have not met is more challenging.

As a trainer, it is extremely difficult to sense if the audience is getting the message or not. Although we may be facing a future with less travel and more online meetings, we will still need to meet face to face in order to really understand each other. For the time being, we need to learn how to small-talk and how to have breaks together on Zoom. Because COVID-19 has emphasized that questions are asked and knowledge is shared not only during presentations and technical discussions but by having coffee, biscuits and talking about life in general. Since project activities came to a halt for a couple of months, project plans have been revisited and some have been delayed. However, activities now take place online in all our projects. Even the Twinning project in Georgia, is now back on track and the activities planned many months ago now take place on Zoom. In most working groups now meets once a week instead of every second month.



Tbilisi, Georgia. Briefing via Zoom. Photo: Statistics Denmark

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