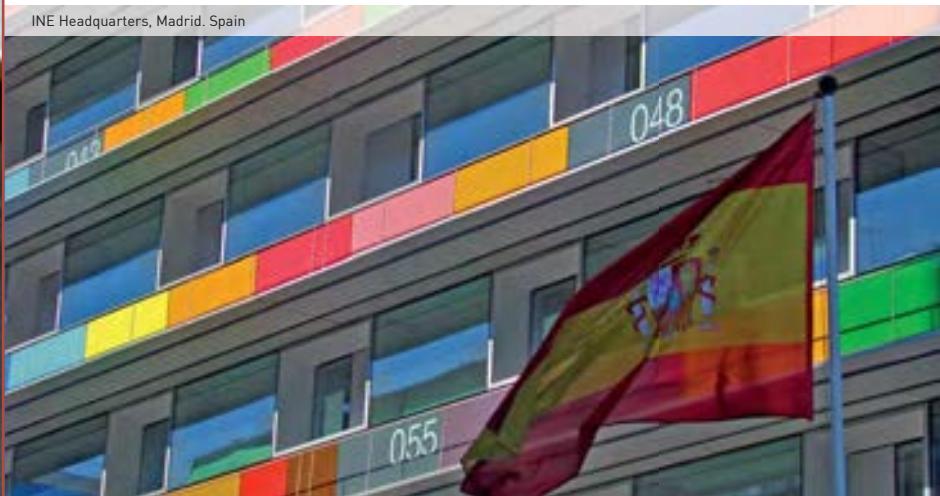


# interview with

## Gregorio Izquierdo

President  
INE (Spanish National Statistics Institute)  
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INE Headquarters, Madrid. Spain



Gregorio Izquierdo Llanes holds a PhD in applied economics from the *Autónoma* University of Madrid and is an accredited tenured university lecturer. He was appointed president of the Spanish National Statistics Institute (INE) in December 2011. Previously, he was head of analysis and surveys at the Institute for Economic Studies and head of economics at the Circle of Employers. He has written five books and more than 40 articles for scientific journals. He has led more than 70 publicly-funded research projects and, in 2000, he won the «Ángel Herrera» award for social sciences, a national accolade given by the San Pablo CEU University Foundation.

Izquierdo has taught at the Spanish National Distance-Learning University (UNED, where he is a tenured lecturer in applied economics), the University College of Financial Studies (CUNEF), the King Juan Carlos University, the School of Diplomacy and the Pontifical University of Comillas, in the areas of economic environment and applied economics.

Looking back on his past two years at the helm of the Institute, Izquierdo is satisfied personally as well as professionally. «My job as president of the INE has allowed me to pursue my vocation, as a public servant, in a position that requires advanced technical qualifications combining the two areas I have always been passionate about: statistics and economics. Although needless to say,» he goes on, «the INE's numerous accomplishments of the past two and a half years are the result of a team effort by more than 4,000 people.»

# *«The statistical operations with greater impact on the media are the Quarterly National Accounts, the Labour Force Survey (LFS), and the Consumer Price Index (CPI)»*

«Information and communication technologies play an essential role in the INE's day-to-day activity,» says Gregorio Izquierdo. Our website had more than 10 million visits in 2013. «The INE's demographic statistics have reached a high degree of development in the past few years and are now at the forefront of our neighbouring countries.»

**The INE handles a huge amount of statistical information covering all areas on the economic, demographic and social spheres.**

#### **Who is it all aimed at?**

The amount of information published by the INE is indeed massive. We produce 156 statistical operations, 45 of which are short-term. Each product has a different target audience, in order to meet needs as varied as personal curiosity about a specific datum, complex analysis for scientific research, newspaper articles, software development or prediction model design.

## **The INE and communications**

### **How are the data published?**

Statistics are presented on the INE website in different formats: press releases (some 280 a

year), results tables and time series. All these are designed to meet the needs of the different kinds of users.

We also provide two recently developed applications. The first calculates the variation in the consumer price index (CPI) between two points in time. It is used to update rents and receives more than 70,000 visits every month. The second shows the number of people included in the municipal register of a given town. This one receives some 140,000 visits every month. Alongside them, there is another tool that displays the frequency of names and surnames, with 350,000 monthly visits.

Our educational website «*Explica*» describes basic notions of statistics and offers tutorials on how to conduct a survey or how best to present statistical data, as well as informative videos on INE products.

**We can say the INE generates a gross social value of the order of two euros for every euro invested in statistics**



**Statistical operations with greater impact on the media are the Labour Force Survey, the Quarterly National Accounts and the Consumer Price Index**

We publish several specialist magazines (*más/INE*, *Revista Índice* and *Estadística Española*), which are yet another medium for people to learn about what we do and where we source our information. These magazines are also instrumental in the development of scientific knowledge in the field of statistics. Since 2010, the INE website provides access to a collection of working papers aimed at more advanced users. This way, we help to disseminate the results of original research studies.

**Is the INE's information reaching the general public?**

In June 2012 the INE website received an Honourable Mention in the PSI Alliance 5 Star Awards, which is evidence of our success in spreading statistical information. This award is granted to European public institutions that provide the best conditions for accessing and reusing the information they handle.

To find out about users' needs, we can rely on the High Council on Statistics<sup>1</sup>. Additionally, the INE conducts user satisfaction surveys

approximately every four years. The last one was carried out in late 2013 and the provisional results indicate a high degree of public trust in official statistics.

**Economic value**

**Which is the most valuable survey in social terms?**

In the second half of 2012 we began measuring the economic value of the impact the INE's statistical information has on the media, with a view to gaining a better perspective on the general public's opinion of what we offer. Finding out what users think about each individual product helps us optimise our use of resources because that way we know what they are interested in.

In global terms, we calculated the INE's statistical operations in 2013 to be worth EUR 382 million on aggregate. If we compare this figure with our total budget for 2013 (EUR 185 million), we can say that we have generated a

<sup>1</sup> The High Council on Statistics is a Consultative Body of state statistical services and social participation of respondents, producers and users of statistics.



gross social value of the order of two euros for every euro invested in statistics.

Statistical operations with greater impact on the media are the Quarterly National Accounts, the Labour Force Survey, and the Consumer Price Index.

#### **How can the public access your products and services?**

We have set up a number of channels for users to send queries and request the services on offer. Anyone can use them to access our products and services.

Our online communication channels are: the INE website ([www.ine.es](http://www.ine.es)) -which as well as the largest offer of data available for consultation provides an online form for users to send in their queries and suggestions- and the INE Electronic Office (<https://sede.ine.gob.es/>).

We also provide personal assistance in a number of ways: the INE central and provincial offices have departments to that effect; the library service, which provides access to the INE library's specialist resources; our phone-query line, which includes automatic access to

some statistical indicators and personalised service; our email ([www.ine.es/infoine/](http://www.ine.es/infoine/)) and telephone helplines (+34 91 583 91 00), which users can use to ask about specific matters; and the statistical information service *Infoeuropea*, which deals with queries on data published by Eurostat.

Queries are handled by specialist staff, so the quality of all the services is guaranteed.

**ICT advancement adds to our efficiency by enabling us to produce more statistics with a smaller budget and less staff**

## **New technologies and security**

### **What role do new technologies play in the INE?**

Information and communication technologies (ICT) play an essential part in the INE's day-to-day activity. In fact, we use them throughout the productive process, from sample design to results publication. ICT advancement adds to our efficiency by enabling us to produce more statistics with a smaller budget and workforce.

On the side of data publication, as well as providing an ever larger number of tables and data series, we now have social media presence through our Twitter account @es\_INE. Our followers grow by the day - they already numbered almost 15,000 by mid June. We use the Twitter account to announce statistics publications and share links to press releases and more in-depth information.

### **What challenges does the INE face in terms of data security?**

The principle of statistical confidentiality protects information during all phases of the production process (design, collection, processing and dissemination). In accordance with this principle, the statistical services are required to take the appropriate organizational and technical measures to protect the information.

The INE's security policy lays down the security guidelines that must be followed across the organisation to ensure our information and services are protected. Apart from this policy, which guarantees the physical security of our data, we use various anonymisation procedures to preserve the statistical confidentiality of the data, from an operation's design to its publication.

The INE faces significant challenges in relation to our partnership with the European Statistical

## Statistics applied to insurance

«We believe statistics are crucial for insurance companies to the extent that they enable them to calculate premiums more accurately and update them continuously based on the demographic information we publish: mortality tables, most common causes of death and population figures,» says Izquierdo. «The INE's demographic statistics have reached a high degree of development in the past few years, placing us at the forefront of our neighbouring countries.»

The INE also gauges the insurance business as part of the Spanish National Accounts, while the Directorate-General for Insurance and Pension Funds -a part of the Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness- produces the following insurance-related statistics:

- ▶ Private insurance statistics (yearly).
- ▶ Private insurance statistics (quarterly).
- ▶ Supplementary social welfare statistics.

**The INE's security policy lays down the security guidelines that must be followed across the organisation to ensure our information and services are protected**

System (ESS). One of them is the use of Big Data, which is available from different sources but cannot be processed using traditional software and techniques on account of its size. Another one is the exchange of microdata in certain fields of statistics between different countries. Both projects require a strong data protection and security policy.

## Challenges of public statistics

**The INE recently completed the process of deseasonalising its short-term statistical series. Why did you decide to do this?**

Short-term economic statistics are extremely useful for analysing economic cycles, but they are subject to seasonal and calendar effects that blur our understanding of economic phenomena.



Seasonal fluctuations form a pattern that roughly repeats itself every year. Calendar effects are defined as the impact on the time series for a given variable caused by differences in the structure of the months (or quarters) of successive years (in terms of length and makeup), while all other factors that affect that variable remain constant.

The key purpose of seasonal adjustment is to filter seasonal fluctuations and calendar effects out of statistical series so that the information we deliver is clearer and easier to interpret.

**Other challenges faced by public statistics include process standardisation and systematisation. What projects have been set in train to address them?**

Eurostat, the European Union's statistical office, is encouraging the use of more integrated models for statistical production. This is the challenge that European statistical offices are currently facing, which are focusing their efforts on establishing common languages to use in statistical processes and developing tools to maximise standardisation.



At the INE, we use the Generic Statistical Business Process Model (GSBPM<sup>2</sup>), which was developed within the United Nations. When we set out to improve our production processes, we always study the manuals and recommendations issued by international organisations. We also consult with other EU member states, particularly through the European Statistical System working groups. So there is a high degree of coordination at the European level, which is enabling our processes to become increasingly standardised and systematised.

**Eurostat has called for the INE to be given a more prominent role, with a broader scope and greater powers for oversight and control of Spanish statistics. What is your opinion of this?**

This is something the EU has been asking the member countries of the European Statistical System to do for a few years now. It is in line with the INE's powers under Law 12/89 on the Public Statistical Function, i.e. overall coordination of the central government's

## INE figures

The INE website (<https://sede.ine.gob.es/>) had more than 10 million visits in 2013, with 150 million pages viewed, 28 million database consultations, 17 million uses of applications, 100,000 downloads of methodological reports on statistical operations, 9,325 queries from Infoine and 4,671 requests for customised information.

The most frequently used statistical operations in 2013 were: LFS with 2,190,872 uses, CPI with 1,513,642 uses, and Population Figures (municipal registers and national population census) with 1,995,226 uses. Next were national accounts and hotel statistics.

Specialist magazines published by the INE: *másINE*, *Revista Índice*, *Estadística Española*.

«Contacting the INE» on the webpage:  
<http://www.ine.es/infoine/>

Contact number: +34 91 583 91 00

«*Explica*» educational website.

Twitter account: @es\_INE

statistical service, and control and supervision of all its technical aspects.

To be specific, Eurostat has always held that the INE should have a bigger role in fiscal statistics for the excessive deficit procedure. But most countries, including Spain, rely on collaboration with the comptroller offices of their ministries of finance and their central banks to produce fiscal statistics.

The Spanish experience, which began in 1993, has been very successful so far, so any change in this respect should be approached with extreme caution, not least because in this area the principle of subsidiarity allows member states to adapt organisations to their own legislation, accounting regulations and budgets.



**Eurostat, the European Union's statistical office, is encouraging the use of new and more integrated models for statistical production**

<sup>2</sup> GSBFM: Generic Statistical Business Process Model.

## New statistics and improved processes drive the INE forward

The INE has published four new operations so far in 2014: Continuous Household Survey, Business Turnover Index, Statistics on Labour Force Flows, and Foreclosure Statistics. The purpose of the latter is to produce quarterly information on ongoing judicial foreclosures, providing insight into trends in home evictions.

In addition, the INE has published data from the Labour Force Survey, including up-to-date population and household data based on the Population and Housing censuses of 2011 and is implementing the new National Classification of Education (CNED 2014).

The 2010 EU Regulations on the European System of Accounts, which will be implemented in national accounting as from this year, require all member states to change the base year and adapt to the new system, with the new weighting schemes and definitions it entails. «We will also be including the illegal, underground economy in calculations of the GDP, again following EU guidelines,» says Izquierdo.

Other new initiatives for this year include the INE's first Survey on the Integration of University Graduates into the Labour Market and a pilot study of the Survey on International Student Mobility.

In the area of socio-demographic statistics, the INE will launch the Household Projections operation, which will generate data with a 15-year horizon (2014–2029). And

in 2015 it will roll out the new Short-term Stock Survey, which will deliver information on immediate trends in the volume of industrial and commercial stocks.

The INE also has important projects where processes are concerned, such as, increasing the use of administrative records, in order to reduce data collection costs and the burden on respondents. «In a word, to be more efficient,» stresses Izquierdo. The Institute is also taking action to reduce the chances of companies taking part in more than one survey, and has adopted a system that enables businesses to provide their answers in XML files drawing from their own IT systems. In some surveys, forms aimed at small companies have been shortened.

A further INE project will integrate all the information collection channels used in INE operations (personal interviews, telephone surveys, online forms) by broadening the Data Collection and Management Integration System (IRIA) to take in all statistics. Work is also under way on a new Integrated System for Population and Territorial Management (SIGPT), which brings together the processes of municipal registers and electoral rolls.

The INE has been stepping up the use of spatial data, geographic information systems and geo-statistical methods for years as part of its data production and publication processes, following recommendations from Eurostat and the UN.

