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EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
STATISTICAL OFFICE OF THE  
EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES (EUROSTAT)

ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC  
COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT (OECD)  
STATISTICS DIRECTORATE

**Joint ECE/Eurostat/OECD meeting on the management of statistical information systems**  
(Geneva, 17-19 February 2003)

Topic III: Efficient management of increasing technical complexity

**CHEAPER, FASTER, BETTER – WHAT ELSE IS NEW?  
REENGINEERING THE STATISTICAL PRODUCTION IN DIGITAL DENMARK**

**Invited paper**

Submitted by Statistics Denmark<sup>1</sup>

**Summary**

**I. Input-related issues**

1. eGovernment is a subject that gets a lot of attention in public debate in Denmark. The Danish Government wants Denmark to assume a leading role internationally in the fields that comprise eGovernment:

- Efficient communication between the private sector and the public sector;
- Efficient communication between different branches of the public sector.

2. Initiatives in these areas have a lot of impact on the way statistics are compiled and disseminated. Consequently, Statistics Denmark plays an important part in common eGovernment projects in Denmark.

3. The main project that seeks to make interaction with the public sector easier for enterprises, is called **virk.dk** (virk is a short Danish word for business), a portal with the ambition to become a single contact point between the public sector and private enterprises.

4. The presentation explains the ideas behind the virk.dk portal and also discusses how Statistics Denmark plans to interact with the portal.

5. The presentation also explains how Statistics Denmark has formulated the idea of a single **input database**, based on input and metadata in XML. This input database is a result of a proliferation of different

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<sup>1</sup> Prepared by Lars Pedersen (lap@dst.dk) and Niels Jespersen (njl@dst.dk).

paths of data input for the same statistics. When fully implemented, the different subject areas will have a uniform relational interface to input data, regardless of the input source.

## **II. Throughput-related issues**

6. The presentation deals with nothing but human nature - our continued efforts to produce statistics as effectively as possible. From the early days of information technology, Denmark introduced a number-based personal identifier system, that was used in all administrative registers<sup>2</sup> created both before and after 1967. With this key information, the Danish statistical system reuses information from most administrative registers – and the last traditional census was carried out in 1970. Ever since, the registers have provided enough information to make – for instance – a daily population census.

7. There were no off-the-shelf ways to handle these large amounts of data so we had to create a programming language of our own. The language specializes in merging large datasets stored on the basis of flat text files. A large bulk of our production is still produced by programs partly written in this language during the last three decades. To produce updated tables the ancient programs are only to be executed.

8. That is cheap and fast – the presentation asks: how can this be done better?

## **III. Output-related issues**

9. With the introduction of PCs in 1991, the first target was to speed up the production time for publications. This was carried out by introducing a standard design for all our publications. The introduction of a standard made it possible to make tools enabling every author to deliver a ready-to-print manuscript by using simple office programs enhanced by macros. Only recently, we released a guide on how to produce standard graphics in our publications. The presentation we will demonstrate the tool as well as give detailed information on the solution.

10. With the general rise of computing abilities, the demand for on-line access to statistics grew and in the mid-eighties Statistics Denmark opened our first on-line databank as a charged service. By 2001, this changed as we opened Statbank.dk as a free service for the world to enjoy. The presentation will give an overview of our Internet dissemination system.

## **IV. Other issues**

11. To keep us on track, our IT strategy outlines a statistical production model and offers a reference architecture that ties it all together.

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<sup>2</sup> Statistics on Persons in Denmark – A register based statistical system. Eurostat ISBN 92-827-4005-6.