

# Media Release

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## The EU Twinning Project between the Central Bureau of Statistics and Statistics Denmark is Launched with the Goal of Enhancing the Quality of Official Statistics in Israel

The Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics (ICBS) together with Statistics Denmark marked the launching of a two-year European Union Twinning project. The goal of the project is to **enhance the quality of official statistics in Israel**.

Many distinguished guests were present at Wednesday's celebratory opening event, among them, Mr. Sándor Szelekovsky, First Counsellor, Head of Trade and Economics Section in the Delegation of the European Union to the State of Israel, Ms. Signe Biering Nielsen, the Deputy Ambassador of Denmark to Israel, Prof. Shlomo Mor-Yosef, the Director General of the National Insurance Institute of Israel, and Prof. Danny Pfeffermann, the Government Statistician of Israel, as well as senior representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and directors from Statistics Denmark and ICBS.

Twinning Projects are a European Union initiative to help acceding candidate countries or neighbouring countries acquire the necessary skills and experience to adopt, implement and enforce EU legislation. In this project, the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics (ICBS) will work in collaboration with Statistics Denmark and with other European Statistical Bureaus in order to align official statistics with standards, guidelines, and best practices in the EU and in international organizations (e.g. OECD).

Among the remarks said at Wednesday's event, were the following:

**Prof. Danny Pfeffermann, The Government Statistician of Israel:** "Exactly three years ago I started my work as the Government Statistician of Israel. One of the first missions in this new job was to formally launch the first twinning project. At that time I had no clue what this project was all about and how important this cooperation was. But then, as time progressed, managers and workers of the CBS kept telling me how constructive and useful the project was, emphasizing two main aspects:

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- 1) It forced them to **check** more deeply and systematically what they were actually doing and even more important, **think** why they were doing what they were doing, in preparations for meetings with the experts.
- 2) There was a lot that we could learn from the experts from Statistics Denmark and the other European countries involved in the project, thus enabling us to enhance our own work and production.

"Our ultimate goal is to produce data that can serve as basis for further research and guide public policy. I am sure that together with our twinning partners from Statistics Denmark and other European countries, and with the other producers and users of official statistics in Israel, we will be able to enhance the quality of the National Statistics System and disseminate statistics of high quality to the benefit of researchers, policy makers and the general public."

**Mr Sándor Szelekovsky, First Counsellor, Head of Trade and Economics Section, Delegation of the European Union to the State of Israel:** "The European Union and Israel have established over the years an increasingly close relationship, going beyond simple bilateral cooperation, thus gradually deepening economic and political ties between our countries. Each Twinning project intensifies this cooperation in key sectors identified in the EU-Israel Action Plan, be it data protection, environment, transport, equal employment opportunities, telecommunications, veterinary services or rural development. Reliable and independent statistics of high quality is fundamental for the good and competitive functioning of a modern economy and also democracy, for that matter."

**Ms. Signe Biering Nielsen, Deputy Ambassador of Denmark to Israel:** "I am happy to launch this project and that Denmark and Israel are working together on it, after working together on the previous project. This successful cooperation benefits both countries. Our lives are influenced by political events and the economic changes in the world, but one cannot argue with facts and statistics, and we need them and will need them in the future for determining policy."

**Ms. Yaffa Ben-Ari, Deputy Director General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Israel:** "The Israeli and European economies are very similar, and therefore we appreciate the cooperation between Israel and the EU countries, and the support that the EU grants to this cooperation. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs works together with the CBS and relies on its data, and we welcome international cooperation in the field of statistics."

**Mr. Carsten Ulrik-Zangenberg, Director of Communication and Sales, Statistics Denmark:** "Many changes are occurring in the world, including changes in our field – such as information dissemination and big data, technological changes and the growing impact of social media. Our challenge is to adapt to these changes and become a part of them. Official statistics is a uniform language that crosses boundaries, countries and cultures, and the project we are launching today deals *inter alia* with these changes."

**Ms. Jolanta Szczerbinska, European Commission, Eurostat:** "I wish to express my appreciation for the work done within the framework of the first Twinning project and my conviction that the second one will be equally successful and satisfying for both Twinning partners. In the current Twinning project there are such important issues as quality in statistics and the access to micro-data for researchers. Both Twinning projects contribute to the strengthening of the role of ICBS as the coordinating body for official statistics and facilitate the implementation of the principles of the Statistics Code of Practice by all producers of official statistics."

The Twinning Project will be supervised by two project leaders, Mr. Yoel Finkel of ICBS and Mr. Jesper Ellekilde Jensen of Statistics Denmark. A Resident Twinning Adviser, Ms. Charlotte Nielsen of Statistics Denmark, will manage the project alongside her ICBS counterpart Ms. Batia Attali. Additional experts from Statistics Denmark and other European Statistical Offices will guide and support the project by means of a series of working groups, workshops, and training sessions, as well as study visits to Europe. The European Union is funding this project with a budget of 1,200,000 Euros.

The Twinning Project, which began in March 2016 and will continue for two years, includes four components: Quality management of official statistics, micro-data services to researchers, infrastructures for agricultural statistics and methodological and geo-spatial tools for improving the quality and the efficiency of field surveys.

In addition to the opening ceremony, a Memorandum of Understanding between the National Insurance Institute and the Central Bureau of Statistics was also signed. The Memorandum of Understanding is one of the outstanding achievements of our previous Twinning Project which was also conducted in collaboration with Statistics Denmark.

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