



**Central Statistical
Office**



**Statistical Office
in Białystok**

**Meeting of Presidents
of Polish and Lithuanian Central Statistical Offices**

Białystok

9-10 November 2010



On 9-10 November 2010 in Białystok a meeting of the Presidents of the Polish and Lithuanian Central Statistical Offices took place. The participants were: Prof. Józef Oleński, President of the Central Statistical Office of Poland; Jonas Markelevicius, Deputy Director General, Statistics Lithuania; Raimonda Simiene, Chief Specialist of European Affairs and International Cooperation Division, Statistics Lithuania; Ewa Kamińska-Gawryluk, director of the Statistical Office in Białystok; Marek Morze, director of the Statistical Office in Olsztyn; Marek Cierpień-Wolan, director of the Statistical Office in Rzeszów; Dominika Rogalińska, director of Regional and Environmental Surveys Department in the Central Statistical Office of Poland; Marek Mroczkowski, Regional and Environmental Surveys Department in the Central Statistical Office of Poland; and employees of the Statistical Office in Białystok.

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss possibilities and ways of cooperation between Polish and Lithuanian statistical offices. The cooperation would be a continuation of the realization of the agreement which was concluded in 1991 between the Central Statistical Office of Poland and the Department of Statistics of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania.

Four subjects were discussed during the meeting: the course of development of Polish and Lithuanian statistical systems – the basis and scope of their functioning and their way of organizing statistical surveys; transborder areas as the subject of statistical surveys; selected areas of potential mutual cooperation and common informational infrastructure in the transborder areas; and possibilities for its financing from European Union funds.

In the first part of the meeting, the President of the Central Statistical Office of Poland, Prof. Józef Oleński, presented information on the cross-border areas and the basis of Polish-Lithuanian cooperation on a regional level. Analyzing the possibilities for cooperation and development in the region, he indicated the strengths such as the complementarity of the transborder region, differences in potentials, and the institutional framework. He considered the information gap in policy making and business as a weakness. He said that the opportunity for the region is constant development and cooperation, which can lead to effects of scale in developing a common infrastructure. Summarizing, the President of the Central Statistical Office of Poland emphasized the cooperation between regional statistical offices, reacting to data users' needs as well as providing information to local governments, NGOs, and businesses. He also focused on the opportunities afforded by the possession of information about the neighbouring country, and thus he justified the necessity of creating a common regional database.

Afterwards, director of Regional and Environmental Surveys Department, Dominika Rogalińska, presented issues concerning regional data banks as a complete source of knowledge about the regions. She discussed the history of the creation of a data bank, its organization and

content. She also presented the prototype of the Local Data Bank and added that data dissemination system is available on-line and off-line. She said that the Local Data Bank will begin functioning in December 2010.

Subsequently, the vice-president of the Statistical Office in Lithuania, Jonas Markelevicius, discussed the subject of the statistical system in Lithuania. In his presentation he concentrated on the issue of reorganization in Lithuanian statistics (reducing the number of regional statistical offices from 10 to 5) arising from the fact that data for users comes mostly from administrative databases. Moreover, he mentioned time reporting system, electronic document management system 'SODAS', shortening the terms of release of statistical information in the post-reporting period, as well as the reduction of the statistical response burden. He pointed out that only statistics may provide the most complete set of information, because of the fact that it collects data from various fields. This was the reason for Lithuania's creating a portal for data dissemination, including data from non-statistical data sources.

Afterwards, the vice-president of the Statistical Office in Lithuania, Jonas Markelevicius, presented the database of economic indicators. He discussed the Regional Database functioning in Lithuania, its organization and functionality.

Transborder areas as the subject of statistical surveys was the next issue discussed during the meeting. Director of Statistical Office in Rzeszów, Marek Cierpiak-Wolan, presented transborder area surveys currently being conducted, as well as perspectives for their development. He stated that despite the development of regional statistics, there are problems with surveys' realization connected with the lack of data available on the lowest levels of aggregation. In spite of these problems, it is important to create a system of information as well as carrying out an analysis of processes occurring in transborder areas. Taking into consideration the demand for data concerning the transborder areas, Poland has initiated surveys at the external border of the European Union. The director presented characteristic features of transborder areas, among which we can distinguish greater activity and the dynamics of newly emerging entities, the higher dynamics of proceeds from sales, average employment and salaries, as well as growth in the number of work permits for foreigners. The subject of the presentation was also to show the significance of these surveys, applied methods and the scope of analysis.

Referring to the presentation of Mr Marek Cierpiak-Wolan, the director of the Statistical Office in Białystok, Ewa Kamińska-Gawryluk introduced the issue of monitoring and analysis of social and economic phenomena in the Polish-Belarusian borderland. She presented information on the subject of the realization of enquiry surveys conducted in Podlaskie voivodship at the Polish-Belarusian border. She remarked that the Statistical Office in Białystok participates in the

survey of goods and services turnover at the external border of the European Union as well as the pilot survey of border traffic at its internal border. She also added that since June 2009, cooperation with the Central Statistical Office of Grodno Oblast has been conducted and its measurable effect is the publication 'Grodno Oblast and Podlaskie Voivodship in 2008.' Director of the Statistical Office in Olsztyn, Marek Morze, added that, since 1993, cooperation with the statistical services of Kaliningrad Oblast has been conducted and has resulted in the edition of the joint publication 'Kaliningrad Oblast and Warminsko-Mazurskie Voivodship in Numbers, 2010.' Moreover, the Statistical Office in Olsztyn carries out transborder surveys coordinated by the Statistical Office in Rzeszów at the border with Russia.

The next topics discussed during the meeting were issues likely to become the subject of bilateral cooperation in the future. Two employees of the Statistical Office in Białystok, Ms Edyta Kalwajtys and Mr Grzegorz Błachowski, discussed respectively issues of agricultural census as well as forestry, environmental protection, and nature preservation. In the presentation of the agricultural census, the method of its organization – its fully electronic way of data gathering and processing – were stressed. Subsequently, the director of the Statistical Office in Białystok, Ewa Kamińska-Gawryluk, discussed publications at a regional level. In the summary it was suggested that it should be indicated which data concerning the transborder areas is worth including in regional publications. Director of the Statistical Office in Olsztyn, Marek Morze, proposed agricultural surveys, the register, and censuses, as areas of potential cooperation. During the discussion, vice-president of the Statistical Office in Lithuania, Jonas Markelevicius, was particularly interested in cooperation within the widely understood scope of forestry, environmental protection, and nature preservation.

The last issue discussed during the meeting was the possibility of creating a common informational infrastructure and finding means to finance it. Director of the Statistical Office in Rzeszów, Marek Cierpień-Wolan, stressed that the processes of integration and disintegration generate the necessity to gather more and more information. He pointed out the problem of data comparability, and indicated the direction of cooperation in transborder areas, namely conducting permanent monitoring of socio-economic phenomena, preparing methodological reports, creating a synthetic indicator illustrating the level of transborder areas development (based on taxonomic methods), conducting joint surveys, as well as preparing thematic data banks.

In the end, Ms Ewa Kępa presented possibilities for obtaining financial support from the European Union for conducting Polish-Lithuanian transborder projects. Two available Projects were discussed: the Cross Border Cooperation Programme Poland-Lithuania, as well as the Lithuania-Poland-Russia Cross-Border Cooperation Programme.

During the meeting, the Presidents of the Polish and Lithuanian Statistical Offices exchanged views on the topics being presented. Summarizing, Prof. Józef Oleński indicated possible means of cooperation between the Statistical Offices of Poland and Lithuania. He suggested that, first and foremost, it is necessary to take actions not requiring higher expenditures, such as direct contacts between regional statistical offices. He stated that a beneficial way of cooperating would be to conduct a survey of goods and services turnover in border traffic at other Lithuanian external borders (their border with Russia and Belarus) by Lithuanian statistics. He also proposed the prospect of compiling a synthetic indicator of development. He said that a transborder database would be a useful, though expensive, tool to achieve this aim and suggested obtaining funds from the European Union for creating the base. Extension of the regional data bank is another possible means of cooperation. The next element of cooperation should be publications which, however, should not constitute the only and most important outcome of such cooperation. It was also stated that the exchange of experiences and opinions on methodology, for example during organized methodological seminars, will be appropriate. The President, Józef Oleński, stressed the importance of statistical literacy concerning methodology. He suggested adapting flash estimates of GDP.

In the end, participants expressed their satisfaction with the meeting and recognized its importance. The presidents of the Polish and Lithuanian Statistical Offices hope to intensify cooperation in the discussed areas.