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Foreword

Statistics Netherlands drastically reshaped its organisational structure in 2000. The new structure is to be the fundament on which it will build in the coming years. Among other things, the restructuring of the Bureau comprised an almost complete change of the management team. The new board of directors has reformulated the medium range goals and ambitions for the Bureau, and developed a number of elementary strategies to achieve them. Statistics Netherlands looks different; its architecture is clearly visible.

The Bureau's staff and management are now faced with the task of filling in the new structure in the coming years. Although new elements have been introduced in the production processes, there is still a long way to go. At the same time, society is asking for more and new information, and wants it sooner. I am convinced that the increased creativity and effort this challenge requires of our Bureau will ultimately lead to a structure of which we can be proud.

This document outlines the strategy of Statistics Netherlands, which has been approved by the Central Commission of Statistics, for the coming years. The contents of the statistical programme will be set out in a separate document, specifying the work programme for 2002-2005. Together, the strategy and the multi-annual work programme will serve as a basis on which Statistics Netherlands will build in the coming years.

ir.drs. R.B.J.C. van Noort
Director General of Statistics
Voorburg/Heerlen May 2001

Mission



Statistics Netherlands was founded over a hundred years ago to collect, process and publish statistics on behalf of practice, policy and research. In the present relevant Dutch legislation this is still the core task of the Bureau. In Dutch society, where changing coalitions of political parties and interest groups all pursue the realisation of their own ideals, it is essential that factual and unbiased information is available and acceptable to all parties involved. The quality of

Vision		Statistics that count
Mission		to compile and publish undisputed, coherent up-to-date statistical information that is relevant for practice, policy and research
Position		provider of a public statistical information infrastructure
Primary processes		statistical production
Secondary processes		information development
Values		ICT and methodology
		organisational management / HRM
		reliable, responsible, enterprising, receptive to signals from society, co-operative, effective, quick, protection of individual identities

statistical information must be undisputed. Statistics must be made available quickly and must reflect the relationships between a wide range of developments and trends in society. Therefore the mission of Statistics Netherlands is:

- › *To compile and publish undisputed, coherent up-to-date statistical information that is relevant for practice, policy and research.*

Statistics that count

The main external factors affecting the work of Statistics Netherlands are the growing demand for statistical information, the increasing importance of the European Union, the globalisation of the economy and rapid developments in the area of information and communications technology. These trends and their consequences for Statistics Netherlands' policy have been taken as starting points to formulate the ambitions and the position of the Bureau in the coming years.

Trends in society

Society is becoming more pluriform and more complex. New developments are occurring ever faster, but at the same time are less predictable. Policy is increasingly based on figures. These trends can be observed both nationally and internationally, and are leading to an increased demand for information.

Government policy needs to be monitored objectively with regard to its effectiveness. Availability of information, including statistics, is a prerequisite for an objective assessment and thus the demand for it is increasing. Although this trend is primarily visible at a national level, as policy-making shifts from national to European authorities, the demand for information in an international context is also growing. The formation of the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) and the subsequent information requirements of the European Central Bank (ECB) have had substantial consequences for statistical work: higher quality figures are required; figures must be made available fast; they must be able to provide further detail, indicate relationships and be authoritative.

Developments in ICT have made most administrative data and registrations in the public and the private sector available in electronic form, making it relatively easy to use them to compile statistics. This means that other information providers than statistical offices can compile these statistics. The added value of Statistics

Netherlands is that it has a broad knowledge and the technical means to produce objective and well-structured information from this enormous body of data. All developments in society are interwoven in some way, and Statistics Netherlands is in a unique position to produce the statistical information that shows how societal areas interact.

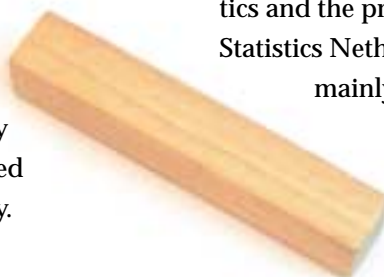
As administrations and registers increasingly constitute the sources for the statistical production at Statistics Netherlands, the nature of statisticians' work has moved towards confronting and matching data from different sources, including the combination of data from administrative sources with survey data. This change of work content has had substantial consequences for the internal organisation. Labour-intensive administrative processes for data entry and editing have become less relevant and the focus is shifting towards complex processes with statistical methodology and ICT systems. And as knowledge-intensive processes require profound expertise, as well as advanced techniques and methods, staffing requirements are also changing dramatically.

The national statistics office

In today's information society, undisputed information, figures and statistics that are universally accepted can be considered to be a basic infrastructure. Statistics Netherlands provides this information infrastructure as a public service. The information the Bureau compiles must be available to everybody at the same time.

In the Netherlands, Statistics Netherlands has always played a central part in the government supply of statistical information, and it intends to maintain and reinforce its position as the national statistics office.

Our ambition is to supply relevant information on a wide range of topics that are important in Dutch society. When Statistics Netherlands publishes figures, they must stimulate meaningful discussions about the issue they refer to, without this being detracted from by a debate on their reliability.



between these member states require the availability of standardised statistical information. The globalisation of the economy has fuelled the interest in internationally comparable information in the Netherlands, too, and international benchmarking has become very important for both the government and the private sector. Harmonised figures are needed to establish the relative position of the Netherlands in Europe and in the world.

Statistics Netherlands wants to reinforce its international position. Statistical work programmes will give priority to statistics that enable international comparison. The Bureau will work towards a greater involvement in the process for achieving international harmonisation of statistics and the preparation of European legislation. Statistics Netherlands is part of an international, mainly European, statistical network. A clear assignment of tasks to the national statistical agencies and to Eurostat is of crucial importance.

A stronger international position

Statistical information is becoming increasingly important in an international context, too, as more and more policy goals are being agreed on in European and global contexts. Statistical concepts and methods must be developed to monitor and steer such policies.

The European Union has not only created a demand for European figures; the significance of national statistics and even regional breakdowns is also increasing. National and regional figures are playing a crucial role in more and more policy processes, varying from setting the financial contribution per member state, to a distribution formula for regional allocation of funds. In addition, policies of the individual member states have to be assessed, and subsequent sanctions may have to be imposed. Institutional differences

The four main processes

Statistics Netherlands distinguishes two primary processes, statistical production and information development. In addition to these, two secondary, supporting processes are essential for the realisation of the strategic goals: information and communication technology (ICT) including methods development, and the management of the organisation, with a strong focus on human resource management (HRM). These are the four cornerstones of policy at Statistics Netherlands. The main strategic activities in the coming years for each of these processes are set out in the following sections.

Statistical production

The process of statistical production comprises the collection, matching, processing and analysis of data. The nature of these activities has changed substantially in the course of the years. Access to administrative sources, the knowledge and skills to match these and combine them with survey data and translate them into statistical concepts are basic to this process, while data protection is a crucial pre-condition.

Social and economic statistics databases

In the early 1990s, Statistics Netherlands already saw that traditional statistical methods would not be able to continue to meet the new demands facing statistics. Designing, conducting and processing surveys is a very time-consuming and expensive process for the Bureau, and places quite a burden on society. Added to this, companies and the public are less and less willing to participate in surveys. A logical alternative would be a large-scale statistical recycling of information available in society initially intended for other purposes. Therefore in the future, Statistics Netherlands will only collect its own data if this information is not available from other sources. With this as a basic principle the Bureau will meet the widely felt need to reduce the response and administrative burdens as much as possible. In recent years Statistics Netherlands has gained much experience in the use of administrative databases. By linking these databases with each other and with data from specifically targeted surveys, initial versions of the Social Statistics Database (SSB) and the Economic Statistics Database (ESB) have been created. These databases reveal the contours of a whole new production process. The SSB and the ESB will be developed further in the future. The databases contain a large part of the information available at Statistics Nether-



lands on persons, households, companies and institutions. In principle they will form the basis for much of the standard output of Statistics Netherlands, but they also constitute an ideal starting point for the compilation of integrated information systems and all types of customised research. When new information is requested, it is no longer necessary to set up a completely new data collection; the required analysis can be done on the basis of information already available in the databases. Statistics Netherlands will thus be able to respond to new demands more promptly and more flexibly.

Data protection

To carry out all these new activities with a sound methodological underpinning and with optimal technical measures a lot of research is still needed. In this research maximum attention must be paid to data security and the protection of individual identities. The 1996 Law on the central bureau of and central commission for statistics contains stringent stipulations in the area of confidentiality of data. Security is an area of continuing concern. In the publication of survey results, we ensure that no figures can be traced back to individual persons, households, companies or institutions. When databases are linked, too, very strict conditions

are necessary to protect individual identities. Statistics Netherlands collaborates closely with the national privacy authority in this respect, and has a solid reputation. As it uses state-of-the-art data protection techniques, Statistics Netherlands is the place par excellence where databases with sensitive information can be matched and linked safely, exclusively for statistical purposes.

Introduction of a quality management model

Extra attention will have to be paid to quality control in all changes in the production processes

and organisation of Statistics Netherlands. In the short term Statistics Netherlands will have to comply with the official national regulations that apply to information held by government authorities. In the longer term Statistics Netherlands has opted for a model based on the model of the European Foundation for Quality Management, focusing on both the output and on the total process (primary processes, supporting processes and management processes). This choice for EFQM puts Statistics Netherlands in line with Eurostat and the statistical offices of Sweden, United Kingdom, Germany and Portugal, that have also opted for this model.



Information development

The process that, for the sake of brevity, we shall call information development, comprises the development of statistical concepts, the combination and confrontation of outcomes in consistent statistical information systems (e.g. the National accounts), and the interpretation and the publication of these results. The significance of this process has increased considerably in the course of the years. Its success relies on knowledge of the societal agenda and contextual and subject-matter expertise.

Centre for policy-related statistics

Policy-makers are manifesting an ever-increasing hunger for statistical and other policy-related information. Parliament wants the effects of policy to be monitored more systematically, and the government plan From policy budget to policy account is illustrative in this respect; it aims to monitor the effects of government policy annually on the basis of pre-determined quantifiable goals. Naturally, policy-relevant statistics are a basic necessity for this process.

Because of recent budget cuts affecting all government departments, Statistics Netherlands' resources have not been able to keep up with the increased demand for policy-related information. Requested to do so by the Minister of Economic Affairs, the Central Commission for Statistics (CCS) did a study of just how much statistical information is produced outside Statistics Netherlands. This study revealed that government ministries are increasingly compiling their own policy-relevant information, including statistics for monitoring purposes, thus gradually pushing Statistics Netherlands away from its former position at the hub of this information supply. The Bureau's work programme will therefore have to gear itself more towards providing the information the government departments want. To achieve this, Statistics



Netherlands will have to have regular and intensive negotiations with the parties concerned to decide on programme priorities.

In accordance with a recommendation by the CCS, Statistics Netherlands aims to gradually transfer integrative statistical systems set up by individual departments to its own programme of activities.

To be able to respond better to the demand for policy-related information, Statistics Netherlands will set up a centre for policy-related statistics, where policymakers and analysts will be able to obtain performance indicators and ad hoc statistical analyses on the basis of information available at the Bureau. Provisions will be made for departments, parliament, planning agencies etc. to have access to Statistics Netherlands information in aid of in-depth analyses. If the available information is not sufficient, the centre will be able to advise on new statistical research to aid policy analysis. The centre will serve as a clear point of contact for government ministries and other customers. The activities of Statistics Netherlands will not include actual policy analysis.

Reinforcing our international position

The Treaty of Amsterdam laid down a formal basis for the provision of European statistical information. Since then, European policy has

resulted in a large number of new statistical guidelines. For example, the stability of the Economic and Monetary Union requires timely and reliable community statistics, and action is being undertaken to supply the ECB in particular with information. The Councils held in Lisbon and Stockholm subsequently led to a demand for structural performance indicators to monitor economic and social policy goals.

At the moment, European obligations account for 60 per cent of the work at Statistics Netherlands. The Bureau will have to put in a lot of effort to continue to meet the European demand for statistics. Statistics Netherlands will continue to give statistics resulting from European obligations priority in its work programme, but it will also strive to increase its involvement in setting up new EU statistics. Timeliness, restricting the information to what is strictly necessary, embedding the data in a coherent information system and a reduction of the response burden are the most important principles in this respect. All this will require an active approach towards Eurostat, the European Commission, the European Parliament and national government. European developments will have to be discussed with the relevant Dutch departments and institutions.

The division of tasks between national statistical offices and Eurostat should be based on the principle of subsidiarity. Data collection and production of national results are the domain of the national statistical institutes, and in this vision Eurostat's role is to co-ordinate and harmonise national statistics and to combine and aggregate information to provide overviews at a European level.

Flexibility and timeliness

The redesigned publication programme will be more flexible. It will provide prior knowledge of

information to be released, and will give more priority to the timeliness of the information. All output of Statistics Netherlands will be incorporated in the database StatLine, which will be the basis for all tables and publications. At the same time the entire database will be accessible free of charge via the Internet and in a user-friendly format. In this way Statistics Netherlands will fulfil its role as a public service.

Micro-databases will also be made available in a customer-friendly format for scientific and statistical research, although only under certain very strict conditions. Tailored information and additional analyses will be possible at an extra charge.



Bureau of standards

In order to make statistics, a set of definitions and classifications needs to be agreed on beforehand. With the growing harmonisation of statistics, the number of international agreements on standards is also increasing. Standards such as the definition of the concept of 'wage', the delimitation of the government sector, or the standard industrial classification are also useful in other areas of society, for example in legislation. Because of its central role in the supply of statistical information, its years of experience with the development and use of standards and its independent status, Statistics Netherlands is in a position par excellence to function as a knowledge centre in this area. Indeed its ambition is to act as a bureau of standards and thus promote the use of international standards, and more particularly European standards, so as to improve the international comparability of statistics.

ICT and methodology


Although information and communication technology (ICT) is not the core business of Statistics Netherlands, it is of vital importance for its activities. ICT is more than the physical infrastructure, computer networks and data connections with the outside world. Methodology and knowledge management is also inextricably bound up in these processes. Many methods developed at Statistics Netherlands eventually become standardised software tools.

Maintaining our place in the international forefront

Working with large integrated databases and linking and matching data from various sources places high demands on the organisation's technical infrastructure. New communications technology is playing an increasingly important role in the way Statistics Netherlands gets its basic information. Therefore in the coming years extra resources will be invested in the Bureau's technical infrastructure.

In the forthcoming process innovations, Statistics Netherlands will devote a lot of its efforts to the development of new methods and techniques. The whole data processing procedure requires specific software that is often not available on the market and has to be developed by Statistics Netherlands itself. To do this, obviously, a dedicated staff will have to be continually aware of new developments in the fields of methodology, statistical informatics and communications technology.

Statistics Netherlands owes its strong international position among other things to its authority on ICT in statistics. The software package Blaise, developed by Statistics Netherlands, is used by statistical offices all over the world, and its methods of environmental accounting have also put it in the forefront of international statistics. Statistics Netherlands wants to continue to



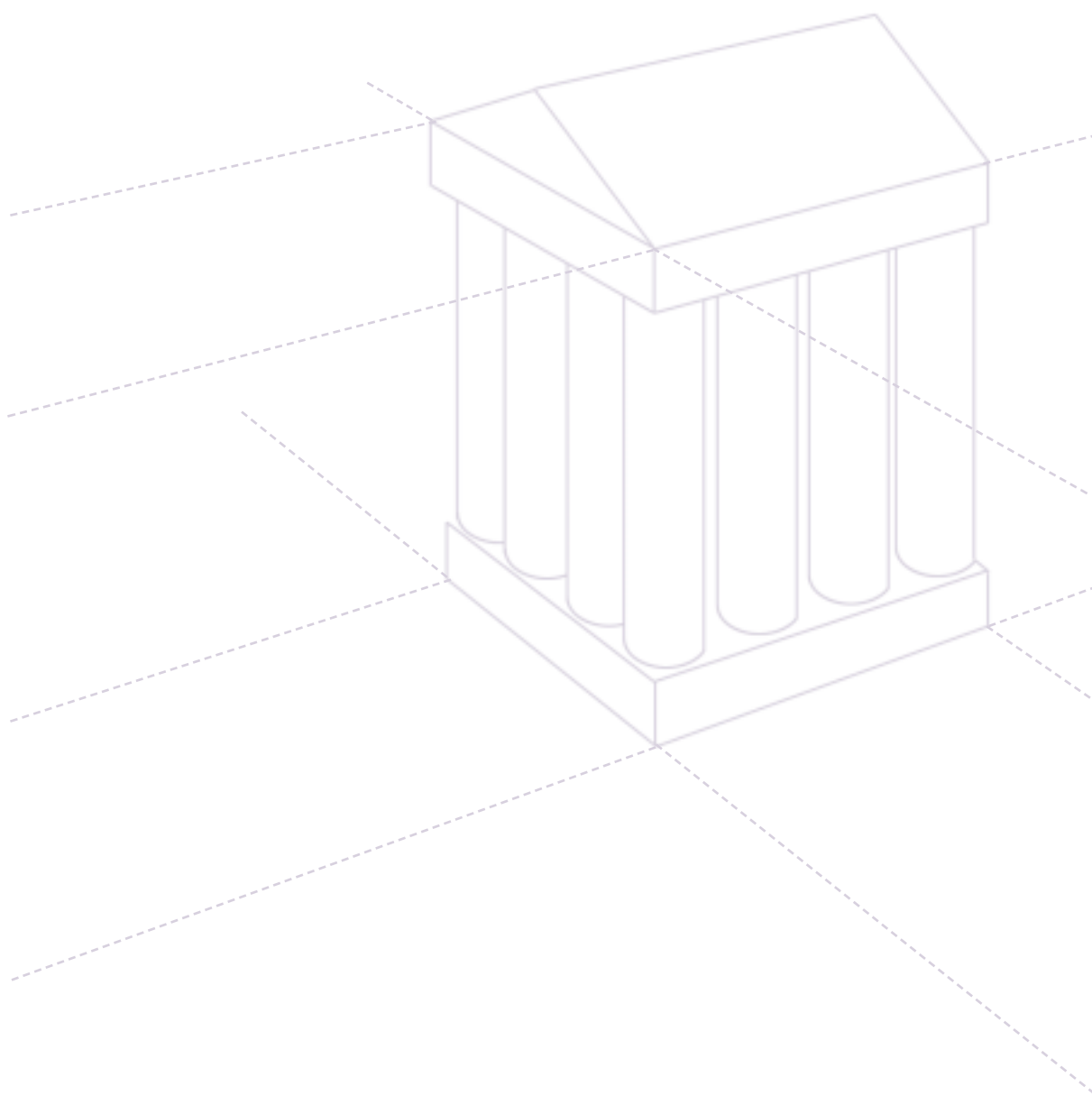
set the tone in this way and will therefore continue to dedicate itself to ICT and methodology.

Strategic research

Statistics Netherlands seeks to maintain its position as a trendsetting knowledge-based institution in the field of the provision of statistical information, both in a national and in an international perspective. Although methodological development and innovation are foremost in continuing this role, substantial knowledge of the subjects to which the statistics refer is also indispensable. Statistics Netherlands' role as a knowledge centre will be made stronger by among other things an intensification of the collaboration between the Netherlands organisation for scientific research (NWO), universities and other scientific and knowledge-based institutions such as the planning agencies and the Dutch central bank. An extensive programme of strategic research has been set up as a framework for such collaboration. The topics to be researched are directly related to the core activities of Statistics Netherlands and are of strategic significance for these activities. In the next few years projects will be set up for ten subjects. The expertise to be improved comprises more than methods and techniques of statistical

research. Statistics Netherlands makes statistics on nearly all aspects of society. The analysis and presentation of these data in their proper context therefore requires a deep insight into a very broad range of subject areas. This is reflected in the choice of the subjects for strategic research: the

new economy, price and volume measurement, social dynamics and the labour market, a system for coherent information on health care, methods to reduce and correct for selective non-response and the development of software tools for the application of advanced methods and techniques.



Organisation management/HRM

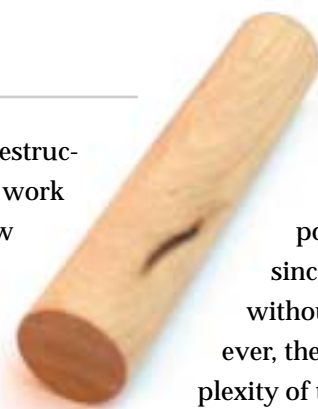
The organisation must be well equipped to manage the complicated and highly efficient production processes. The management of the organisation must be based on institutional processes that have proven they function well. The improvement of these processes is also very important with a view to the forthcoming change in the status of Statistics Netherlands to an autonomous government organisation (ZBO).

Statistics Netherlands wants to present itself as a high quality knowledge-based institution. In this capacity the knowledge of the staff is the most important production factor. Therefore to realise this status Statistics Netherlands will strive to be an attractive employer.

Employability will be a priority in HRM policy.

Improving effectivity and efficiency

Statistics Netherlands was radically restructured in 2000. The organisation of the work was adapted to accommodate the new production processes, thus creating the conditions for a substantial improvement in effectivity and efficiency. With this new structure, the budget goal imposed by Minister of Economic Affairs in April 1999, i.e. to structurally cut costs by more than 11 million euro, or 10 per cent a year, will be realised by 2003.



technology has meant that this process has already been in progress for the last twenty years. These developments have made it possible to reduce manpower capacity since the beginning of the 1980s, almost without having to cut back on output. However, the other side of this coin is that the complexity of the processes has increased enormously. Because it has become necessary to combine data from different sources, and to illustrate the relationships between trends in broad-coverage statistical information systems, increasing demands are being made on the skills of the staff.

The availability of statistics as a basic provision remains crucial, and a well-organised production process is indispensable for this. The increasing complexity of this process puts even more pressure on staff. For this reason priority will be given to upgrading the knowledge and skills of employees through a continuous process of training. The reorganisation last year included the creation of the CBS Academy to organise and supervise this process.

Knowledge and employability

In a professional organisation like Statistics Netherlands human resources are the most important asset. Staff is being given increasing independence and being asked to take more responsibility for their work. Statistics Netherlands is doing everything possible to equip itself adequately for the future.

The introduction to this document has already explained just how much the methods we use to collect information have changed and indeed are still changing. This is not a recent phenomenon; the advent of information and communications

More autonomy

In the summer of 2000 the Dutch Cabinet of Ministers decided to change the status of the Bureau and give it more administrative independence. This has many advantages, especially for the management of the organisation. The board of directors will have considerably more room for manoeuvre. The professional independence of Statistics Netherlands is presently laid down by law and will not change.

The role of the Central Commission for Statistics will be extended with tasks related to the supervision of the management of Statistics Netherlands. The Minister of Economic Affairs remains responsible for maintaining the conditions under which Statistics Netherlands can achieve its full potential, and the Bureau will continue to be funded from this department's budget. Furthermore, the Cabinet has decided that Statistics Netherlands should have better and free access to data registrations and should be involved as much as possible in community decision-making on statistical affairs. The legislation providing for this new autonomous status for Statistics Netherlands is expected to be submitted to the Dutch Lower Chamber in the autumn of 2001.

Colofon

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