

# Report on the Sector Review of Tourism Statistics in Armenia

Report prepared by Mr Pavel Vancura and  
Ms Dita Zemite

February 2017

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface.....	5
Executive summary.....	7
1. Assessment of results.....	9
1.1 Part 1: Institutional Environment.....	9
1.1.1 Principle 2: Mandate for data collection.....	9
1.1.2 Principle 3: Adequacy of resources.....	10
1.1.3 Principle 4: Commitment to Quality.....	10
1.1.4 Principle 6: Impartiality and Objectivity.....	11
1.2 Part 2: Statistical Processes.....	12
1.2.1 Principle 7: Sound methodology.....	12
1.2.2 Principle 8: Appropriate Statistical Procedures.....	15
1.2.3 Principle 9: Non-excessive burden on respondents.....	16
1.2.4 Principle 10: Cost Effectiveness.....	17
1.3 Part 3: Statistical Outputs.....	17
1.3.1 Principle 11: Relevance.....	17
1.3.2 Principle 12: Accuracy and Reliability.....	19
1.3.3 Principle 13: Timeliness and Punctuality.....	19
1.3.4 Principle 14: Coherence and Comparability.....	21
1.3.5 Principle 15: Accessibility and Clarity.....	22
2. Recommendations.....	23
2.1 Principle 2: Mandate for data collection.....	23
2.2 Principle 3: Adequacy of resources.....	23
2.3 Principle 4: Commitment to Quality.....	23
2.4 Principle 6: Impartiality and Objectivity.....	23
2.5 Principle 7: Sound methodology.....	23
2.6 Principle 8: Appropriate Statistical Procedures.....	27
2.7 Principle 9: Non-excessive burden on respondents.....	27
2.8 Principle 10: Cost Effectiveness.....	27
2.9 Principle 11: Relevance.....	27
2.10 Principle 12: Accuracy and Reliability.....	28
2.11 Principle 13: Timeliness and Punctuality.....	28
2.12 Principle 15: Accessibility and clarity.....	29

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Unmet user needs for local users and in accordance with Regulation No. 692/2011 concerning European statistics on tourism.....	18
Table 2: Assessment of the correspondence between TS of the NSSRA and the Regulation No. 692/2011 concerning timeliness and variables .....	20
Table 3: List of tables representing TS of the NSSRA .....	22

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

COICOP	Classification of Individual Consumption According to Purpose
CAPS	Competitive Private Sector in Armenia
CPA	Statistical Classification of products by Activity
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy
ESCoP	European Statistics Code of Practice
ESS	European Statistical System
EU	European Union
GSBPM	Generic Statistical Business Process Model
HS / CN	Harmonised System / Combined Nomenclature (system for classifying traded goods)
ICD-10	10 <sup>th</sup> Revision of International Classification of Diseases
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IRTS 2008	The International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics 2008 by UNWTO and UNSD
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
ISCO-88	International Standard Classification of Occupations
ISIC	International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities
NACE Rev.2	Statistical Classification of Economic Activities in the European Community, Revision 2
NSSRA	The National Statistical Service of the Republic of Armenia
NUTS	Nomenclature of territorial units for statistics
PRODCOM	PRODUCTION COMMUNAUTAIRE (Community Production – Statistics on production of manufactured goods)
RA	Republic of Armenia
QAF	Quality Assurance Framework
SAQ	Self-Assessment Questionnaire
SITC	Standard International Trade Classification
SR	Sector Review
SSWP	State Statistical Work Programme
TA / TO	Travel agency / Tour operator
TS	Tourism Statistics
TSA	Tourism Satellite Account
UNSD	United Nations Statistics Division
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organisation

## PREFACE

1. Eurostat supports both enlargement countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo<sup>1</sup>, Montenegro, Serbia, Turkey) and European Neighbourhood Policy countries (ENP-East: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine; ENP-South: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Syria and Tunisia) in aligning their statistical production with EU and international standards and assessing their statistical systems.
2. To assess and support the efforts of the partner countries in this regard, a number of specific tools have been put in place: peer reviews, global assessments and sector reviews. Sector reviews support the partner countries in their efforts to align the core sectors of statistics (e.g., National accounts, Business statistics, Labour Force Surveys, etc.) with the European Statistics Code of Practice and international / European standards. The objectives of the sector reviews are to assess the administrative and technical capacity of the statistical systems to produce high-quality statistics in the reviewed sector, to assess the statistical production in the reviewed sector vis-à-vis the EU *acquis*, and to propose actions to improve and strengthen the statistical system.
3. Eurostat publishes reports of sector reviews (as well as reports of peer reviews (previously light peer reviews) and global assessments (previously adapted global assessments)) on the Eurostat website (<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/european-neighbourhood-policy/publications/reports>). This sector review assessed the sector of Tourism Statistics (hereinafter the TS) of the National Statistical Service of the Republic of Armenia (hereinafter NSSRA), under the Eurostat project “*Provision of global assessments, sector assessments and light peer reviews for enlargement and ENP countries*”. Eurostat initiated this review following a request from the NSSRA. The lead contractor was DevStat in consortium with the Statistics Lithuania (contract No. 14467.2014.002-2014.742) and engaged two international reviewers Mr Pavel Vancura and Ms Dita Zemite.
4. Prior to the mission, NSSRA staff completed a self-assessment questionnaire (SAQ) assessing how well tourism statistics in Armenia complies with the European Statistics Code of Practice (ESCoP) and with specific regulations for tourism statistics. Responses to the SAQ served as the starting point for the review, which took place in Yerevan from 5 to 8 December 2016 at the NSSRA headquarters.
5. The target of this SR was to assess tourism statistics produced by the NSSRA in respect of their compliance with European standards and practices. The overview of the organisation of tourism statistics in the NSSRA as well as of procedures, sources and methods used in compiling tourism statistics is provided in this report. Finally, recommendations are given that could lead to improvements in the compliance of tourism statistics produced by the NSSRA with European standards.
6. The SAQ covered the following aspects: institutional environment, statistical processes and statistical outputs. This means that compliance of Armenian official statistics with the principles of the European Statistics Code of Practice was evaluated, with a particular focus on tourism statistics.

---

<sup>1</sup> This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

Based on the ESCoP 13<sup>2</sup> principles out of 15 were taken into consideration and included in the Sector Review.

7. The review findings are the result of the analysis of documents provided by the NSSRA, documents available on the NSSRA website, and information collected and discussed during the in-country mission.
8. Cooperation with the NSSRA was excellent throughout. This allowed sound, thorough and fruitful assessment of the TS in Armenia.

---

<sup>2</sup> Missing principles: 1 – Professional Independence and 5 – Statistical Confidentiality

## Executive summary

9. The sector of tourism plays an important role in many countries, and the Republic of Armenia is not an exception. Tourism offers a big potential from the point of view of economic growth, employment, small and medium-sized businesses, natural and cultural heritage and social integration at national and, in particular, regional / local level. In order to gain appropriate information on tourism, especially on visitors and their trips/behaviour as well as businesses operating in the tourism sector, it is important to build a strong and independent system of official statistics.
10. The NSSRA can be regarded as modern statistical authority that is nationally and internationally open, cooperative and transparent and recognised as the national authority for developing, producing and disseminating statistics (including TS). The NSSRA has a clear mandate (given by the law) to collect data and use administrative sources for statistical purposes.
11. In terms of tourism statistics, the resources available at the NSSRA are not adequate, in particular knowing the gaps and limits, as well as challenges and opportunities currently faced by the tourism statistics in Armenia. Moreover, there is no detailed information on the cost of particular surveys and processes in the NSSRA allowing comparing (justifying) the cost of statistics against the needs of users.
12. The NSSRA pays a lot of attention to the principles of impartiality and objectivity, as well as quality issues (quality of both processes and outputs). In order to meet all these requirements, the NSSRA applies the Generic Statistical Business Process Model (GSBPM) in most of the statistical domains and follows the principles of the European statistics Code of Practice (ESCoP) and the Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) of the European Statistical System (ESS).
13. In the field of tourism statistics, the NSSRA implements appropriate methodology based on European and other international standards, guidelines and good practice. However, the scope of tourism statistics is not sufficient. The statistical survey on accommodation establishments and travel agencies or tour operators needs to be revised (for details see recommendations). Some of the processes (e.g., collection and processing of data) have to be improved as well.
14. The increasing importance of the developing tourism in the RA has led to the necessity for additional TS improvements that cover introduction of new surveys on international and domestic tourist flows.
15. Burden on respondents from tourism surveys does not seem to be excessive, but, at the same time, it has not been measured appropriately, therefore the assessment is not objective. When it comes to the overview of costs, it might be regarded as a weak point as well. There is no internal / external mechanism for monitoring the use of resources for the production of tourism statistics in the NSSRA, thus the estimation and comparison of cost effectiveness of particular processes and activities is not possible.
16. Currently TS of the NSSRA consists of a combined quarterly survey on accommodation establishments and TA / TO and data on international tourism received from the National Security Service of the RA. The latest data on international tourism are available from the survey conducted at borders in 2013. The data of 2013 are not sufficiently up-to-date for the rapidly-changing global tourism environment. The implementation of the International Visitor Survey that could give a complete view on tourism in Armenia depends on financial contributions from donor organisations.

17. Time series of the survey on accommodation establishments and TA/TO started in 2001, but data are published on the website ArmStatBank since 2011. The questionnaire and list of variables included in the survey are of a broad coverage for a supply-side survey, as compared to similar surveys in EU. The trade-off between the needs of internal and external users of statistical data from one survey of the NSSRA on tourism and burden on respondents is visible.
18. The sample of the survey increases every year – it covered 523 accommodation establishments in 2015, and the number has grown by more than 50 %, as compared to 2011. The NSSRA is proud of its efforts to reach a high response rate (about 98 %). Such a high response rate is achieved based on the good organisation of data collection visible in the work in regional offices and the good relationships with respondents.
19. Data are collected by using postal paper questionnaires that require manual data input, however, there is a possibility to send the questionnaire by e-mail (used by a small part of respondents). As regional offices are responsible solely for the data collection, the data input, verification, completeness and consistency checks are done in the TS division of the NSSRA, by one person. The need for web-based surveys, not only in the TS, but all statistical domains, is evident; however, it depends on availability of funds from external donors.
20. The concepts as well classification of TS comply with European and international definitions. In order to achieve full compliance with the Regulation No. 692/2011 and consistency with the concepts, a Methodological Manual for Tourism Statistics drafted by Eurostat as a reference for everyday work has been recommended for use.
21. Dissemination of TS is a part of the NSSRA publication calendar. TS publications are available in paper and electronic form, in 3 different languages – Armenian, Russian and English.

## 1. Assessment of results

### 1.1 Part 1: Institutional Environment

22. In this part, the NSSRA, with special focus on tourism statistics division, has been assessed on the institutional and organisational factors that have significant influence on the effectiveness and credibility of the statistical authority developing, producing and disseminating statistics. The relevant issues were mandate for the data collection, adequacy of resources, quality commitment, impartiality and objectivity.

#### 1.1.1 Principle 2: Mandate for data collection

23. The NSSRA has a clear legal mandate to collect information for the development, production and dissemination of statistics given by the RA Law on State Statistics<sup>3</sup> adopted on 4 April 2000.

24. The RA Law on State Statistics authorises the NSSRA to use administrative data sources for production of official statistics. In the sphere of tourism statistics there is a specific provision in the Law of the RA on Tourism and Tourist Activities (adopted on 17 December 2003). It states (Article 7, Point 2.2) that the Authorized Body<sup>4</sup> cooperates with ministries, regional governance and local self-governance bodies, subjects of tourist activity in development of programmes for reception of tourists and providing services to them, organisation of tours, database formation, preparation of development programs and marketing, administers the administrative statistics of the sphere. The NSSRA closely cooperates with the Tourism Committee, has free access to their administrative data (registers) and uses administrative data (the Register of Accommodation Establishments and TO/TA) for the production of tourism statistics data.

25. The Law on State Statistics (Article 12) together with the Three-Year State and the Annual Statistical Work Programmes provides the NSSRA with a strong legal mandate to collect the data needed for the implementation of the statistical programmes. The NSSRA is entitled to collect data directly from the statistical units and is allowed to access administrative registers. The Law on State Statistics stipulates the obligation for the providers of statistical information to give the necessary data<sup>5</sup> needed for those state statistical surveys, which are included in the Annual Statistical Work Programme, free of charge.

26. In compliance with Article 21 of the Law on State Statistics, the NSSRA is allowed to penalise units that do not take part in statistical surveys. In case of non-response within the deadline set, the respondent receives a written notice within 15 days. For the delay in sending the necessary reports within more than one month after the deadline to provide data<sup>6</sup>, the respective units are prosecuted in line with the procedure stipulated by the Law and imposed with a fine set by the Administrative Code.

---

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.armstat.am/en/?nid=183>

<sup>4</sup> At the moment the State Governance Body undergoes changes and new inter-government Tourism Committee under the Ministry of Economy has been settled.

<sup>5</sup> All data collections from businesses are obligatory. The Population Census as well as the Agricultural Census is obligatory for households, whereas participation in household surveys is voluntary.

<sup>6</sup> This means non-response within 15 days after receiving the written notice of not providing the data (despite the term) by violating the procedure or requirements (unreliable, incomplete data or other misrepresentation).

27. An appeal against the administrative penalty from the body implementing the state statistics is possible in compliance with the RA legislation on administrative offences. Within the last three years, the NSSRA has penalised the following number of units: 762 in 2015, 687 in year 2014 and 759 in 2013.
28. The NSSRA recognises the introduction of online reporting for reducing response burden and improving timeliness of reporting as an important action to be taken for strengthening the mandate for official statistics data collection.

### **1.1.2 Principle 3: Adequacy of resources**

29. The NSSRA recognises that the resources, both in magnitude and quality, are not adequate to meet the current statistical needs regarding the production of tourism statistics. There is a distinct lack of staff working on tourism statistics, as well as a lack of financial and IT resources.
30. Skills and competence of staff are considered as sufficient<sup>7</sup> to meet current requirements. At the same time when it comes to improving expertise of staff, the NSSRA does not provide any external or internal training programmes for the staff working on tourism statistics, which makes it difficult to keep a sufficient level of knowledge.
31. As for the IT resources, the NSSRA considers them as not really adequate for the purpose of producing tourism statistics.
32. For future challenges in tourism statistics such as using big data on mobile positioning, credit card or social media, the NSSRA suffers from the lack of staff (quantity and skills), financial and IT resources if current resources will not be significantly extended.
33. The total number of full-time employees (excluding staff in regional offices who send / receive questionnaires and reminders) working on tourism statistics currently only accounts for 2, including the Head of Balance of Payments and Foreign Trade Statistics Division. The number is inadequate to meet European requirements for tourism statistics.
34. The NSSRA is not able to disaggregate the amount of annual budget allocated to tourism statistics and thus estimate total cost on tourism surveys and other connected activities.
35. The feedback on the scope and detail of tourism statistics reported by data users is positive according to the NSSRA self-assessment. Nevertheless, there are some areas of tourism statistics (e.g., domestic and outbound tourism) for which more detailed data are needed by users.

### **1.1.3 Principle 4: Commitment to Quality**

36. The quality of official statistics is an important issue worldwide. Statistical authorities should be committed to quality, should have a clearly defined quality policy and tools in place to deal with quality management.
37. A quality policy<sup>8</sup> of the NSSRA is defined and made available to the public via the website. The Quality Policy aims at the systematic improvement of statistical products and processes through the development of relevant methodologies and tools, focusing on high quality services, increasing work

---

<sup>7</sup> On a scale from 1 = “completely adequate” to 5 = “completely inadequate” this was marked as 3.

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.armstat.am/en/?nid=619>

efficiency and cost effectiveness. The quality system of the NSSRA is based on the 15 principles of the ESCoP.

38. The overall quality policy is applicable for all statistical domains in the NSSRA including tourism statistics. Quality declarations are issued for all official surveys and available to the public. The following information is included in each quality declaration:
  0. General information on the statistical product – name, subject area, responsible authority / office / person, purpose and history, users and application, information sources, legal authority to collect data, response burden;
  1. Content – description of content, statistical concepts;
  2. Time – reference period, date of publication, punctuality, frequency;
  3. Accuracy – overall accuracy, sources of inaccuracy, measures on accuracy / measurability;
  4. Comparability – comparability over time, comparability with other statistics, coherence between provisional and final statistics;
  5. Accessibility – forms of dissemination, basic material: storage and usability, documentation, other information;
  6. Supplementary documentation.
39. Concerning tourism statistics quality declarations exist for:
  1. International and domestic tourism;
  2. Travel agencies;
  3. Tourists registered in hotels and hotel facilities;
  4. Recreational, entertainment and business tourism;
  5. Services (import and export of services provided for the organisation of international transport, communication, recreational activities, cultural and sport events).
40. GSBPM<sup>9</sup> is applied for all 138 statistical domains in the NSSRA to plan and monitor the quality of the statistical production process. The ESCoP and QAF of the ESS are taken into consideration when statistical surveys are planned and conducted.

#### **1.1.4 Principle 6: Impartiality and Objectivity**

41. During the sector review, also the principle of impartiality and objectivity was assessed. This principle states that the NSSRA should develop, produce and disseminate statistics respecting the scientific independence and in an objective, professional and transparent manner in which all users are treated equitably.
42. The NSSRA's sources and methods, which are used in the compilation of tourism statistics, are chosen based solely on statistical considerations, and hence tourism statistics is compiled on an objective basis.

---

<sup>9</sup> GSBPM is a mean to describe statistics production in a general and process-oriented way. It is used both within and between statistical offices as a common basis for work with statistics production in different ways, such as quality, efficiency, standardisation, and process-orientation. It is used for all types of surveys. The nine phases of the statistical business process are: specify needs, design, build, collect, process, analyse, disseminate, archive, evaluate.

43. All errors discovered in the published outputs are corrected and corrections are published at the earliest possible date. The corrected data are marked as revised / corrected and appropriate explanation for the reason behind the correction and the source of the error is provided.
44. At the moment, no official revision policy (neither general, nor topic-specific) is available in the NSSRA. Therefore, no notices on major revisions and changes in methodologies in tourism statistics are provided in advance, and all revisions and methodological changes are published upon release of the data.

## **1.2 Part 2: Statistical Processes**

45. In the second part of the sector review, the tourism statistics processes (surveys) were assessed for their compliance with European standards, guidelines and good practice adopted within the ESS, in relation to ESCoP principles 7-10.

### **1.2.1 Principle 7: Sound methodology**

46. The NSSRA implements the following surveys and uses the following data sources:
  - a) a quarterly survey on accommodation establishments and travel agencies or tour operators called “International and domestic tourism”;
  - b) monthly border records on traveller flows – information on the number of arrivals to and departures from Armenia recorded in cross-border points received from the Migration Agency of the Ministry of Territorial Administration of the RA. Since 2011 information is downloaded from the border electronic management information system of the National Security Service;
  - c) border sample survey on inbound and outbound tourism – it is conducted on irregular basis (every five or more years) when appropriate budget allows it. Two waves of this survey were taking place:
    - i. from September 2006 to August 2007 – the “Sample Survey on Arrivals and Departures” was carried out by the NSSRA in cooperation with the Armenian Tourism Development Agency and the USAID<sup>10</sup> Project “Competitive Private Sector in Armenia” (CAPS);
    - ii. in 2013 – the “International Visitor Survey” was carried out by the NSSRA in cooperation with the Ministry of Economy of the RA, the National Competitiveness Foundation of Armenia, the German Corporation for International Cooperation (GIZ<sup>11</sup>) and USAID Enterprise Development and Market Competitiveness (EDMC).
47. Domestic tourism is covered only partly. There is no information on the total number of domestic trips made by Armenian citizens since the survey on accommodation establishments and TA / TO does not cover all trips. In particular, there are no data on trips to other accommodation, such as trips with accommodation by relatives and friends, trips to own recreation establishments (second homes) or establishments not included in the survey on accommodation establishments (e.g., Airbnb, small

---

<sup>10</sup> USAID is the lead U.S. Government agency that works to end extreme global poverty and enable resilient, democratic societies to realise their potential.

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.giz.de/de/html/index.html>

so-called private establishments). Data on same-day domestic trips is also not covered. In some cases, trips can be captured by the survey on TA / TO, but very often domestic trips are self-organised.

48. The principle used for determining the country of residence in the data received from the National Security Service of the RA in respect to the length of stay in the country is 182 days compared to the 365 days used in TS. In order to produce comparable TS, the deviation should be mentioned.
49. Inbound tourism is not complete. Although there is regular monthly information on cross border flows of foreign travellers coming to Armenia, other essential non-monetary characteristics as well as monetary indicators (expenditures) are not available. In addition, records from the border police include all travellers and the corresponding tourism concept needs to be applied<sup>12</sup>. Variables on inbound tourism very often are covered by a border tourism survey, but in Armenia it is not conducted on regular basis.
50. Moreover, outbound tourism is covered only partly, indicators are available from the border flows data (records of Armenian travellers going abroad) and from the travel agency and tour operator survey.
51. As for the standard methodological guidelines and framework of statistical surveys in the field of tourism statistics, the quality declarations contain basic information. There are no other documents containing detailed concepts, definitions or classifications. Some information from quality declarations could be extended and specified at more detailed level.
52. When comparing variables and breakdowns included in the surveys on accommodation establishments with Annex I<sup>13</sup> of the EU Regulation 692/2011 concerning European statistics on tourism<sup>14</sup>, few variables are missing. These are following:
  1. number of bed places;
  2. number of establishments having one or more bedrooms accessible for persons with reduced mobility, including wheelchair users;
  3. net occupancy rates of bedrooms;
  4. number of tourism nights spent in non-rented accommodation.

Missing breakdowns are following:

1. NUTS level 2;
2. type of locality (a), referring to the degree of urbanisation (densely populated area; intermediate area; intermediate area; thinly populated area);
3. type of locality (b), referring to the location close to the sea (costal; non-costal);

---

<sup>12</sup> Paragraph 2.12 of the IRTS 2008 states: Tourism is therefore a subset of travel and visitors are a subset of travellers. These distinctions are crucial for the compilation of data on flows of travellers and visitors and for the credibility of tourism statistics.

<sup>13</sup> Subjects covered by the Annex I:

- a) internal tourism, in terms of the capacity and occupancy of tourist accommodation establishments (the variables, periodicity and breakdowns laid down in Sections 1, 2 and 3 of Annex I)
- b) internal tourism, in terms of tourism nights spent in non-rented accommodation (the variables, periodicity and breakdowns laid down in Section 4 of Annex I)

<sup>14</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2011:192:0017:0032:EN:PDF>

4. size class (small, medium-sized, large establishments).
53. The variables and breakdowns of national tourism according to the Regulation on tourism demand (participation in tourism and characteristics of tourism trips and visitors (including same-day visits)), are laid down in Annex II to the Regulation No. 692/2011 (Sections 1, 2 and 3). The NSSRA is not able to cover all current tourism surveys required under Annex II to the Regulation, apart from the following:
- a) the number of Armenian tourists going abroad with tour operator or travel agency by purpose and main destination of a trip;
  - b) the number of Armenian tourists staying at accommodation establishments by purpose of stay. This is covered by the survey on accommodation establishments.
54. The national classifications used in Armenia are consistent with internationally recognised classifications. The NSSRA uses NACE to classify activities of accommodation establishments and travel agencies or tour operators. Since the NSSRA does not (for the time being) compile the TSA, other classifications like CPC, CPA, ISIC, COICOP are still not relevant for tourism statistics but the NSSRA has already implemented them in other domains and thus is ready to use them.
55. The data are collected by the regional (marz) agencies of the NSSRA on an exhaustive basis
56. There are no specific requirements for recruiting staff and no continuous vocational training of the staff involved in tourism statistics. Moreover, experts engaged in tourism statistics have no opportunity to attend courses, seminars or workshops at national or international level for acquiring or developing expertise, gaining knowledge and experience and sharing good practice.
57. The NSSRA has not established regular contact, e.g., through conferences, workshops, task forces, with the scientific community to discuss methodological, IT and innovation developments in tourism.
58. The survey on accommodation establishments and TA / TO has not changed since 2001. In 2012 the NSSRA introduced a new MS Access-based data entry programme to support processing and controlling of figures in all fields of statistics.
59. In the area of tourism statistics the NSSRA uses two registers – register of accommodation establishments and register of TA / TO. Both registers are updated regularly, on a 6-months basis.
60. The following information regards sampling and data collection for the survey on accommodation establishments and TA / TO:
- a) statistical unit – local kind of activity unit (in some cases enterprise or establishment if responding unit cannot divide data by local units);
  - b) reference period – quarter;
  - c) geographical coverage – only at national level;
  - d) update of sampling frame – every 6 months;
  - e) net sample size – 523 accommodation establishments and approximately 250 TA / TO;
  - f) Sample / population (ratio in %) – 100 %;
  - g) coverage errors of population frame (over / under-coverage) – possible under-coverage, because only units registered by the Ministry of Justice are included and some units (not registered) can be missed out;

- h) sampling design and methodology – census survey (whole population is included in the sampling frame);
- i) data collection method – a paper questionnaire is sent by post; electronic questionnaires are available on the NSSRA website and can be completed online and sent by e-mail to a common address used for all surveys;
- j) average time needed to fill in questionnaires – no information;
- k) number of built-in validations incorporated in the data collection software to minimise errors during data collection – no such validation tool;
- l) use of administrative data to collect at least part of the required information – no administrative data are used. Apart from the list of establishments from the Ministry of Justice, no other detailed data are used (just the list of units);
- m) samples concerning different surveys are coordinated between each other, in order to minimise response burden – not applicable.

### **1.2.2 Principle 8: Appropriate Statistical Procedures**

- 61. Tourism statistics in the NSSRA is in large parts not based on administrative data. The only exception is registers of the Ministry of Justice which are used as population frame for the survey on accommodation establishments and TA / TO.
- 62. The NSSRA when using other administrative sources (registers), links the identification key available from the administrative registers with the key used in statistical registers, in particular in the business register.
- 63. Since the NSSRA uses administrative databases, but not administrative data in the field of tourism statistics, the differences between administrative and statistical processes in terms of definitions, concepts, coverage, etc. are not relevant.
- 64. The Organisational structure of the NSSRA, with two divisions responsible for the data quality – Quality Management Division and Internal Audit Department – provides guidelines, recommends appropriate methodologies and periodically examines the methods used in the statistical processes. It is a well-established system for meeting requirements of Principle 8.
- 65. Survey questionnaires are not assessed by experts in questionnaire design. Questionnaires are designed by the division responsible for the area in question because no special unit designing questionnaires exists. The Statistical Council of the NSSRA approves the final version of the questionnaires, and afterwards the Ministry of Justice officially stamps all statistical questionnaires.
- 66. As for the expert assessment of the survey questionnaires, the Tourism Committee of the Ministry of Economics is approached to provide comments on the questionnaires.
- 67. Prior to data collection, the draft questionnaire is tested with a pilot in real situation. In 2001, when the last changes were proposed, the questionnaire on accommodation establishments and TA / TO was sent to approximately 10 % of the respondents.
- 68. There is a possibility for respondents to download an electronic version of the paper questionnaire (in word or excel), fill it in and send it back by e-mail.
- 69. Before completing the questionnaire, all respondents are provided with all necessary documents (i.e., letters, questionnaires, leaflets) and these documents are regularly reviewed and updated, as

necessary. Respondents may also receive support for filling in the questionnaires (written instructions in a form of manual for filling in the questionnaire, support from statisticians). Procedures exist to answer respondent requests and to their complaints in respect to the NSSRA.

70. There are no regular training courses for managers responsible for surveys.
71. Follow-up procedures are performed in the case of non-response and unreachable units. In case respondents refuse to send questionnaires, reminders are sent and a system of penalties is used as well.
72. Quality indicators related to data collection and coding are not produced and analysed.
73. All the questionnaires collected are undergoing logical and mathematical checks by the responsible person of the respective division. Serious mistakes have to be corrected by the respondent, afterwards the questionnaire should be signed and repeatedly sent to the NSSRA.
74. All units are included in the survey on accommodation establishments and TA / TO, therefore no sampling and weighting procedures are implemented in tourism statistics.
75. The non-response rate in tourism surveys is very low, therefore estimation (including correction of non-response, editing or imputation methods) is not relevant.
76. The data of the surveys on accommodation establishments and TA / TO are verified with longitudinal checks. The checks are done manually, no automatic procedure is available.
77. Tourism outputs are not revised regularly. If errors are corrected, the NSSRA adds a note that figures have been corrected and adds the necessary explanations, thus the information is visible to all users.
78. The survey on accommodation establishments and TA / TO includes additional variables for the needs of national users, e.g., the purpose of visits, expenses and services.

### **1.2.3 Principle 9: Non-excessive burden on respondents**

79. Every year, prior to the adoption of the NSSRA statistical work programme, a standard procedure requires to inquire about data needs by main data users. This also applies to the tourism survey on accommodation establishments and TA / TO.
80. In total 62 variables are included in the survey on accommodation establishments and TA / TO, 35 of which are not published, but used by the NSSRA National Accounts Division for internal needs and analysis of situation.
81. At the moment, the response burden on respondents is not assessed on a regular basis. Also, no significant measures for minimising respondent burden are taken, including in tourism statistics.
82. The NSSRA does not register the time spent by respondents for filling in the questionnaires, but it has planned to introduce such a tool in the future.
83. No administrative sources (apart from the registers of the Ministry of Justice) are used, since tourism statistics is not collected by institutional bodies. However, in Armenia the Law on State Statistics stipulates an obligation for administrative authorities to provide administrative data if requested.

#### **1.2.4 Principle 10: Cost Effectiveness**

84. There is no internal / external mechanism for monitoring the use of resources for the production of tourism statistics in the NSSRA.
85. In order to improve the efficiency of data collection and data analysis, the NSSRA plans to introduce electronic data collection.
86. Automated tools helping to reduce manual interventions and consequently improve timeliness and cost-reduction are used only during the dissemination phase (e.g., Armstat bank), but not during data entry, data capture and validation (apart from MS Access which is used for data entry purposes, but without any automatisisation tools).
87. The team responsible for tourism statistics in the NSSRA consists of 2 persons working full-time, one of which is statistician and the other one a manager responsible also for balance of payments and external trade statistics. Considering the agenda, responsibilities and challenges of the employees working on tourism statistics, it is obvious that the tourism statistics team is understaffed.
88. No estimation of the total costs for tourism statistics is available in the NSSRA. Costs are not calculated for any statistics in such a detail that cost effectiveness of particular processes and activities could be measured and compared.

### **1.3 Part 3: Statistical Outputs**

#### **1.3.1 Principle 11: Relevance**

89. The main users of TS data are: the Ministry of Economic Development and Investments of the RA, the Central Bank of Armenia, the NSSRA and others, e.g., mass media, international organisations, scientific-educational and financial organisations, businesses etc.
90. The relevance of the main TS outputs is high for policy makers, mass media and scientific or academic purposes, as evaluated by the NSSRA. Representatives from the tourism industry and the businesses working in hospitality industry<sup>15</sup> evaluate the relevance of the available statistical products as medium.
91. Article 9 “Subjects of the Hotel Industry” of the Law on Tourism in the RA includes a classification of accommodation establishments by category. The survey on accommodation establishments does not include variables on categories of accommodation establishments. The respective variable may be useful for data users and is often included in the questionnaires on accommodation establishments in EU.
92. The main needs of the key users are met and reflected in the SSWP of the NSSRA, however, there are unmet user needs in terms of variables that could be added to existing surveys or collected through new surveys. Variables requested by users are presented in Table 1. Variables (categorised for local data users and according to the EU regulation) are considered to be included in regular data collection in the medium term depending on available resources (both financial and staff) of the NSSRA.

---

<sup>15</sup> Hospitality industry is a broad category of fields within service industry that includes lodging, event planning, theme parks, transportation, cruise line, and additional fields within the tourism industry.

Table 1: Unmet user needs for local users and in accordance with Regulation No. 692/2011 concerning European statistics on tourism

	Local data users	The Regulation
<b>Survey on Accommodation establishments</b>		
<b>Capacity of accommodation establishments</b>	Number of bedrooms and bed places	Number of bedrooms and bed places by type of accommodation and locality
<b>Occupancy of accommodation establishments</b>	Number of arrivals and nights spent by regions of the RA Number of arrivals and nights spent of residents by regions of the RA Number of arrivals by age and gender Number of arrivals from Armenian diaspora Net occupancy rates of bedrooms by the RA and region Net occupancy rates of bed places by RA and region	Net occupancy rates of bedrooms by type of locality and size class (optional); Net occupancy rates of bed places by type of locality and size class (optional)
<b>TA / TO survey</b>		
	Expenditures on package tours; Number of departures by country of destination	X
<b>Other survey</b>		
	Volume and characteristics of trip for outbound, domestic and inbound tourism	Volume and characteristics of trip for outbound, domestic tourism

93. Local users are consulted before adopting the annual SSWP. The SSWP is published in a draft version on the NSSRA website<sup>16</sup> and available for comments and suggestions. It includes TS, but there is no separate procedure for consulting user of TS, nevertheless, there are regular meetings with the State Tourism Committee of the Ministry of Economic Development and Investments that is one of the key users of TS and is representing policy makers.
94. The NSSRA registers the number of subscribers and individual data requests, but this information has not been analysed in terms of needs for and satisfaction with TS.
95. Although TS are relevant for users and the unmet user needs are known, it is advisable to have a system for monitoring TS user satisfaction.

<sup>16</sup> [www.armstat.am](http://www.armstat.am)

### **1.3.2 Principle 12: Accuracy and Reliability**

96. The NSSRA has implemented a system for assessing and validating source data and intermediate results of TS within the division responsible for the production of TS. The data collected via the survey on accommodation establishments and TA / TO are validated during the data entry in the MS Access database by the data entry operator. The MS Access database has arithmetical and logical rules that validate the data from the survey.
97. The data from the survey on income are compared with the Trade and services statistical data.
98. The intermediate results and output of data received for International Tourism by the National Security Service of the RA are cross-checked with the survey data in order to establish consistency of arrivals and departures by nationalities and number of arrivals presented in both data sources.
99. Since the TS survey is a census, the coefficient of variation, sampling and non-sampling errors are not available. The NSSRA acknowledges non-sampling errors, e.g., frame errors due to incorrect NACE classes.
100. The NSSRA has not analysed measurement errors due to respondents and questionnaire. Staff of the NSSRA is of the opinion that in TS there almost are no measurement errors, therefore such analysis is not performed at the moment. As the survey data are collected via postal paper questionnaires, the NSSRA believes that there are measurement errors arising from the survey mode. The NSSRA is on a way to restructuring the whole data collection system that would include a system of electronic and online questionnaires.
101. Currently, the NSSRA is treating outliers in the survey data by visual checks or by comparing them with previous reference periods.
102. One of the NSSRA strengths is a response rate of almost 100% in the survey on accommodation establishments and TA / TO, the non-response rate accounts for only about 1-2 %. According to the NSSRA, the main reason behind non-response is “non-contact and refusal”. There is no analysis available for other non-response reasons.
103. The process of imputing missing values or imputation is not carried out in TS, as the non-response rate is very low. In case of missing values for a variable “room nights”, they are not imputed. If non-response rate increases, imputation should be introduced.
104. The quality of TS is documented, and the quality declarations on international and domestic tourism, travel agencies, tourists registered in hotels and hotel facilities, and recreational, entertainment and business tourism are available for users on the NSSRA website. The NSSRA states that the information is updated on annual basis.

### **1.3.3 Principle 13: Timeliness and Punctuality**

105. The NSSRA calendar of statistical publications includes TS, and information about publications is provided in the quality declaration (title and forms of publications).
106. The time of dissemination and timeliness of the TS does not fully correspond with the deadlines and variables stipulated by the EU Regulation No. 692/2011 (see Table 2).

107. 60 days after the end of the data collection, paper or electronic publications are issued. This time period meets the requirements of the Regulation No. 692/2011, even in respect to key indicators to be published earlier.
108. TS is produced on a quarterly basis, and therefore, does not include the monthly breakdown required by Regulation No. 692/2011.
109. Lack of financial and human resources prevents the NSSRA from implementing a survey on trips made by Armenian households, although such information is required by the Regulation.
110. The breakdown of variables by NACE categories (55.1, 55.2, 55.3) stated in the Regulation on TS is partly implemented by the NSSRA, as in the survey on accommodation establishments this is an optional question.

*Table 2: Assessment of the correspondence between TS of the NSSRA and the Regulation No. 692/2011 concerning timeliness and variables*

<b>Variables to be transmitted according to the EU Regulation No. 692/2011</b>	<b>Current state of the NSSRA TS</b>	<b>Recommended by the NSSRA for implementation in the short term</b>	<b>Recommended by the NSSRA for implementation in the medium term, depending on financial resources</b>
Monthly data (Annex I, Section 2, B)			
<b>Occupancy rates (bed places, bedrooms)</b> (shall transmit within 3 months after the end of the reference period)	Available on annual basis (60 days)	✓	
<b>Arrivals of residents and non-residents at tourist accommodation establishments by type of accommodation</b> (shall transmit within 3 months after the end of the reference period)	Available on quarterly basis (60 days)	✓	
<b>Nights spent by residents and non-residents at tourist accommodation establishments by type of accommodation</b> (shall transmit within 8 weeks after the end of the reference period)	Available on quarterly basis (60 days)	✓	
Annual data (Annex I, Section 1-2) 2015 (shall transmit within 6 months after the end of the reference period)			
<b>Capacity of accommodation establishments by type of accommodation, locality</b>	Available on annual basis (bedrooms) (60 days)	✓	
<b>Arrivals of residents and non-residents at tourist accommodation establishments by type of accommodation and residence of the guest</b>	Available on quarterly basis (60 days)		
<b>Nights spent by residents and non-residents at tourist accommodation establishments by type of accommodation and residence of the</b>	Available on quarterly basis (60 days)		

<b>Variables to be transmitted according to the EU Regulation No. 692/2011</b>	<b>Current state of the NSSRA TS</b>	<b>Recommended by the NSSRA for implementation in the short term</b>	<b>Recommended by the NSSRA for implementation in the medium term, depending on financial resources</b>
<b>guest</b>			
Annual data (Annex II, Section 1) (shall transmit within 6 months after the end of the reference period)			
<b>Number of residents, aged 15 or over, participating in tourism for personal purposes during the reference year by gender and age group</b>	N/A		✓
<b>Number of residents, aged 15 or over, not participating in tourism for personal purposes during the reference year by gender, age group and main reasons</b>	N/A		✓
Annual data (Annex II, Section 2) (shall transmit within 6 months after the end of the reference period)			
<b>Variables on tourism trips and visitors making the trips</b>	N/A		✓
Annual data (Annex II, Section 3) (shall transmit within 6 months after the end of the reference period)			
<b>Same-day visits</b>	N/A		✓

111. Final TS are disseminated every quarter.
112. No divergences from the announced dissemination dates for TS have been registered in the NSSRA. The data collection process is administered precisely and professionally to eliminate cases that may cause delays in the TS dissemination.
113. The Information Dissemination and Communication Policy for public use is available on the website. The policy document clearly communicates all the elements of the publication and dissemination process in the NSSRA.
114. According to the Information Dissemination and Communication Policy, the announcement about delays, changes or non-publication of data shall be made 3 working days in advance of the delay.

### **1.3.4 Principle 14: Coherence and Comparability**

115. TS is available as long time series with no breaks. The time series of the survey on accommodation establishments as well of the TA / TO are 14 years long.
116. The general compliance between national and European concepts in TS is very good. No divergences were observed for the following characteristics: definition of statistical unit (LKAU), classification (NACE), main indicators (arrivals and nights spent available, missing breakdown of monthly data and monthly occupancy rates).
117. In general, tourism statistics is comparable with the European data on tourism and the requirements specified by the Regulation No. 692/2011.

### 1.3.5 Principle 15: Accessibility and Clarity

118. TS is disseminated on quarterly and annual basis, and available electronically on the website [www.armstat.am](http://www.armstat.am) or in paper form. Most of the publications are available in Armenian, Russian and English.
119. The ArmStatBank is a database where part of TS is published. It is very convenient for users and facilitates self-tabulation, since it allows also forming different views and formats for displaying data.
120. The dissemination calendar is publicly available on the NSSRA website. The calendar of statistical publications according to the State Statistical Work Programme for 2017<sup>17</sup> and 2016<sup>18</sup> are the latest available versions.
121. According to the release calendar, there are no press releases on the TS.

Table 3: List of tables representing TS of the NSSRA<sup>19</sup>

Table 1: Statistical data bases/Balance of Payments and Foreign Trade/International Tourism/MS Excel Incoming and outgoing visitors, 2006Q1-2016Q3, 2006-2015, (persons)
Table 2: ArmStatBank / Transport and Tourism/Tourism Hotels by marzes, indicators and years, 2011-2015
Table 3: Socio-Economic Situation of RA, Indicators of accommodation establishments, 2013-2015, (persons, mln drams)

122. The NSSRA answers to individual data requests and provides custom designed analysis. According to the Information Dissemination and Communication Policy, the inquiry (demand, request) for information can be accepted by mail, e-mail, phone, personally in the NSSRA open library or by fax. The request for information is responded by phone, e-mail or regular mail. The user may find out about the procedures for acquiring the necessary information by calling the NSSRA. The same procedure applies also to TS. However, in respect to individual data requests, the policy specifies neither the response deadline, nor the e-mail address, nor the charges for such services.
123. Access to micro-data can be granted in line with the provisions of Article 14 of the Law on State Statistics “... allowing the use of micro data without identifiers for scientific use. The researchers can get access upon request, and requiring, in addition to the case by case approval by the State Council on Statistics”.
124. To ensure national and EU quality standards TS is compiled according to the “*Handbook on data Quality Assessment and Tools*”, Quality declarations and GSBPM.
125. The accessibility and clarity of metadata is good. The link to metadata is provided in a table in ArmStatBank and separately on the main page under the section Metadata. According to the NSSRA, the TS metadata are updated in case of methodological changes on an annual basis.

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.armstat.am/file/calendar/2017-i%20Oracuic-en.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> <http://armstat.am/file/calendar/2016-i%20Oracuic-en.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> Published at [www.armstat.am](http://www.armstat.am)

## **2. Recommendations**

### **2.1 Principle 2: Mandate for data collection**

126. As an important action for strengthening the mandate for data collection of official statistics the NSSRA should consider introducing an online reporting mechanism for reducing respondent burden and improving timeliness of reporting.

### **2.2 Principle 3: Adequacy of resources**

127. It is recommended to increase resources (human, financial and IT), which are available for tourism statistics. The resources, especially the capacity of staff, seem to be inadequate considering the current agenda of tourism statistics as well as future plans, requirements and challenges.
128. For maintaining a sufficient level of knowledge of experts working on tourism statistics, the NSSRA should provide them with regular external or internal training programmes, such as language lessons, international seminars and conferences (e.g. the Global Forum on Tourism Statistics organised by the OECD and Eurostat every two years), subject to available financing.
129. The NSSRA should adjust its reporting and accounting system in order to be able to disaggregate the amount of annual budget allocated to the TS and thus estimate the total cost on surveys and other related activities. From other country experiences, a time registration system for statistical products and statistical processes is required.
130. It is recommended for the NSSRA to organise user satisfaction surveys on statistical outputs of particular statistics. The feedback on the scope and level of detail of statistics given by data users is very important for future development (user-oriented).

### **2.3 Principle 4: Commitment to Quality**

131. Quality declarations concerning tourism statistics might be slightly more detailed in chapters dealing particularly with accuracy and comparability.
132. More information on GSBPM, which is applied for all statistical domains in the NSSRA, as well as the ESCoP and QAF in the conditions of the NSSRA, could be given to the public to ensure that the society is well-informed about quality provisions applied.

### **2.4 Principle 6: Impartiality and Objectivity**

133. It is recommended to create an official revision policy and make it public to show that the NSSRA is a modern, open and user-oriented institution.

### **2.5 Principle 7: Sound methodology**

134. The international and domestic tourism survey on accommodation establishments and travel agencies or tour operators should be divided into two individual surveys, each with a separate questionnaire. There is no reasonable advantage of having just one form for two different sectors.
135. If the NSSRA wants to comply with EU standards, methodological recommendations and the regulation in the field of tourism statistics, it is highly recommended to follow provisions of the

Regulation No. 692/2011 and methodological guidelines of the Methodological Manual for Tourism Statistics<sup>20</sup> drafted by Eurostat.

136. The survey on accommodation establishments should provide all important indicators from the point of view of national as well as international users. From the EU perspective, the main indicators are listed in Annex I to the Regulation No. 692/2011. When comparing EU requirements with the data available in the survey on accommodation establishments, it is noticeable that some variables are missing. It is recommended to supplement the questionnaire with the indicators and breakdowns mentioned below and consult the Methodological Manual for Tourism Statistics for proper delineation of definitions and methodology. The items in **bold** are considered to be the most important ones.

Variables:

1. **number of bed places** (capacity variable);
2. number of establishments having one or more bedrooms accessible for persons with reduced mobility, including wheelchair users;
3. **net occupancy rates of bedrooms** (occupancy variable);
4. number of tourism nights spent in non-rented accommodation.

Breakdowns:

1. **NUTS level 2** (for both capacity and occupancy variables);
  2. type of locality (a), referring to the degree of urbanisation (densely populated area; intermediate area; intermediate area; thinly populated area);
  3. type of locality (b), referring to the location close to the sea (costal; non-costal);
  4. size class (small, medium-sized, large establishments)
137. As for the capacity variables (the number of establishments, rooms, beds and places for tents and caravans) the most important recommendations from the Methodological Manual are listed below. The NSSRA is advised to follow these methodological guidelines when updating / adjusting the questionnaire and variables of the survey on accommodation establishments.
- a) The maximum capacity over the year should be reported:
    - i. Number of tourist accommodation establishments – the maximum should be considered at the level of the establishment (not the peak month at aggregate level of 12-month figures). This implies counting all establishments no matter of when they are available, as long as they are available at one point during the year.
    - ii. Number of bed places or bedrooms – the maximum capacity over the year should be reported excluding extra beds. This maximum should be considered at the level of the establishment: the peak value for the individual establishment, not the peak month at aggregate level for e.g. a NACE and / or region. This implies counting all bed places (excluding extra beds) or bedrooms no matter of when they are available, as long as they are available at one point during the year.

---

<sup>20</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-manuals-and-guidelines/-/KS-GQ-14-013>

- b) A bed place is also a place on a pitch or on a mooring in a boat to accommodate one person. One pitch for camping / tent, caravan or similar shelter and one mooring for boat should be counted for 4 bed places if the actual number of bed places is not known.
138. The regional aspect of statistical outputs (including tourism statistics) becomes more and more important. Therefore, the NSSRA should consider how to adjust the data collection for accommodation statistics to be able to produce data broken down by NUTS level 3 (level of marzes).
139. Several important recommendations for the occupancy variables (the number of nights spent, arrivals of residents and non-residents, occupancy rate of bedrooms and bed places) from the Methodological Manual are listed below. The NSSRA is advised to follow these methodological guidelines when updating / adjusting the questionnaire and variables of the survey on accommodation establishments.
- a) Number of nights spent:
- i. Although extra beds should not be counted in the capacity, nights spent in extra beds should be included in occupancy figures.
  - ii. The same rule (to be included in occupancy data) is applied for young children who do not occupy a bed. It means that the number of nights spent are counted although there is not a bed for those overnights.
- b) Number of arrivals (residents and non-residents):
- i. Arrivals where the stay ends in the following / different reference period<sup>21</sup> (and nights are reported for two or more months) are to be included in the period of arrival of a guest. This rule shall be applied, although it may distort the average number of nights spent in particular period.
  - i. The occupancy rate of bedrooms in the reference period is obtained by dividing the total number of bedrooms used during the reference period (i.e., the sum of bedrooms in use per day) by the total number of bedrooms available during the reference period (i.e., the sum of bedrooms available per day). The result is multiplied by 100 to express the occupancy rate as a percentage.
  - ii. There are two ways / approaches to calculate occupancy rate. The first approach focuses on bedroom(s) and counts when (the number of days) the bed was occupied. The second approach tracks the number of days and counts how many bedrooms were occupied in each day during the reference period. Precise formulas are given in the Methodological Manual (Chapter 2.4.3.1 and 2).
140. Tourism can be considered as seasonal activity. For each season, specific places and activities are preferred. Therefore, the issue of seasonality becomes an important factor of tourism statistics. It is recommended to collect monthly data on occupancy of accommodation establishments. It means to set down a reference period of one month, but the frequency of data collection (data reporting for respondent units) will / can be quarterly.

---

<sup>21</sup>Quarter (used in the NSSRA's survey) or month (recommended); example: a guest stayed overnight at a hotel from 28 May to 2 June. It was 1 arrival and 5 nights spent in total. The hotel will report 1 arrival (guest) and 4 nights in May and no arrival and 1 night in June.

141. The information included in the quality declarations is very useful. However, there is only basic information, and, since no other documents containing detail concepts, definitions and classifications of tourism surveys are available, a more detailed description of the methodology will be highly appreciated.
142. It is common practise in “modern” statistical offices to establish methodological / technical networks (e.g. units, committees) which define and monitor implementation and validate results of specific statistical processes (e.g., sampling, data collection, data editing and imputation, weighting / calibration or coding). However, such networks need special knowledge and experience. In the NSSRA practice these processes, with few exceptions, are part of the units dealing with specific statistics. The NSSRA may consider pros and cons of such an organisation and in some cases built specialised units / teams which would support or supervise specific domain divisions (topic-oriented-units). Another recommendation would be that regional (marz) agencies, which are responsible for the data collection process, extend their responsibilities in this field. Within the data collection process, regional agencies could not only send / receive questionnaires, which they simply forward to the main office for data processing, or send remainders, but they may also compute (process) the data and do first quality controls.
143. It is strongly recommended to propose continuous vocational training of the staff involved in the production of tourism statistics and offer them opportunities to attend courses, seminars and workshops at national or international level in order to acquire and develop expertise, increase knowledge and experience, as well as share good practice. Eurostat could be asked if there is a chance for non-EU (or non-candidate) countries to attend the Working Group meetings organised once a year. It is a very good platform for experts to share their experience and discuss issues which are not easy to be solved nationally.
144. Good practice for improving any statistical field (including tourism statistics) is to build regular contacts, e.g. through conferences, workshops, task forces, with the scientific community and discuss methodological, innovation developments or other essential topics. The NSSRA is advised to think of creating such a platform by inviting all the important stakeholders who are active in the field of tourism and tourism statistics. Regular meetings (once a year) would be an appropriate tool for exchanging information and supporting good cooperation with the institutions involved.
145. Tourism is a developing sector (activity). New patterns of organising trips (e.g., a booking of accommodation via Airbnb) or new travel behaviour of visitors (security is a big issue these days) are being promoted. Therefore, statistics should react to the changing environment and adjust surveys whenever it seems to be necessary or appropriate. The survey on accommodation establishments and TA / TO has not changed since 2001. After 15 years, there is definitely a need for updating the questionnaire (skipping variables that are no longer important and replacing them by more useful indicators). Additionally, in respect to the data collection process, there is only a paper questionnaire or a simple electronic questionnaire in MS Word or MS Excel format, which respondents can download from the NSSRA website, fill in and send back to the NSSRA by e-mail. Nowadays, when online statistical tools for filling in and processing questionnaires are common practice in many statistical institutions, development and creation of such tools would be a substantial relief for respondents and the NSSRA.

146. A few recommendations concerning sampling and collection of the survey on accommodation establishments and TA / TO include the following:
- a) to strictly require respondents to submit data at the level of local kind of activity units or at least at the level of local units to be able to produce and disseminate accurate data at regional level;
  - b) to propose monthly reference period to ensure that the seasonality of data is better captured;
  - c) to create advanced data collection methods, e.g., online reporting application;
  - d) to measure respondent burden – average time used for filling in the questionnaire;
  - e) to build automatic validation tools in the data processing phase;
  - f) to use all the administrative data available.

## **2.6 Principle 8: Appropriate Statistical Procedures**

147. The NSSRA is advised to consider the creation of a unit for designing questionnaires for all statistical domains in order to have one common and official layout of questionnaires and reduce burden on particular divisions.
148. It is recommended to provide regular training courses for survey managers.

## **2.7 Principle 9: Non-excessive burden on respondents**

149. Since the respondent burden is an important topic, the NSSRA should pay attention whether variables that are collected, but not published, are really needed. There are 35 indicators in the questionnaire on accommodation establishments and TA / TO which are not published, but used by the national accounts division. It is highly recommended to discuss these variables with the National Accounts Division – are they still important and essential for them. The use of these variables should be justified.
150. The NSSRA's intention to propose questions on the time spent for filling in the questionnaires and to generally measure the response burden on respondents in all fields of statistics, including tourism, is supported.

## **2.8 Principle 10: Cost Effectiveness**

151. It is recommended to propose a mechanism for monitoring the use of resources, e.g., monitoring of survey costs or particular processes, if possible.
152. The NSSRA is advised to create automated tools for reducing manual interventions, which consequently may result in the improvement of timeliness and cost-reduction within the data entry phase.
153. It is recommended to estimate the total costs of tourism surveys or, if possible, particular processes within the surveys.

## **2.9 Principle 11: Relevance**

154. The NSSRA should consider meeting the unmet user needs (indicated in Table 1) related to local users and the EU Regulation No. 692/2011 concerning European statistics on tourism.

155. As the NSSRA collects data from the survey on outgoing tourist flow served by TA / TO, for having a good data source and information on two comparable tourists' flows from the same source it is worth to consider adding variables in the questionnaire on the incoming tourist flow served by TA / TO.
156. The NSSRA should consider including the variable on categories of the accommodation establishments by type (hotels, motels, camp-sites, etc.) in order to produce statistics according to the Law on Tourism in the RA.
157. The NSSRA should conduct a separate analysis of TS utility based on the number of individual data requests, subscribers, and database statistics and downloads by years. It will allow monitoring the interest of users and use of the TS data.
158. The NSSRA should consider including a quarterly press release on activity of accommodation establishments in the press release calendar. The press release on activities of the accommodation establishments is a crucial part of tourism statistics in almost all EU countries as well as in other regions. Both tourism professionals and general public are commonly looking for this information.
159. The NSSRA should consider implementing a regular user satisfaction survey for TS. It may be organised via the website for users accessing the TS tables or by surveying key users of the TS.

## **2.10 Principle 12: Accuracy and Reliability**

160. Introduction of online / electronic TS questionnaires would eliminate measurement errors caused by the survey mode – paper questionnaire and manual data input. Abolishing paper questionnaires would allow devoting more time to develop existing products and creating new ones.
161. Introduction of a common identifier, e.g., registration number or a unique ID, for enterprises in all the administrative registers (Tourism Register, State Register and Register of Tax Authority, as well as the Business Register maintained by the NSSRA) will improve the timeliness and accuracy of data.
162. The NSSRA should establish an overview of non-response reasons and rates for each reference period.

## **2.11 Principle 13: Timeliness and Punctuality**

163. In order to achieve compliance with the EU Regulation No. 692/2011 concerning European statistics on tourism, monthly data on arrivals and nights spent should be asked in the questionnaire on accommodation establishments.
164. In order to achieve compliance with the EU Regulation No. 692/2011 concerning European statistics on tourism, monthly variables of bedroom and bed place occupancy and capacity should be added to the questionnaire on accommodation establishments.
165. As there is no household survey on residents travelling within Armenia and abroad, the NSSRA does not comply with the Regulation and requirements thereof defined under Annex II on national tourism. It is advised to introduce a household survey within a medium term. If introduction of a separate survey on travel is not feasible in the current situation, it is recommended and considered to start with a short travel module in the existing Household Budget Survey.

166. The NSSRA should include a question on the NACE category (55.1, 55.2, 55.3) as obligatory in the questionnaire on accommodation establishments in order to comply with the required breakdown of the Regulation No. 692/2011.

## **2.12 Principle 15: Accessibility and clarity**

167. In order to become more user-friendly in respect to individual data requests or customised datasets, it is advised to supplement the dissemination policy with detailed instructions for users. There is no information on e-mail address used for receiving information / data requests from users (it should be created) as well as no information on response deadlines and charges. The recommendation does not concern specifically TS, but applies to all statistical products.
168. To increase the TS accessibility, the NSSRA should consider expanding the TS section of the ArmStatBank and adding a table on incoming and outgoing visitors to ArmStatBank that currently may be downloaded as a MS Excel file from different location. The increased amount of TS in a public database could reduce the burden on staff answering phone calls and responding to data requests on TS. This applies to a number of tables and reference periods (accommodation statistics currently is published only starting from 2011).
169. The NSSRA should consider translating the quarterly publication “*Social-Economic Situation of the Republic of Armenia*” into English. Currently this publication is available in Armenian and Russian, but it includes TS and is one of the key data sources for TS in Armenia.
170. The latest date for updating the metadata file / quality report should be added.