

Kiwa certifies information security Statistics Netherlands

'Information security does not only occur on paper'

As one of the first Dutch government organizations Statistics Netherlands put its information security up to the test by an external party. Kiwa was chosen after the mandatory tendering process. 'Partly because of the price, but mostly because of the no-nonsense approach Kiwa demonstrated from day one,' says Erik Schepens, information security officer at Statistics Netherlands. 'There was an instant "click", essential if you embark on to such an intensive process together.'

Statistics Netherlands, founded in 1899, is a Dutch governmental institution that gathers statistical information about the Netherlands. In Dutch it is known as the 'Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek' (Central Agency for Statistics), often abbreviated to CBS. It is the Dutch authority when it comes to the collecting, processing and publishing of, among other things, demographic and economic statistics.

Statistics Netherlands' facts and figures are important for government, science and business: they base policy and objectives on them. 'Statistics Netherlands collects data about companies, groups of people and their environment', Schepens says. 'For example statistics on crime, unemployment or the number of newborn babies. In order for us to do our work, society must be able to trust we handle data carefully and that our information security processes are well organized.'

Meet the standards

According to Schepens, Statistics Netherlands takes information security very seriously. Before entering the ISO 27001 certification trajectory with Kiwa, the organization already had their processing of privacy-sensitive information checked against relevant requirements. 'In addition, we wanted to have an external organization test whether our internal processes concerning information security meet the applicable standards and standards. We wanted to know where we stand and if there are things we can improve. An ISO 27001 certificate also helps us to demonstrate to the outside world that our information security meets all requirements.'

Certification process

And so Statistics Netherlands and Kiwa got together in a three-month certification process. 'That started with a preliminary study, a "baseline measurement". This meant that our way of working was examined and that we showed Kiwa's auditors how we deal with information security within Statistics Netherlands. They have looked very specifically at how we structured our file storage, how we make backups and how our computer center is protected. During the process, Kiwa talked with IT professionals and other CBS employees who are dealing with information security.'

Structural focus

Statistics Netherlands may call itself ISO 27001 certified since October 2017. 'But of course that does not mean that improving our processes stop at that', says Erik Schepens. 'In any case, we have to re-certify regularly according to the standard, but information security is also a structural focus, something that does not occur only on paper. We have everything right now. Our Information Security Management System (ISMS, ed.) is functioning and the organization is aware of the importance of carefully handling data. But we continue to evaluate and, if necessary, improve it. After all, the technological developments surrounding data are constantly evolving and so do the security issues that come with them.'