

International conference on International Outreach and Coordination in National Accounts for Sustainable Growth and Development

Session 4 - Institutional capacity building in countries

Title: Strengthening of capacities in Spanish speaking countries

Institution: National Statistical Office of Spain

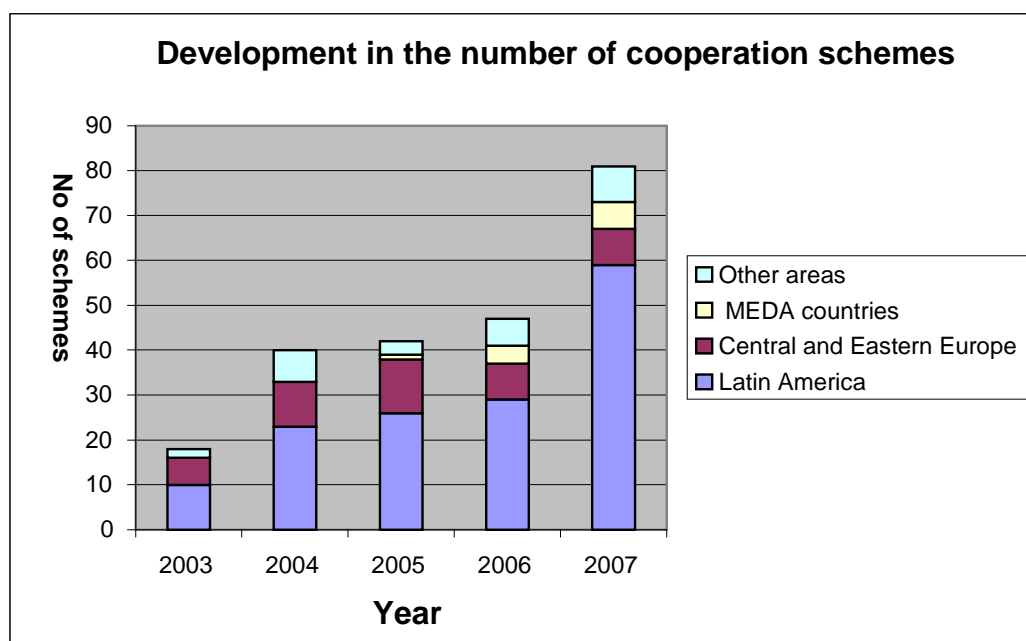
As part of the Spanish Cooperation Master Plan of the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation (MAEC), the National Statistical Office (INE) is responsible for technical cooperation with other countries in the field of official statistics.

Since November 2004, under a cooperation agreement with the International and Ibero-American Foundation for Public Administration and Policies (FIIAPP), the two institutions have jointly developed training projects for other countries and provided cooperation and international technical assistance. FIIAPP, the Foundation which reports to the MAEC, takes sole charge of the financial and administrative management of activities, while the INE is responsible for the strategic and technical focus of the cooperation.

Since 2006, the INE has produced a biannual newsletter on cooperation, which presents the technical cooperation schemes the INE has carried out in the previous six months. The newsletter is published in Spanish and English and is available at http://www.ine.es/ine/ine_fiiapp/bci_4_es.pdf

As an example, the budget allocated by the INE for 2007 totalled 734,200 euros, approximately 65% of which was assigned to Latin American countries. This budgetary appropriation is supplemented by resources from projects financed by international donor agencies.

During 2007 the INE conducted its cooperation activities mainly in three geographical areas: Latin America, MEDA countries, and Central and Eastern Europe.



Analysing the different areas in which the INE has carried out cooperation activities, from the beginning, due to their different contents, national accounts have been one of the most requested subjects, particularly by Latin American countries.

For example, every year the INE runs a two-week training course on national accounts for staff from the offices of the statistical offices and central banks of Latin America. Last year the twenty-seventh course was held. For approximately the last ten years, its aim has been to train the accounting officers from these countries to compile national accounts following the guidelines of the 1993 System of National Accounts, (SNA-93). Similarly, although for a shorter period, experts from the INE have travelled to the abovementioned geographical areas to hold workshops on national accounts and some of their subsystems (quarterly accounts, regional accounts and accounts of the institutional sectors). Looking at the different generations of accounting officers who have attended these courses, without any doubt the INE can be said to have made an important contribution to these countries currently compiling their national accounts to SNA-93 standards. It should also be remembered that this handbook was translated into Spanish by the INE of Spain.

Since 2005, these courses and workshops have included in the FIIAPP-INE training programme for statisticians from Latin America. In the same framework, in the last three years, numerous courses have been held on statistical indicators for decision-making in which the national accounts unit play an active part.

Besides continuing training activities, in recent years the INE has carried out a large number of ad-hoc cooperation activities with different countries on national accounts.

The challenges posed by these countries, for which they seek to cooperate with the INE, fall into two categories: institutional and technical.

From an institutional point of view, they have asked the INE for cooperation assistance, for example, in creating a national accounts department to allow the production of national accounts to be transferred from the Central Bank to the Statistical Office, or coordinating an operation for the rebasing of economic accounts in all areas.

On the other hand, given the great experience of the INE experts in national accounts, cooperation on technical subjects has been very diverse. In Latin American countries, perhaps the most serious shortcoming that has been identified is the scope of quarterly accounts and those aspects concerning analysis of the economic situation (cyclical indicators, short term analysis, etc.) There has been a great number of cooperation activities on this subject. In the Eastern European countries, the major difficulties that have been identified are related to fulfilling the requirements to transmit information demanded by their entry into the European Union. Therefore, compiling the public accounts and estimating their most representative balances (government deficit and government debt) in the context of the excessive deficit procedure, or preparing quality reports in regional accounts, which are of the greatest importance for the latest Financial Perspectives of the European Union, were issues for cooperation with these countries. Lastly, the lower technical and organisational level of the economic accounts of the MEDA countries has meant that they have encountered more difficulties. The INE of Spain has taken part in the MEDSTAT project, providing training on the estimation of economic accounts at constant prices.

Even so, from a technical point of view, the topic which has elicited the greatest number of cooperation requests to the INE of Spain relating to national accounts has been tourism satellite accounts. For many countries, knowing the weight of tourism in their economies is very important, and together with INE experts vast know-how on this subject, this has led to numerous cooperation activities which have been repeated several times by some countries. The geographical area from which these collaborations have been requested is also very wide: from Latin American, Eastern European and MEDA countries.

There were two most significant common technical problems experienced in these countries. On the one hand, the unavailability of sufficiently detailed and up-to-date economic accounts, and on the other, the shortage of basic statistics for estimating the flows relating to tourism. In both cases cooperation with the countries mentioned was intensive.

Lastly, the INE considers that the International Comparison Programme (ICP) is of the greatest strategic importance, and it therefore wants to play an active role in it in order to reach the necessary target of having purchasing power parities, enabling price levels between the different countries to be compared.

The INE wishes to consolidate the important effort made over the last four years to promote training and international cooperation activities, giving priority to the national accounts area.