

# Fundamental characteristics of the ESTONIAN statistical system and its transformation

Asia-Pacific Conference 24-26.08.2016 in Bangkok: Transforming Official Statistics for implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

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## Content

1. Historic background and description of the Estonian Statistical System
2. Coordination
3. Production of the SDIs
4. Success factors, conclusions
5. Questions for discussion

The screenshot shows a mobile application interface for Estonian Statistics. The status bar at the top indicates 'EMT LTE', the time '8:40', and '100%' battery. The app header is red with a home icon, the text 'ESTONIAN STATISTICS', and an information icon. The main content is titled 'GENERAL DATA ABOUT ESTONIA' and lists the following information:

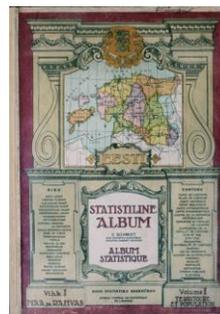
<b>Official name of the state</b>	Republic of Estonia
<b>Independence Day</b>	24 February (1918)
<b>Polity</b>	parliamentary republic
<b>Capital city</b>	Tallinn
<b>Official language</b>	Estonian
<b>Currency</b>	euro (1 euro = 100 cents) Estonia adopted the euro on 1 January 2011.
<b>Population, as of 1 January 2014</b>	1 311 870
<b>Population density</b>	30 inhabitants per 1 km <sup>2</sup>

## Components of the NSS (as adopted by the global conference and the ESCAP Committee on Statistics)

1. Legal framework
2. Strategic/Programme planning
3. Advocacy for the improvement of the NSS (*afternoon session*)
4. Coordination within the NSS
5. Engagement between data users and data producers (*afternoon session*)
6. Modernization of statistical organizations
7. Quality assurance and dissemination policies (*afternoon session*)
8. Human resources and skills (Session 3)
9. Statistical infrastructure
10. Data sources

## Historical background (1)

- 1921: The Central Statistical Bureau
- Comprehensive statistical publications in Estonian and French
- Two population and housing censuses.
- 1944-1991: Part of the statistical system of the Soviet Union.
- Mainly data collection function for the Soviet political and a planned economy system
- Central data dissemination in Moscow.
- Economic statistics mainly aimed at monitoring the production targets.



## Historical background (2)

- 1993 – extensive reorganisation, based on needs of an independent state and international requirements
- Since 2004 – part of the EU statistical system (ESS)



## European Statistical System(ESS)

- A statistical system of the biggest economic region in the World with 0.5 bn. inhabitants.
- Ca. 45 thousand people working in the system, budget ca. 3 bn. EUR .
- Production of OS is largely harmonized by means of the legal acts.
- Considerable differences between national legal, institutional frameworks, data production procedures and tools.

## The Estonian National Statistical System

- Two producers: Statistics Estonia (SE), Central Bank of Estonia (CBE)
- Official Statistics Act (completely redrafted in 2010) – closely linked to the EU Statistical Law (EU 223/2009).
- Statistical Council (since 2010)
- Networks of professionals: Advisory bodies (social statistics, regional statistics, PHC etc.)
- Rolling 5Y statistical programme, updated annually. Approved by the Government. Annual report on the implementation.
- Very high level of compliance with the European statistics Code of Practice (independent review in 2015)

## Official Statistics Act

- The reference material: Handbook of Statistical Organisation. Third edition: The Operation and Organisation of a Statistical Agency, ANNEX I.  
[http://unstats.un.org/unsd/publication/SeriesF/SeriesF\\_88E.pdf](http://unstats.un.org/unsd/publication/SeriesF/SeriesF_88E.pdf)
- General provisions; Governance; OS Programme; Data Collection and Processing; Data Storage and Dissemination; Census; Compelling respondents, Liability and implementation clauses.  
<https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/ee/Riigikogu/act/506012015002/consolide>
- The reference legal act: EU 223/2009 (Regulation on official statistics of the EU) (including underlying principles for official statistics in the EU)
- See also the UNECE '*Generic Law*' initiative and outcomes.  
[http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/stats/documents/ece/ces/2016/mtg/CES\\_2016\\_8\\_Add.1E\\_G1602171.pdf](http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/stats/documents/ece/ces/2016/mtg/CES_2016_8_Add.1E_G1602171.pdf)

## Statistics Estonia (SE)

- A government agency in the area of the Ministry of Finance;
- DG reports to the Minister only on administrative matters;
- Is **professionally independent** according to the national and European law;
- 337 FTEs;
- Annual budget around 9 mio USD (excluding the PHC)
- The stat. programme includes approx. 200 activities, including 155 regular surveys. More than 90 % are guided by **EU legal acts**;
- Pursues active policy of adopting EU and other international policies and standards;
- Has a clear coordination role within the NSS.
- Coordinates the system of classifications.
- Maintains the **statistical registers** (e.g. business register);
- Uses effectively modern IT tools;
- Demonstrates **high share of electronic data collection** (both, businesses and households) (Example: 2/3 web-response rate of the 2011 PHC)
- Pays high attention to reduction of response burden and **use of administrative data**.
- **Modernizing the organization**: Is implementing a process-based organization model (GSBPM). It applied centralized methodology, data collection, dissemination, ICT and administration since the beginning of 2000s.

## Public trust

- According to the Eurobarometer survey (2007,2009,2015) – nearly one half of the respondents in the EU tend not to trust OS.
- In Estonia: 46 % (2015) = slightly better.
- In Sweden and Finland: 73 % and 72 % respectively.

## Shortages of the Estonian NSS (1)

- Low hierarchical standing of the NSO. The DG is subordinated to a political post.
- Statisticians are involved in the policy dialogues only occasionally.
- Historical stove-pipe approach has still strong standing in the SE's organization.
- **Capacity building:** Low internal staff mobility, difficulties with recruitment and with keeping young staff.
- Relatively big survey samples => high response burden => public bad will
- Rather low reaction to changes in the environment

## Coordination within the NSS

### I. At the national level:

- (Almost) centralized system, some coordination needed

### II. At the regional level (EU):

- **CONTENT: PLANNING → DATA TRANSMISSION, QUALITY EVALUATION**
- **TOOLS: ESS Committee, High level conference of the DGs of the ESS (DGINS), Directors Groups etc.**

## Coordination content



Source: Statistics Austria, 2012

## Coordination of planning

- 5Y Strategy of the NSO - main development directions and targets
- National Program: government cycle (4 Y), main directions and targets included in the strategic development programme of the Ministry of Finance
- 5Y rolling statistical program: defines specific activities with complementing information

## Coordination of production

In the NSSs with different producers:

- Methods
- Data collection
- Data processing (e.g. Trade of goods (NSO) data for BoP (central bank)/ Trade of services (central bank) for the national accounts (NSO)).
- Storage
- Analysis
- Dissemination

## Coordination of processes

- Standardisation activities
- Common classifications
- Harmonisation of definitions and statistical indicators

## Coordination of quality

Common output quality aspects:

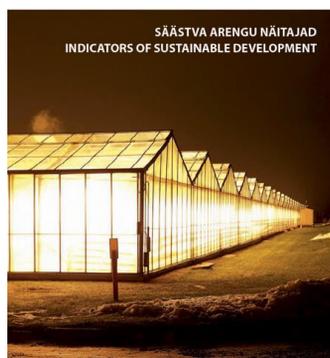
- Relevance
- Timeliness and punctuality
- Accuracy and reliability
- Coherence and comparability
- Accessibility and clarity

## Coordination tools and instruments

Institutions	Instruments	Standardisation tools	Communication + other tools
Statistics council	Agreements, Memorandas	Guidelines	Common training
Subject committees	Self-assessments	Definitions	Consulting
Technical committees	Peer-reviews, audits, inventories	Classifications	Common website
	Data transmission through single gates		Common/integrated publication calendar

## SDIs

- SD: consistent consideration in Estonia since 1995 by adopting the SD Act.
- Strategy „Sustainable Estonia 21“ (2005)
- Last publications on SDI's in 2015 and 2012
- 69 indicators on growth of welfare, coherent society, viable cultural space, ecological balance



## Production and dissemination of the SDIs

- 241 SD indicators adopted by the UNSC in 2016
- Considerable improvement needed in EST to produce global set of SDIs
- The new goals bring up new aspects in measurement for every country
- Multi-domain indicators: population, social, economic and environmental statistics
- Different institutions involved
- Input data from different subject matter units
- Compilation of indicators in one designated unit of the SE(environmental statistics)
- Special section on the NSO's website with the links to the respective release calendar, publications and database.

## Main reasons for a successful transformation (1)

### I. Supporting environment

- Political integration with the EU (led to the strong integration with the EU statistical system)
- Very strong IT-oriented culture
- Supporting education level
- Mature statistical systems in proximity

## Main reasons for a successful transformation (2)

### II. Internal factors

- Benchmarking, learning from others.
- Sufficient and stable legal foundation, including broad mandate for data collection
- Strategic discipline (commitment to a common vision), well established programme planning
- Leadership, employee commitment

## Conclusions/Lessons worth to extract

- **General:** Change in the environment has and will lead to change in the business. We tend to underestimate need for change.
- **General:** The ICT development has been a decisive factor for modernizing the statistical services.
- **National:** Transfer from one system to another takes time and needs a high quality strategic vision, commitment and execution.
- **National:** Centralization of statistical production allows a highly coordinated and structured approach.
- **National:** Coordination and cooperation with data owners is crucial. A NSO should be actively involved in design of administrative data/ A NSO should be consulted when creating, reviewing, revising administrative data.
- **General:** Level of integration within a regional/international statistical system may be the most powerful development driver for a less mature statistical system.

Thank You

## Questions

- 1) In your view, what is a modern NSO?
- 2) Which features of the National Statistical System of your country are the least characteristic of a "modern statistical system"? Which features are the most characteristic of a "modern statistical system"?
- 3) Please try to prioritize possible actions which could effectively contribute to the modernization of the National Statistical System in the region/sub-region
- 4) What is your role in coordinating the production of SDG indicators?
- 5) What is your legal and institutional framework for collecting and integrating statistics?
- 6) What is the role of the Chief Statistician in developing partnerships and institutional mechanisms?
- 7) How does statistical program planning in your country consider international/regional integration and support the user-producer interaction?
- 8) What are the realistic opportunities in your country to lower response burden on respondents and to make data provision more efficient and convenient? Please list the opportunities and obstacles.