

## **Workshop on Human Resources Management and Training in Statistical Offices 14-16 September 2010**

### **Session 1: How to attract and retain staff for tomorrow in Statistical Offices?**

#### **Statistics Finland's Personnel Survey**

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#### *Summary*

Statistics Finland's policy on human resources development is laid out in its Operational Strategy, Personnel 2010 Programme and competence strategies. The Personnel Survey is both a strategic measure and a tool that Statistics Finland has been using since 1998. The Survey itself and the exploitation of its results have been developed in long-term co-operation between the agency's management, human resources management and trade unions. The electronic inquiry is comprised of a section of questions (from the Ministry of Finance Barometer Survey) which facilitate comparisons with other central government organisations, and a section of Statistics Finland's own questions. The annually conducted Survey can be supplemented with topical, thematic questions. The theme studied in 2009 was change. As a strategic measure the job satisfaction index describes the personnel's satisfaction with leadership, contents and challenges of work, remuneration, development opportunities, work atmosphere and co-operation, working conditions, flow of information and employer image.

The response rate of the Personnel Survey has usually been high at around 75 to 80 per cent. The diversified questions and background variables help in drawing a good picture of the structure of the personnel's satisfaction. The systematic way the Survey is conducted and the obtained results applied into practical actions form part of the agency's planning and monitoring mechanism. Based on the Survey, Statistics Finland's management outlines points of emphasis at the level of the whole organisation. In 2009, for instance, these were management of change, development of co-operation and the group of employees with 11-20 years of service. In co-operation with management teams, the departmental working groups on occupational well-being implement practical measures in their departments.

The Personnel Survey has inspired the launching of major development projects, such as those on the development of leadership and supervisory work (2003 - 2005), and the agency's intranet. Recently the focus has been on the exploitation of the results in the development of activities. In the past the analysing of the results was mainly assigned to an outside consultant but the departments are today supported in assuming more responsibility for the interpretation of the results. This is done through a so-called occupational well-being network, which provides a practical framework for learning from others and for adhering to agreed actions.

## INTRODUCTION

This paper describes briefly the background to the Personnel Survey, the Survey itself and its implementation process. Before moving on to practical examples of the usage of the Personnel Survey, we give an overview of the trends observed in the development of the Survey results over a few years.

Statistics Finland's policy on human resources development is laid out in its Operational Strategy, Personnel 2010 Programme and competence strategies. The Personnel Survey is both a strategic measure and a tool for directing practical development work that has been used at Statistics Finland since 1998.

The Personnel Survey has been developed in long-term co-operation between the agency's management, human resources management and trade unions. Its roots go back to the general policies for the development of human resources management in the Finnish state administration in the 1990s. At that time the Ministry of Finance launched projects aimed at improving the quality and cost-effectiveness of work communities in state administration. In the mid-1990s, Statistics Finland also participated in these development projects and made measurements of the functionality of its work community. In 1996 and 1998 Statistics Finland participated in a study on the effectiveness of early rehabilitation which also comprised an element measuring the functionality of the work community. Systematic monitoring of the functionality of the work community was entered as a goal in the 1998 Occupational Health and Safety Action Plan. Statistics Finland built its own Personnel Survey basing on the aforementioned paths of development.

### *Job satisfaction is a strategic measure*

High-quality statistics and good customer service are born from the actions of workers. In an organisation built on expertise the job satisfaction, renewal and motivation of the employees are highly important. As a strategic measure the job satisfaction index provides information about the personnel's satisfaction with leadership, contents and challenges of work, remuneration, development opportunities, work atmosphere and co-operation, working conditions, flow of information and employer image.

It is essential that the themes affecting job satisfaction are monitored and developed systematically. One measure of the 'Professionally' component of Statistics Finland's critical success factors is the personnel's job satisfaction.

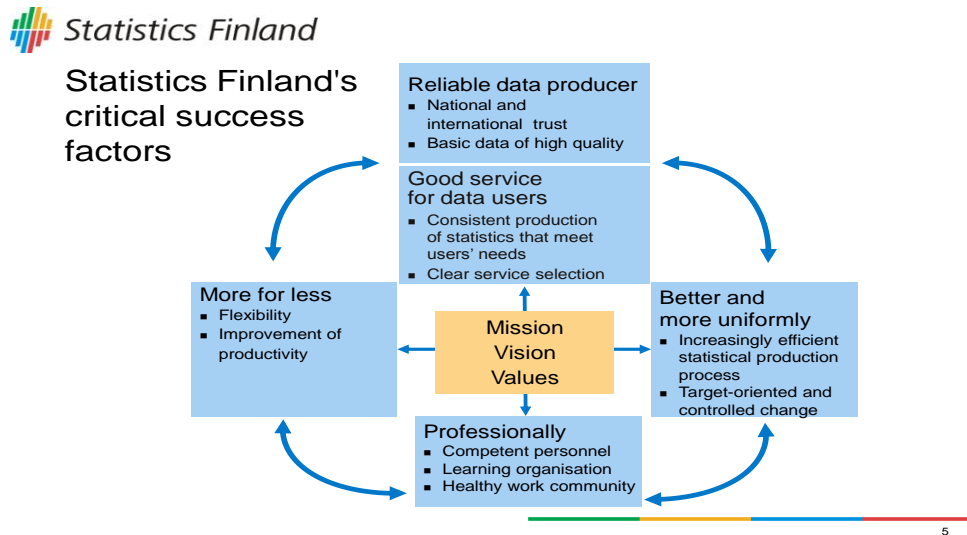


Figure 1. Statistics Finland's critical success factors

### *Personnel Survey touches on everyday work of employees*

Since the late 1990s, the perspective of occupational well-being has received strong emphasis especially in the development co-ordinated by human resources management. In the model for occupational well-being, activities are divided into physical, mental and social areas. The model gathers together the goals, means, monitoring and actors of occupational well-being. The Personnel Survey is a practical tool for the directing and monitoring of development work. The Survey examines the employees' job satisfaction, readiness for renewal, experiences of the functionality of internal co-operation, views about the realisation and clarity of strategic policies, and about the activities of the management and supervisors.

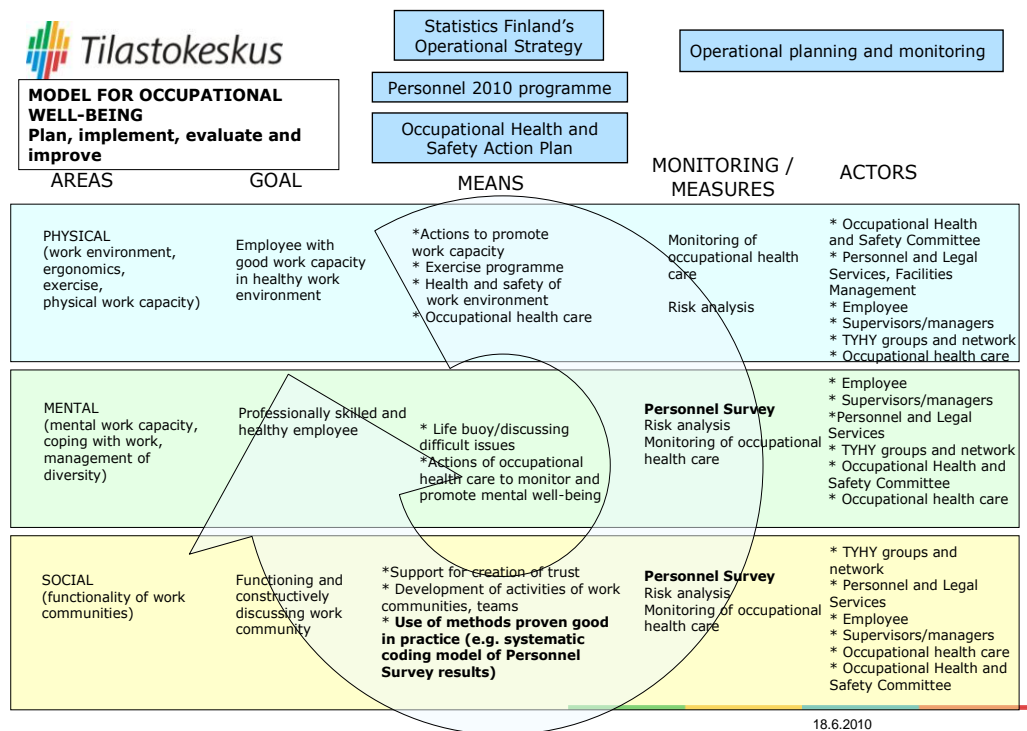


Figure 2. Model for occupational well-being is part of the Personnel 2010 programme

### Contents of the Personnel Survey

The electronically conducted Personnel Survey comprises questions of the Job Satisfaction Barometer survey of the Ministry of Finance (from hereon VMBaro) and Statistics Finland's own questions, in other words 62 questions in all. The VMBaro is also widely used by other state agencies to monitor and analyse job satisfaction. The background variables can be studied diversely by age, gender, length of service, type of employment contract, department, level of education and supervisory responsibilities.

In the VMBaro the themes of the questions fall under eight categories (precise questions are in Appendix 1):

1. Leadership
2. Content and challenges of work
3. Remuneration
4. Support to development
5. Work atmosphere and co-operation
6. Working conditions
7. Information flow
8. Employer image.

In addition to these the survey studies willingness for job rotation and intentions to change jobs. The VMBaro section includes 29 questions in all. The VMBaro is especially useful as it offers the possibility for comparisons between state agencies.

In addition to the aforementioned VMBaro questions, the Personnel Survey includes a battery of Statistics Finland's own questions for exploring the themes even more closely.

There are altogether 33 such questions. In the project which was concluded in 2008 to review the inquiry the questionnaire was tested at Statistics Finland's Survey Laboratory. The inquiry also includes an open question and the possibility to respond to a so-called ad hoc section for asking how a topical theme, such as change, impact of the economic situation or the Ministry of Finance's current study on further rationalisation or decentralisation of the national statistical service affects work.

For the VMBaro part the scale of reply alternatives is 1 to 5 (very dissatisfied, dissatisfied, neither dissatisfied or satisfied, satisfied and very satisfied). The scale of reply alternatives in Statistics Finland's own battery of questions is also 1 to 5, in other words, totally disagree, somewhat disagree, neither agree or disagree, somewhat agree and totally agree. The reply alternative 'Don't know' is also available.

### *From answers to means*

The Personnel Survey is conducted annually in the early part of the year. In 2009, the process was made lighter by deciding that only the VMBaro would be conducted every other year. The agency's Management Services department is responsible for the practical arrangements of the inquiry. The inquiry is located on an external server and it can be answered for a fortnight. The response rate has been good ranging from 74 to 80 per cent.

Apart from for the whole organisation results from the Survey are also produced by each department. VMBaro time series, indices by background variables, and distributions and indices by individual question are produced for the *whole agency*. The VMBaro enables internal comparisons within the state administration so comparing is made with the whole of the state administration, the administrative sector of the Ministry of Finance, and with state agencies engaged in research activity. Separate summaries are made of the open answers and of the possible ad hoc section.

Indices and distributions are produced for the *departments*. To retain confidentiality, data by the background variables are not produced by department.

The results are utilised as the basis for the development of activities at the level of both the whole organisation and the departments. The process progresses as follows:

 Tilastokeskus Progress of Personnel Survey

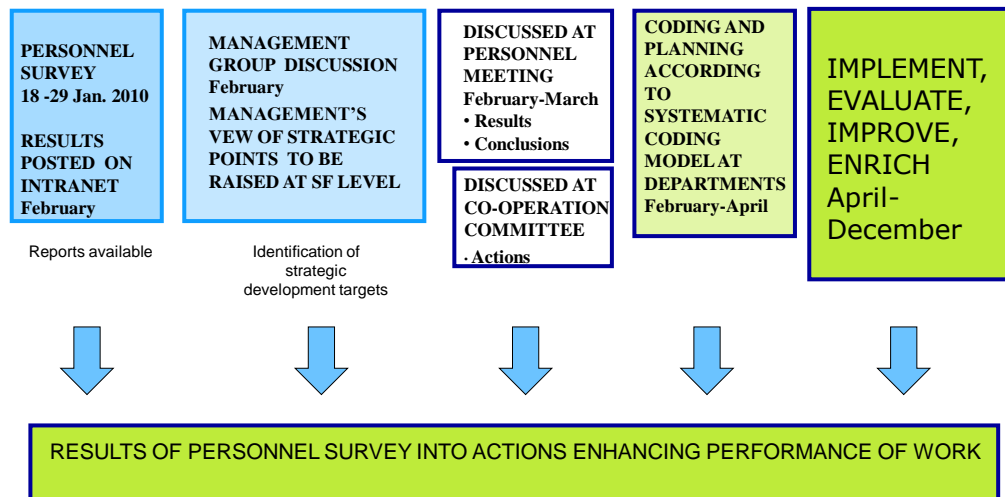


Figure 3. Progress of the Personnel Survey

Over the years diverse alternatives have been tested in producing and analysing of the results. The responsibility for the various stages of the inquiry has been increasing assumed in-house instead of employing an external consultant. At the moment the Management Services department co-ordinates the inquiry process, i.e. its implementation, preliminary analysis of results for the whole agency, and supports the other departments in exploiting the results to benefit their activities. The results are discussed by both the Management Group and the Co-operation Committee, i.e. a composition which includes representatives of both the employer and the employees. The development trend which concerns the whole organisation is discussed at a meeting open to all personnel.

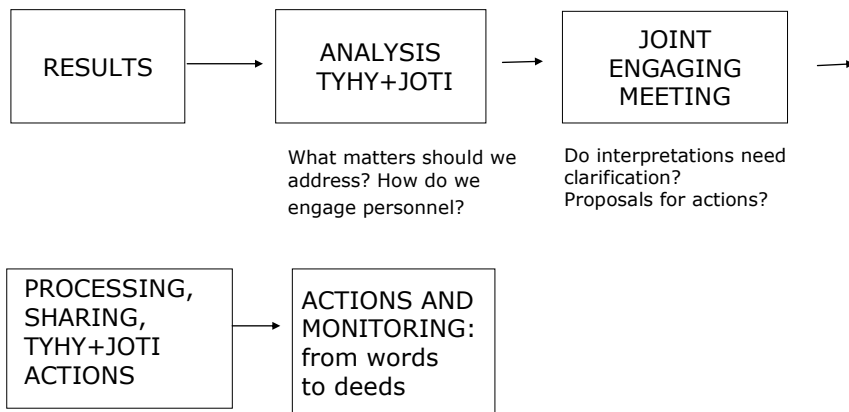
The consideration of each department's own results is the responsibility of its **occupational well-being group** (TYHY group) and **management team** (JOTI team). The TYHY groups were originally set up for the analysis of the results of the Personnel Survey. However, it was noted quite soon that there was need for systematic co-operation between these groups and the JOTI teams. Analysis of the results is still the most important task of the TYHY groups but the procedure has been developed towards a more collaborative and involving direction aimed at producing practical recommendations for actions.

To make the Personnel Survey process fluent and efficient, the TYHY groups jointly developed a so-called **systematic coding model** in 2008. Up to then each department had proceeded independently in processing the results. In practice the systematic coding model is a workbook guiding the assessment of the success of the measures that have been taken to improve occupational well-being. It steers the departments in comparing their own results with those for the whole of Statistics Finland and with their own earlier results. The inquiry serves as a basis for seeking **strengths and successes** as well as **areas for development**. The recommendation is to select 1-3 areas for development and then

focus on practical improvements to them. **Benchmarking** is recommended both within Statistics Finland and with other state agencies. Each TYHY group should make a **plan for progressing**. All activity is based on participation and good co-operation. The measures that are due to be taken are centrally monitored by the Management Services department and the Occupational Health and Safety Committee.



**FROM RESULTS TO ACTIONS**



*TAKING CARE OF CO-OPERATION AND PARTICIPATION*

Figure 4. Co-operation between TYHY group<sup>1</sup> and JOTI team<sup>2</sup> is in key position in a department

**Results and actions**

When the results from the Personnel Survey over the 2006-2010 period are examined in the light of the VMBaro, we can observe that the index figure rises for all sections right up to the year 2008. In remuneration the positive trend still continues in 2010 but as Table 1 shows remuneration is the only section for which the index point figure remains below 3. The overall index figure is 3.41, which can be viewed as a good achievement. Statistics Finland’s results are slightly better than the average for the state administration on the whole.

<sup>1</sup> TYHY = occupational well-being group  
<sup>2</sup> JOTI = management team

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Management (State)	3.25 (3.28)	3.40 (3.26)	3.48 (3.29)	3.39 (3.33)	3.39 (3.37)
Contents and challenges of work (State)	3.62 (3.65)	3.72 (3.65)	3.72 (3.66)	3.65 (3.66)	3.68 (3.69)
Remuneration (State)	2.72 (2.68)	2.82 (2.68)	2.85 (2.67)	2.92 (2.76)	2.92 (2.83)
Support to development (State)	3.24 (3.22)	3.30 (3.19)	3.33 (3.20)	3.27 (3.21)	3.23 (3.24)
Work atmosphere and co-operation (State)	3.58 (3.59)	3.67 (3.59)	3.68 (3.62)	3.62 (3.64)	3.65 (3.70)
Working conditions (State)	3.72 (3.51)	3.78 (3.46)	3.85 (3.46)	3.68 (3.46)	3.69 (3.50)
Communication (State)	3.05 (3.04)	3.15 (2.99)	3.23 (3.01)	3.11 (3.06)	3.10 (3.07)
Statistics Finland as an employer (State)	3.45 (3.18)	3.47 (3.12)	3.51 (3.12)	3.44 (3.15)	3.37 (3.19)
Overall grade (State)	3.35 (3.30)	3.44 (3.28)	3.48 (3.29)	3.41 (3.32)	3.41 (3.36)

Table 1. Development of job satisfaction indices at Statistics Finland in 2006-2010 (comparison between 195 state organisations)

In accordance with the systematic coding model, basing on the results of the Personnel Survey the Management Group outlined three areas for focused consideration in 2009: 1. Internal atmosphere and co-operation, 2. Management of performance and change and 3. The group of employees with 11-20 years of service at Statistics Finland. These sub-areas were not selected because results on them were particularly poor. If anything, they were chosen for special attention in order to sustain the past good development. The matters that were highlighted in the selection of the first sub-area were feelings of job certainty, openness in the preparation of matters and decision-making, difficult conflicts among the personnel and co-operation between departments. The second topic entity was comprised of the organisation of tasks, implementation of change, systematism and proactiveness of activities and the management of projects. The third target of selection, i.e. group of employees with 11-20 years of service, showed dissatisfaction with leadership and information flow, as well as with the sharing of knowledge and competence related to job tasks.

The Personnel Survey is of course not the only measuring instrument but just one among many others. However, it produces valuable signals about the employees' motivation and experiences. As topics the aforementioned challenges are wide and their advancement has been taken into consideration in e.g. preparation of strategic HR measures, diverse procedures (for internal mobility, internal labour market, discussing difficult issues/expressing early concern) projects and development work (career path project, development of leadership and supervisory work, process and quality work) and in coaching and training (kick-starting of expert careers, training programme in statistical skills, project work, mentoring, work supervision, networks).



At least three dimensions can be identified in the exploitation of the Personnel Survey: it can serve as a basis for setting up development projects (Cases 1 and 2 below as examples), it can help in supporting everyday activities (Case 3) or it can renew modes of operating (Case 4).

*Case 1: Setting up of the project for the development of leadership and supervisory work*

The Personnel Survey has been an inspiration in the launching of major development projects, such as those on the development of leadership and supervisory work (2003 - 2005). The Director General instigated the project for the purpose of improving leadership and supervisory work. Thus the primary impulse for the project came from the Personnel Survey result indicating that leadership and supervisory work had clearly deteriorated from earlier years. Naturally at the background was also a need that had already risen over a longer time period to develop competence for leadership and supervisory work. The work generated many kinds of renewals which are still valid. For example, the agency's management policy was defined, the division into units within departments was reviewed, supervisors' tasks, responsibilities and mandates were defined and a description was drawn up of competence requirements for supervisory work. The decision to develop supervisory work in the professional direction was a major advancement in leadership. Supervisors' important tasks are to lead people and enable statistical experts to perform their work well. The project described above is a proof of sustained development in which the results of the Personnel Survey could be put to efficient use.

*Case 2: Development of communication with intranet*

In the area of communication, the development of the agency's intranet can also be regarded as a major and strong signal. The results of past Personnel Surveys had indicated a need for improving intern communication.

*Case 3: Supporting the procedure for discussing difficult issues*

The procedure for raising and discussing difficult issues is an example of a procedure that has been clarified in the area of management. For leaders and supervisors, tasks relating to early intervention and raising and discussing difficult issues are some of the challenging duties in the area of people management. The Personnel Survey has helped to raise the subject up for discussion. Demanding situations requiring intervention and discussion relate to absences, state of health or difficulty in coping with work. Written instructions have been drawn up for the procedure of discussing difficult issues, which provide guiding outlines for behaviour in these situations. However, the instructions alone are not enough because highly sensitive interactive situations are concerned. Therefore, supervisors are supported with coaching and consultations, and by intensifying co-operation with occupational health care. The objective is to address early enough any possible difficulties in work because they reflect on all members of the work community.

*Case 4: Development of activity*

Recently the focus has been on the exploitation of the results in the development of activity. The question then is not of a large project but of gradual development in small steps instead. In the past the analysing of the results was mainly assigned to an outside consultant but the departments are today supported in assuming more responsibility for the interpretation of the results. This is done through the activities of the so-called

occupational well-being network, whereby learning from others and commitment to agreed measures become concretised.

The themes raised at the departments include general organisation of work in the work community, sharing of competence, development of project work, information flow and openness. Because the themes are broad it has been recommended that just a few matters should be concentrated on and real progress made in them.

## *Conclusions*

The Personnel Survey is used as a strategic measure and development tool at Statistics Finland. The Personnel Survey produces information for the agency's human resources management and other management about the employees' views and experiences concerning the internal employer image. When the management invests in measures for the development of the work community which improve job satisfaction these can influence the employees' job motivation and commitment. This is important to bear in mind with respect to the retention of the availability of labour force in a situation where the supply of labour force is diminishing and exit from the labour force is growing.

It is good that the inquiry offers the possibility for comparison with the whole state administration at the time when the state administration is increasingly being thought of as a group of companies. We are not only comparing ourselves with our own results in the past but also with other state agencies.

In future it would be pertinent to examine closely the relationship between major development projects and smaller development actions that take place alongside routine work. With a co-ordinated and systematic network-like approach to work the Personnel Survey can be extensively utilised.

Thus, the development of the inquiry itself has been a learning process which has been followed by learning how to genuinely exploit its results. The network-like activity of the TYHY groups and the exchange of experiences in the use of the systematic coding model have been creative activity supporting a new kind of discourse culture. It has brought the exploitation of the Personnel Survey down to the level of everyday activity. In my opinion the systematic activity of the TYHY groups and the use of the systematic coding model have served development.

## APPENDIX 1

## Personnel Survey 2009, draft battery of questions

### Background variables

1. Gender
2. Age
3. Length of service
4. Service/employment contract
5. Department
6. Level of education
7. Supervisory position or not (team leader/unit head/director or department)

### Questions:

Questions 1 to 10 are from the Ministry of Finance Barometer Survey (may not be edited)  
Questions 11 to 17 are Statistics Finland's own questions

*Please answer the following questions according to your own opinion. Assess the situation during the past 12 months.*

- 1 Leadership**  
How satisfied are you with?
  - 1.1 The support your immediate superior provides in matters related to your work and in creating preconditions for it
  - 1.2 The general organisation or work in your work community
  - 1.3 The availability of feedback on your work performance, command of professional skills and development in your work
  - 1.4 The fairness and humanity of the way you are treated by the supervisors and management of your work community
  
- 2 Content and challenges of work**  
How satisfied are you with?
  - 2.1 The clarity of the targets set on your performance and work in general
  - 2.2 The independence of your work and your ability to influence the contents of your work
  - 2.3 The amount of challenges your work offers
  - 2.4 The stimulation your work offers and the enjoyment you get from your work
  
- 3 Remuneration**  
How satisfied are you with?
  - 3.1 The clarity and intelligibility of the basis on which you are paid
  - 3.2 Your pay relative to the demands of your work
  - 3.3 Changes made to your pay if your work performance changes
  - 3.4 The fairness of your pay

**4 Support of development**

How satisfied are you with?

- 4.1 Your progress in your career and support for it in your work community
- 4.2 Your opportunities to participate in workplace training and other concrete measures offered by your work community for the development of your competence

**5 Work atmosphere and co-operation**

How satisfied are you with?

- 5.1 The internal co-operation and work atmosphere of your work community
- 5.2 The fairness and humanity of the way you are treated by your co-workers
- 5.3 The appreciation of your competence and work input in your work community
- 5.4 The realisation of gender equality in your work community

**6 Working conditions**

How satisfied are you with?

- 6.1 Your possibilities to reconcile your work and private life
- 6.2 The certainty of your job now and in the future
- 6.3 Your coping ability and energy
- 6.4 Your workspace and your working tools

**7 Flow of information**

How satisfied are you with?

- 7.1 The internal communication and flow of information in your work community
- 7.2 The openness of your work community in the preparation of matters and in decision-making

**8 Employer image**

How satisfied are you with?

- 8.1 The public image of your employer as a good employer
- 8.2 The clarity and intelligibility of your employer's values
- 8.3 The materialisation of the values in practice

**9 Job rotation**

- 9.1 Are you willing to embark on job rotation?

**10 Change of jobs**

- 10.1 Are you so dissatisfied with your present job that you are considering changing jobs?

**11 Leadership**

- 11.1 Difficult conflicts among personnel are tackled promptly at my department
- 11.2 Changes are implemented in a systematic manner at Statistics Finland
- 11.3 Management is skilled at Statistics Finland
- 11.4 Management is interactive at Statistics Finland
- 11.5 Projects are well managed at Statistics Finland
- 11.6 Systematic and proactive activities are based on a well-functioning planning and monitoring system at Statistics Finland
- 11.7 The role of a unit head is clear
- 11.8 The role of a team leader is clear

**12 Content and challenges of work**

- 12.1 I can use my own abilities diversely in my work
- 12.2 I know how my own work is connected with the goals of Statistics Finland and my department
- 12.3 I feel I can influence the activities of my work community

- 12.4 The processes that are essential in my work function well
- 12.5 Project work is of high quality and productive at Statistics Finland
- 12.6 My department has clear goals
- 12.7 My department has a clear plan for achieving the goals

### **13 Support of development**

- 13.1 My professional competence is up-to-date and developing
- 13.2 I co-operate with parties from outside Statistics Finland that are important for my work.
- 13.3 At my department problems related to job tasks are seen as challenges that can be learned from
- 13.4 Sharing of knowledge related to job tasks and competence is typical of Statistics Finland's activity

### **14 Work atmosphere and co-operation**

- 14.1 I give support and encouragement to my co-workers and supervisor
- 14.2 I can freely express different and deviating opinions in my work community
- 14.3 I trust in the support of my work community
- 14.4. Co-operation between departments functions well

### **15 Working conditions**

- 15.1 I can usually manage my work within normal working hours

### **16 Employer image**

- 16.1 The principles of statistical ethics are respected at Statistics Finland
- 16.2 Statistics Finland is service-oriented
- 16.3 Activity is continuously being improved at Statistics Finland
- 16.4 Statistics Finland is innovative
- 16.5 My department reacts adequately to changes in society and the development needs that arise from them
- 16.6 Statistics Finland has clear goals
- 16.7 Statistics Finland has a clear plan for achieving the goals
- 16.8 The activity of Statistics Finland is efficient and productive
- 16.9 I do work that is meaningful

### **Open question**

- 17 Do you still have something else in mind that you would like to mention in this context?