

Investing in official statistics

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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Estonia

1. CONTENT OF THE PRESENTATION

1. Challenges of the global statistical system
2. Strengths (comparative advantages) of OS, value of official statistics
3. User involvement
4. Coordination of the SDG area
5. Costing of OS
6. Communication and branding
7. Questions

Adopting to major global developments

- Data revolution as a global trend
 - Increasing availability of data/new data sources
 - Emerging producers/competitors. Every system/organisation should aim at survival in the changing environment. The ability to survive depends on adaptability.

=> DISSEMINATION IS A GROWING AREA OF INNOVATION.

- Changed/new phenomena require new metrics
- Global value changes
- Migration
- Large scale political, economic and financial crises.
- Tightened budgets of the public sector. But quality is never cheap.

Comparative advantages/distinguishing value of official statistics

1. Objectivity and independence.
2. Transparency of its data and methods.
3. Respect for privacy and confidentiality.
4. Adherence to international standards and comparability.
5. Stability as a data provider.
6. Relevance of the information it provides.
7. Quality of the data it provides.

Source: Proceedings of the Global Conference on a Transformative Agenda for Official Statistics: Outcomes and Summaries of Sessions, p. 6.

Our comparative advantage is valid only if:

Official statistics are produced in full professional independence;

Based on scientific methods, rigorous quality criteria and the UNFPO

Source: Report of the European Statistical System (ESS) Conferences on a Transformative Agenda, UNSC 2016

The general problem – understanding the value of official statistics

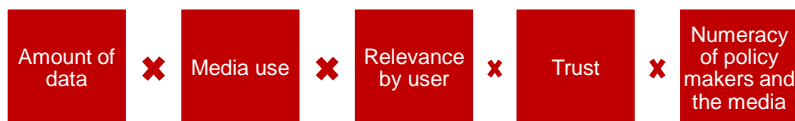
„Modern societies and policy makers show little awareness of the necessity to invest in the production of high quality statistics. Respondents are not enthusiastic when they are asked to fill in a questionnaire“

Source: Discussions in the ESS on strategic Vision 2020, 2014

Adoption the FPOS by the UN General Assembly (2014) means recognizing importance of official statistics for decision making at the highest political level.

Declaration versus reality? Clear call for strenghtening the statistical systems.

Understanding the value added of official statistics



Enrico Giovannini, German Statistical Week, Hamburg, 2015

Understanding the value of OS – dealing with the problem

- Depends on the overall culture of the informed decision making.
- Generally, a successful change relies on diagnostics (diagnosing existing situation)
- A change program should be monitored/evaluated (assessing achievements)

+

- Involving users, strong user orientation in the NSO
- Modern tools of dissemination
- Communication

Estonian practice/ADVOCACY

Official Statistics Act of Estonia, Article 1 (2):

„The purpose of official statistics is to reflect the situation of and changes in the society and to provide the society with information relevant to the demographic, social, economic and environmental development, including for preparing development plans and forecasts, developing different policies, conducting scientific and applied research, and making knowledge-based decisions.“

- International commitments (the multi-annual statistical program of the EU, UN SDG etc.)
- Reports of the international organisations (e.g. IMF)
- The producer interacts directly with the users when preparing the statistical program. Support from professional users (including ministries). Statistical program is linked to the NSOs budget

Estonian practice/Connecting statistics with the policies

A goal, defined in a subject area development program, should be monitored. (General principle imposed by a (lower level) legal act)

- The development programs include statistical indicators for monitoring progress.
- The indicators are discussed with the producers of relevant statistics.
- The statistical work program document should specify for all surveys:
 - relevant policy,
 - output indicators,
 - cost.

Estonian practice/INVOLVING USERS (1)

To stay relevant -> Systematic approach: institutions, tools.

- We call data users and respondents „Clients“. It has changed our customer-oriented culture.
- Our goal is to increase its analytical capability to explain/interpret the published figures (publications, the Blog).
- When contacting respondents – the purpose of data collection should be explained.

INSTITUTIONS:

- Statistical Council (NA) advises upon preparation of the statistical program. Users should be members of the SC.
- Subject area advisory councils.

Estonian practice/INVOLVING USERS(2)



TOOLS:

- Web-based tool for standardised proposals on surveys, output indicators, methodology, sample size, relevance
- Training courses for users and respondents
- User surveys about their needs and satisfaction (starting from 1996)
- Measuring use of statistics (e.g. hits on the database tables)
- Customer contacts are registered in the CRM system

Estonian practice/SDG Coordination

- SD Commission
- Inter-ministerial WG on SD
- The Government Office is acting as a coordinator.
- The NSO contributes to the work of the national bodies and producing the SDIs (among others).
- Within the NSO: clearly dedicated unit responsible for SDIs (environmental statistics)
- National SDIs are only partly compliant with the UN commitment.
- Renewal of SDI's starts in 2017 to get better in line with the UN 2030 Agenda.

Estonian practice/MODERN DISSEMINATION (1)

- Dissemination policy is well introduced.
<http://www.stat.ee/en/dissemination-policy>
- Central dissemination unit in the NSO, responsible for user needs and dissemination.
- The underlying principles:
 - Equal access to OS, simultaneous release through all products/channels, free of charge (incl. electronic download of the publications)
 - Release calendar on the website, on 01.10 for the next year (blog posts are irregularly released)
 - Data is disseminated with metadata
 - Principle of impartiality
 - Procedure for commenting on the misinterpretation, misuse, criticism.

The screenshot displays the Estonian Statistical Database website. The main navigation bar is red with the logo 'STATISTIKA ESTONIA' and links for 'Frontpage', 'Homepage', 'Contacts', and 'Feedback'. Below the navigation bar are two buttons: 'Find statistics' and 'Submit data'. The central content area is titled 'Release calendar' and features a search form with the following options:

- Subject Area: Population
- Period: January 2015
- Type: News Releases
- Presentation: Type / Area / Title

A 'Show' button is located to the right of the search form. Below the search form, there is a calendar for January 2015. The calendar shows the following dates: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31. Below the calendar, there is a section titled 'Release calendar' with a link to 'Eurostat release calendar'. At the bottom of the page, there is a 'Find statistics' section with links for 'Economy', 'Environment', and 'Population'. The Windows taskbar at the bottom shows the date and time as 16:00 on 22.09.2015.

Estonian practice/MODERN DISSEMINATION (2)

- Segmentation of users: infrequent users; main users; key users
- Systematic customer relationship management (CRM) in place since 2007
- Timeliness is measured across the whole product portfolio
- Clear procedure for regular, irregular, unplanned (correction of errors) revisions
- In case of irregular (major) revisions a written notice is sent in advance to relevant users
- Clear procedure for media response (criticism, misinterpretation, misuse)
- Standardised ordering process for statistical information

SEGMENTATION OF USERS

Key users

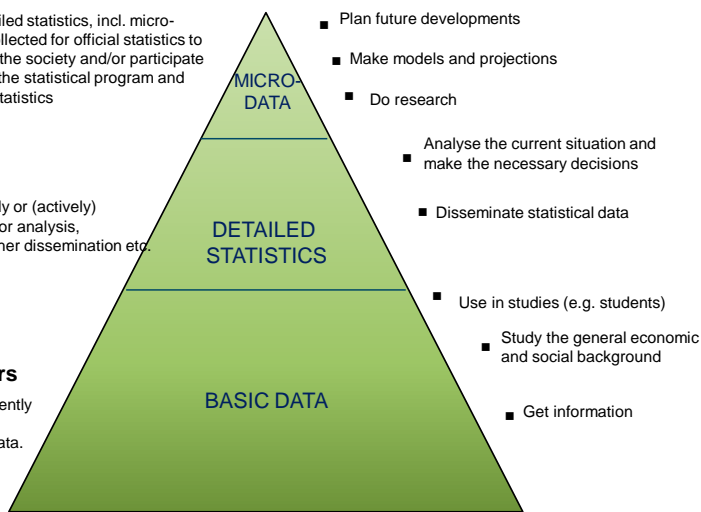
Mostly use very detailed statistics, incl. micro-data; use the data collected for official statistics to create new value for the society and/or participate in the preparation of the statistical program and the development of statistics

Main user

Use statistics regularly or (actively) in specific periods – for analysis, decision-making, further dissemination etc.

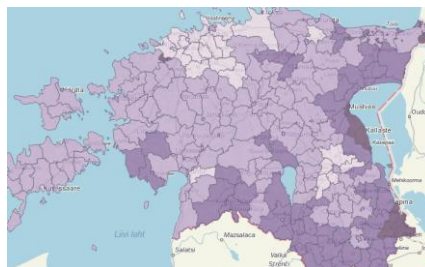
Infrequent users

Use statistics infrequently or randomly, mostly interested in basic data.



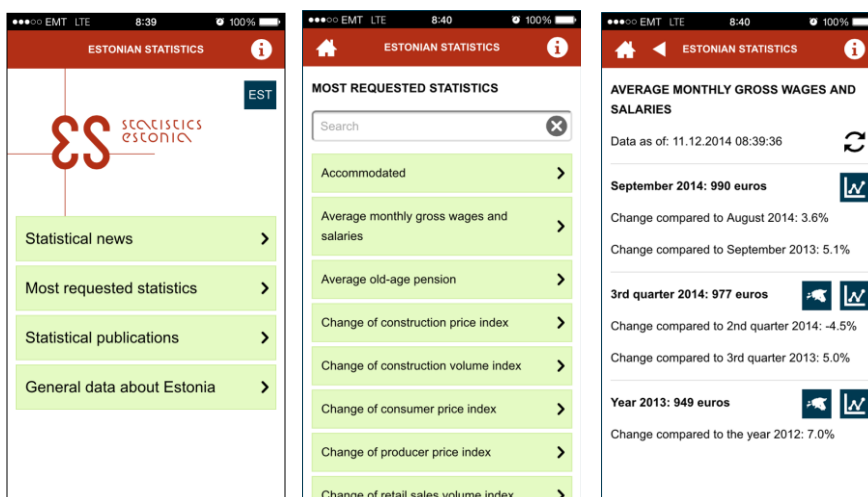
Not just database tables(1)

- Predefined data tables, automatically updated from the public stat. DB
- Public use files
- Statistics map application
- Smart devise app „Estonian statistics“
- CPI calculator
- Purchasing power calculator
- Visualisation tools
- International statistics section

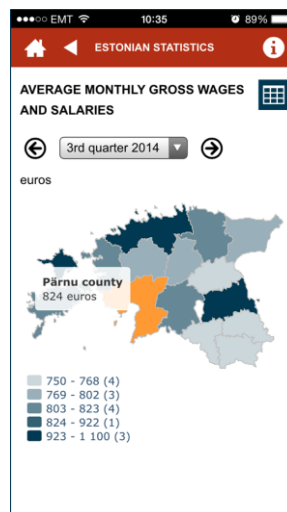
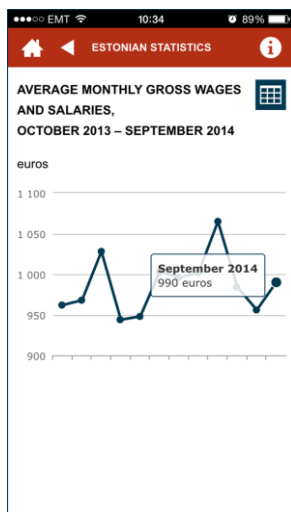


At-poverty risk, regional data

Not just database tables/Estonian statistics app (1)



Not just data tables/Estonian statistics app (2)



Costing of official statistics/Estonian case

- Product-based (survey, a development project) cost accounting.
- No process-based cost accounting in place.
- Estimated cost of each statistical activity is included in the statistical program.
- Costing is based on a detailed time recording (weekly) system.

COMMUNICATION/Promoting the value (1)

- 150-160 news releases p.a. in Estonian and English
- Press conferences
- Thematic conferences
- Articles in the press
- FB, Blog, Twitter, Slideshare – mainly to promote official statistics and statistical literacy; to change the attitude of citizens who often characterise statistics as dry and formal
- Outsourced media monitoring of ca. 120 channels.
- Media training for employees (writing, presenting)

COMMUNICATION/Promoting the value (2)

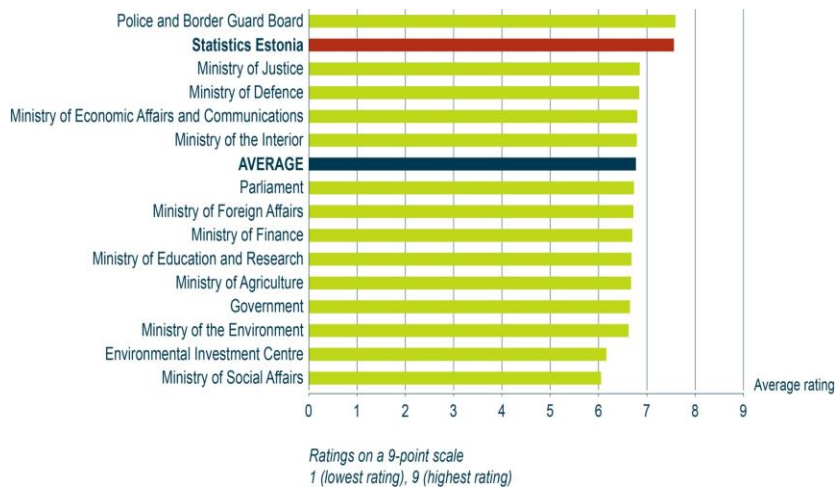
Communicating the value through QUALITY

- Implementing the quality management system (TQM, EFQM), frameworks dealing with institutional quality (FPOS), process quality, product/output quality
- ESS Code of Practice
- Metadata on quality, linked to the public database
- Standardized quality reports of the data sets

DOES THE USERS ARE AWARE OF OUR QUALITY EFFORTS?

No...

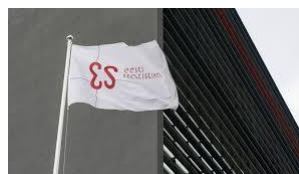
General rating of media relations, 2014

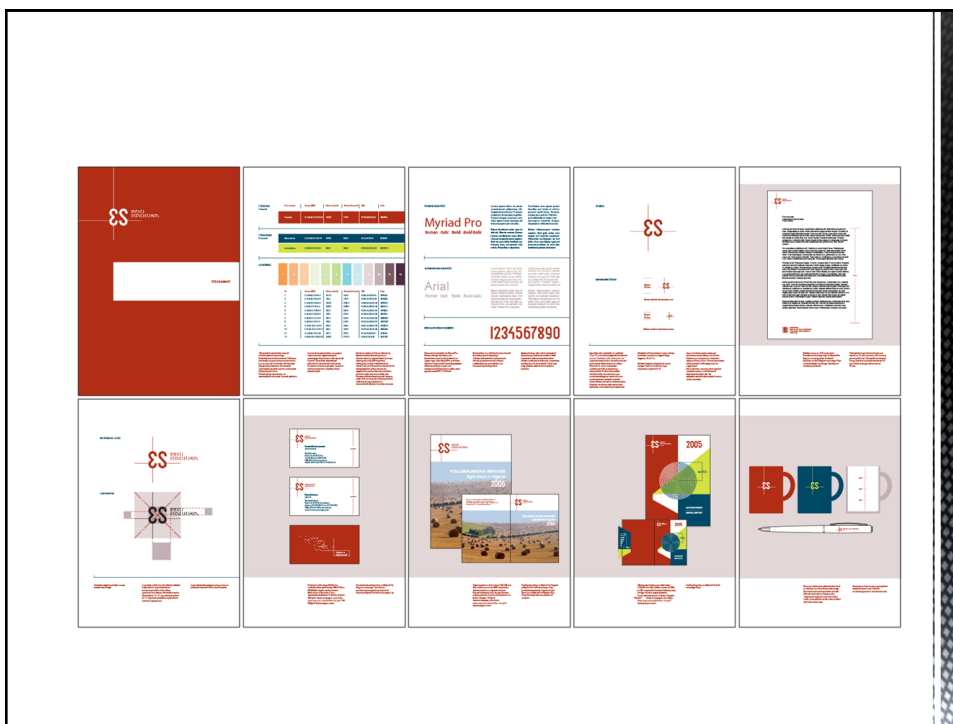


Source: Statistics Estonia

Branding

- Diverging logotype, not similar to this applied by the Government
- Consistent design and lay-out of any materials
- Trademark: 'Statistics Estonia' instead of 'State statistical authority', referring to the product
- Very common approach in the EU ('Eurostat' instead of 'European Commission')
- Systematic application of the new visual identity since 2006





Questions

- 1) If Your NSO's budget for 2017-2020 would be increased significantly (e.g. 10 - 20 %), which investments you would consider in order to increase value added of the output produced by your institution? (This investment should also contribute to the production of the SDIs.)
- 2) In Your opinion, which quality aspects of official statistics have the greatest influence on the value added and comparative advantages of official statistics? Which one should be placed on the list of the priority actions in (a) the Asia-Pacific region; (b) its sub-regions; (c) your country?
- 3) Usually, the value of official statistics is not widely recognized (or undervalued) by policy makers and respondents. Is this statement relevant for your country? How well is the value of official statistics understood in your country?
- 4) Are statistics produced by a national statistical system uniquely branded and recognized by the public as official statistics?
- 5) Are current investments in national statistical systems adequate to meeting the demands of users? What should be done to improve the accessibility of existing data and metadata for users? Which types of collaborative activities for the region/sub-region could help with meeting users demands more completely?

Thank You

Recommendations (1)

- The NSOs should fully apply and communicate the FPOS adopted by the UN General Assembly when communicating with the stakeholders.
- The NSOs should apply systematic statistical program planning, to strengthen coordination and user engagement. They should share respective best practices and tools. The national statistical work programs should be consolidated and be in line with the regional/sub-regional work programs. The national statistical programs should consider the need for developing, producing and disseminating the SDIs.
- The national governmental authorities should set up legal base, strategic programs and coordination mechanisms aiming at consistent governance of the SD. The NSOs should be involved in these arrangements to prepare for production of high quality indicators aimed at measuring the goals.
- The NSSs should strengthen cooperation with the academic and education institutions to raise overall statistical awareness and to support the statistical capacity building.

Recommendations (2)

ESTABLISH A FIRM FOCUS ON USERS/CUSTOMERS:

- The NSSs should elaborate a reference guideline for best communication and dissemination policies and practices. The NSOs should apply and publish a release calendar for statistical products.
- The NSOs should intensify communication with and consultation of users. For instance, permanent user advisory bodies for relevant topics should be established.
- The NSOs should further develop modern public statistical databases accompanied by metadata, notably with the self-tabulation option (including information on methodology and quality).
- The NSOs should facilitate the use of confidential microdata for scientific and research purposes.