

A contribution to developed statistical systems in developing countries – the experience of the Banco de Portugal

José Sérgio Branco¹ and Filipa Lima²

1. Introduction

The production of statistics is a social responsibility. Therefore, the statistical system must be organised in the most efficient way possible, ie by providing good-quality data to the public at the minimum social cost. Cooperation is a way of improving efficiency. This paper presents the experience of the Banco de Portugal in the framework of statistical cooperation and assesses the main benefits that can be reaped for all parties involved. The Banco de Portugal has a long experience in the field of statistical cooperation, which has traditionally involved countries from the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP)³ and, more recently, the acceding countries to the European Union.

The activities of the Banco de Portugal in this domain take different forms: visits of foreign institutions to the Bank; technical assistance missions to foreign institutions; initiatives of international organisations with the support of the Bank; multilateral meetings; and seminars. The role of multilateral activities has been increasing in recent years in comparison with bilateral training efforts.

In the next section, we will describe the main aspects of cooperation, including the motivations and the main benefits. The third section summarises the different forms of cooperation activities in which the Banco de Portugal has been engaged. We conclude with some final remarks in the fourth section.

2. General features

The basis of cooperation lies in the need to work together to achieve common goals. The motivation behind the Banco de Portugal's cooperation efforts lies in the notion that international cooperation is a means to exchange experiences, share good practices, and improve the quality of the service of central banks. The statistical function is an increasingly important function of central banks around the world. From original statistical areas of money and banking statistics and balance of payments compilation, many central banks have also acquired experience in other fields of economic statistics: national accounts, statistics on non-financial corporations, central credit registers or pension funds. The Banco de Portugal has itself experienced this widening of the scope of statistical provision in the last few years, and was formally recognised in 2008 as a Statistical Authority by Portuguese Law.

¹ Statistics Department, Banco de Portugal.

² Statistics Department, Banco de Portugal.

³ The CPLP is an international organisation which includes the following eight countries: Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Portugal, São Tomé and Príncipe and East Timor.

The cooperation activities of the Banco de Portugal in the field of statistics have been chiefly focused on two main groups of countries. The first group concerns the countries of the CPLP with which Portugal shares a common history and language and which have traditionally been special partners in the Portuguese cooperation policy. The cooperation with these countries focuses predominantly on the improvement of statistical capacities, in particular in the application of international statistical standards and the exchange of know-how. In the specific case of Brazil, there is an agreement of technical cooperation and assistance between the Banco de Portugal, the Central Bank of Brazil and the Foundation of the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), with an emphasis on national financial accounts.

The second group is composed of countries in the process of acceding to the European Union. In the framework of this process, countries should take steps to develop their statistical systems and align their data with European and international standards. The experience of Portugal in the development of its own statistical system, before and after its accession to the European Union, provides a very good input to the new EU member states. Seven countries were involved in collaboration with the Banco de Portugal: Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Latvia, Lithuania and Slovenia, which acceded to the European Union in 2004, and Bulgaria and Romania, which acceded in 2007. The cooperation activities do not end after accession; we also have cases where we have shared experiences with other EU member states. Additionally, outside the CPLP and the European Union, the Banco de Portugal has had very fruitful collaboration with other countries, namely, Chile, Israel, Japan, Malaysia, South Africa and Morocco.

There is a mutual gain from cooperation: the sharing of good practices, an increase in the comparability of statistics, the exchanging of experiences and an improvement in relations between countries. In addition, the fact that cooperation with those countries (especially CPLP countries) is regular, consistent and continuous strengthens the bonds between them.

3. Forms of cooperation

The cooperation activities of the Banco de Portugal in the field of statistics can take the following forms: visits of foreign delegations to the Banco de Portugal; technical assistance missions; multilateral meetings; support to international organisations; and seminars. The involvement of the Banco de Portugal in multilateral activities has been a relatively new feature in its cooperation activities. These multilateral activities complement the bilateral missions as they lead to the creation of an international community of statisticians.

3.1 Visits to the Banco de Portugal

The Banco de Portugal frequently receives, in its offices, the visits of colleagues of other central banks and national statistical institutes. These visits can consist of a complete tour of the Statistics Department or one of its units: National Financial Accounts and Securities Statistics; Balance of Payments and International Investment Position Statistics; Monetary and Financial Statistics and Central Credit Register; and Central Balance Sheet, Statistics Audit and Statistics Dissemination.

This type of cooperation has the advantage that the practices of the host country can be learnt at first hand. In fact, when implementing new statistics, the Banco de Portugal also visits countries or institutions which already have experience in the specific field.

Table 1 shows the evolution of this form of cooperation by country from 2001 to 2008.

Table 1

**Visits to the Banco de Portugal in the framework
of cooperation in the field of statistics**

Unit: days x participants

Year	CPLP						New EU member states							Other countries	Total	
	AO	BR	CV	MZ	ST	TL	BG	CY	CZ	LT	LV	RO	SI			
2001			19.0	12.5		2.0			6.0							39.5
2002	15.0			9.5		1.5			1.5				4.0	2.0		33.5
2003			18.0	16.0	1.0				6.0	6.0	14.5					61.5
2004			20.0	25.0		15.0			15.0		65.0					140.0
2005	20.0						4.0	20.0						1.0		45.0
2006	19.0		5.0	4.0										6.0		34.0
2007			1.0	2.0	6.0									4.0		13.0
2008	20.0	6.0				10.0	1.0		10.0	6.0						53.0
Total	74.0	6.0	63.0	69.0	7.0	28.5	5.0	20.0	32.5	12.0	6.0	79.5	4.0			406.5

Country codes: AO – Angola; BG – Bulgaria; BR – Brazil; CV – Cape Verde; CY – Cyprus; CZ – Czech Republic; TL – East Timor; LT – Lithuania; LV – Latvia; MZ – Mozambique; RO – Romania; SI – Slovenia; ST – São Tomé and Príncipe.

3.2 Technical assistance missions

Another form of cooperation is the organisation of technical assistance missions, which consist in the visits by experts of the Banco de Portugal to institutions in partner countries. These missions are usually aimed at the implementation of specific projects. Some of the missions are organised in the framework of IMF projects. Table 2 measures these missions by country and by year.

Table 2

Technical assistance missions

Unit: days x participants

Year	BR	CV	ST	ZA	Total
2002		10.0			10.0
2003			10.0		10.0
2004	10.0	40.0	15.0		65.0
2005	10.0				10.0
2006					0.0
2007			10.0		10.0
2008				5.0	5.0
Total	20.0	50.0	35.0	5.0	110.0

Country codes: BR – Brazil; CV – Cape Verde; ST – São Tomé and Príncipe; ZA – South Africa.

3.3 Multilateral meetings

The Banco de Portugal has participated in the meetings of the central banks of Portuguese-speaking countries on the national statistical systems, which take place since 2000 every two years (as a general rule). These meetings are held in different locations and are a unique opportunity to reinforce mutual contacts and exchange knowledge, which is especially beneficial for the host country. Table 3 provides the list of these meetings.

Table 3

Meetings on the national statistical systems of the central banks of Portuguese language countries

Year	2000	2002	2005	2006	2008
Location	Portugal (Lisbon)	Mozambique (Maputo)	Angola (Luanda)	São Tomé and Príncipe (São Tomé)	Cape Verde (Praia)

3.4 Support to international organisations

The Banco de Portugal also supports the organisation of IMF courses in Lisbon. The courses usually include speakers from both the IMF and the Banco de Portugal. They cover balance of payments statistics, monetary and financial statistics and the General Data Dissemination System (GDDS), as shown in Table 4.

Table 4

IMF courses with the support of the Banco de Portugal

Unit: days x participants

System	Year	AO	BR	CV	GW	MZ	ST	TL	Total
Balance of payments statistics	2001	15	15	15	15	15	15	–	90
	2007	10	–	10	10	10	10	10	60
General Data Dissemination System	2002	10	–	10	–	10	10	–	40
Monetary and financial statistics	2002	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	105
	2004	15	–	15	15	15	15	15	90
	2005	10	–	10	10	10	10	10	60
	2007	10	–	10	10	10	10	10	60
	2008	20	–	20	20	20	20	20	120
Total		105	30	105	95	105	105	80	625

Country codes: AO – Angola; BR – Brazil; CV – Cape Verde; TL – East Timor; GW – Guinea-Bissau; MZ – Mozambique; ST – São Tomé and Príncipe.

3.5 Seminars

In addition, the Banco de Portugal has also participated in recent years in seminars in Angola, Cape Verde and Mozambique. This is an additional way of bringing together experts from the Banco de Portugal and other countries and of exchanging practices and knowledge.

4. Final remarks

Statistical producers face increasingly demanding challenges, mainly derived from the revision of both the System of National Accounts and the IMF's Balance of Payments and International Investment Position Manual, which call for closer cooperation among compilers.

Among the various driving forces of good-quality statistics that include adequate human, financial, technological and legal resources, we argue that institutional cooperation at the international level in the field of statistics is a key factor to improving the quality of statistics. The Banco de Portugal is highly committed to this task through the use of various instruments. The way forward in this area is to proceed along the path we have been paving, which involves the exchange of knowledge in bilateral actions and the reinforcement of multilateral contacts.