UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE   29 May 2015
CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

Workshop on the Communication of Statistics
(Washington, D.C. United States of America, 27-29 April 2015)

REPORT OF THE WORKSHOP

1. The Workshop on the **Communication of Statistics** was held in Washington, D.C. United States of America, from 27 to 29 April 2015. It was attended by representatives from the statistical offices of Australia, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Mexico, Montenegro, Netherlands, Poland, Russian Federation, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and United States of America as well as by representatives from the Eurasian Economic Commission, Eurostat, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), International Labour Organization (ILO), International Monetary Fund (IMF), Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21), United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the United Nations European Commission for Europe (UNECE).

2. The workshop was held back-to-back with the Workshop on Statistical Data Collection: Riding the Wave of the Data Deluge. The two workshops were organised under the responsibility of the High-Level Group Modernisation Committee on Statistical Products and Sources. It was hosted by the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics. Michael Levi, from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and Taeke Gjaltema, from UNECE Statistical Division, opened the workshop and welcomed participants. After that, Kerstin Haensel from the Federal Statistical Office of Germany was introduced and was the chair the workshop. On Wednesday 29 April (the two-workshops overlapping day) Erica Groshen, Commissioner of United States Bureau of Labor Statistics welcomed the participants of both workshops. The keynote presentation was given by Connie Citro, Director of the United States Committee on National Statistics.

3. The agenda included the following substantive topics. (See agenda as an annex):

  (i)   Social Media
  (ii)   Apps, APIs and Open Data
  (iii)   Digital Publishing of Statistics
  (iv)   Open Session
  (v)   Building and Maintaining the Credibility of Official Statistics

There were also presentations on crosscutting issues such as: the HLG Modernization Committee of Products and Sources, the crosscutting task team on communication of modernization activities and the first results of the survey of national statistical offices on communication and promotion activities.

4. All background documents and presentations for on the Communication of Statistics e are available at http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=37217#/ and those related to the Workshop on Statistical Data Collection are available at http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=37220#/

5. Key items identified for future work included:

Social Media

- Develop indicators for measuring the impact and effectiveness of social media activities
- Share strategies on social media and international collaboration, including using interactive channels.

Apps, APIs and Open Data

- International collaboration on standards and sharing of best practices are needed
- Hackathons: good to organize more, including Global hackathon

Digital Publishing of Statistics

- Share experiences and best practices in a more frequent manner on certain topics such as: yearbooks, visualization tools, games to promote statistical literacy or dictionaries of statistical terms and concepts.

Open Session

- Develop analytics and evaluation tools to steer web content

Building and Maintaining the Credibility of Official Statistics

- How to ensure and maintain independence
- Guidelines and best practices on reputation/crisis management

Annex: Summary of discussions on substantive topics

A. Keynote speech

6. The Keynote speech was delivered by Connie Citro, Director of the United States Committee on National Statistics. She addressed the topic of moving from multiple modes for surveys to multiple data sources for estimates. She stressed the importance for official statistics to move to a mixed data sources paradigm, using the best sources to meet policy and public needs.

B. Topic (i): Social Media

7. This topic was organized by Lukasz Augustyniak (Eurostat). It included the following presentations:

- United States: Breathing life into your social media program: strategy, planning and experimentation.
- France: Twitter and other social media for official statistics: why, what and how
- United States: Census of Agriculture –Social media data dissemination approaches
- Denmark: A strategic approach to social media strategy

8. The following points were raised in the discussions as lessons learned.

- Having a Social Media strategy is important
  - Audiences for websites and social media differ.
  - Should be embedded in corporate strategy
  - Crisis protocol important
  - Choose hash tags carefully
- Visuals are important in Social Media
- Resources have to be committed to social media activities
- Have a dedicated team with the right competences
- Use big events to boost awareness
- Social media is 24/7
- Twitter is King
- Decentralized social media interaction good, but training and guidelines are needed

9. Small groups discussed the following topics and identified areas for future work:

- Develop indicators for measuring the impact and effectiveness of social media activities.
- Share strategies and international collaboration, including using interactive channels.
- Develop and share guidelines for Social Media (with special attention to Centralized as well as decentralized social media interaction, the risks and benefits of decentralized approach to Social Media).

C. Topic (ii): Apps, APIs and Open Data

10. This topic was organized by Ellen Dougherty (United States). It included the following presentations:

- Japan: Projects of open data for Official Statistics of Japan
- Russian Federation: Russian official statistics in the open data context: achievements, challenges and future steps

- United States: The Health Indicators Warehouse: balancing the need for accuracy with ability to create an open data and API accessible platform for United States federal health statistics
- Sweden: Hack for Sweden
- United States: Relational metadata for statistical data APIs
- South Africa: Targeted dissemination through reverse geocoding services

11. The following points were raised in the discussions as lessons learned:

- Hackathon is a good idea, but also good to define the goal of a hackathon
- Users like local/localized data provision, but you will have to handle privacy issues
- When combining two data sets, confidentiality can again become an issue
- We are continuously in a beta state
- We need common metadata to get from 3 star to 4/5 star open data
- Data integration is difficult (we all face the same problem)
- Improve access to data and share tools and experiences
- It is useful to have hierarchical information in APIs
- There is a knowledge gap between IT and communication staff

12. Small groups discussed the following topics and identified areas for future work:
- International collaboration on standards and sharing of best practices are needed
    - Better knowledge on existing standards
    - From users' perspective
    - Work on common metadata
- Hackathons: good to organize more, including Global hackathon. Also relevant to know how to go from Hackathon to apps that keep being alive.
- Share experiences with apps and open data (positive/negative)
- How to sell open data ideas to senior management and how to build a better cooperation between IT and statisticians

D. Topic (iii): Digital Publishing of Statistics

13. This topic was organized by Terri Mitton (OECD). It included the following presentations:

- United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland: Building a website, a digital publishing capability and a reputation
- South Africa: Web publishing of statistics: Statistics South Africa website
- United States: Census Explorer lets you map out neighbourhood statistics
- FAO: Efficiency and effectiveness: the FAO Statistical Yearbook
- OECD: Bringing OECD data to life
- Sweden: Sweden in figures

14. The following points were raised in the discussions as lessons learned:

- Teaming up IT, content experts and communication people
- Focus on average users/un-educated users (improve statistical literacy)
- Digital first (future of print is digital)
- Keeping your website up to date (with respect to users' needs) is complex
- We all share the same pain (technological challenges, lack of resources)

- Repurposing the yearbook: FAO approach way forward (one tool for multiple outputs/products)

15. Small groups discussed the following topics and identified areas for future work:

- Share experiences and best practices in a more frequent manner:
    - With respect to yearbooks
    - For sharing tools (visualization)
    - Games to promote statistical literacy
    - Dictionaries of statistical terms and concepts
    - For open data approaches/experiences
- Develop common tools that enable sharing
- Develop metrics on the type of users and find out what they want

E. Topic (iv): Open Session

16. This topic was organized by Kerstin Hänsel (Germany). It included the following presentations:

- Slovenia: The end of the Statistical Yearbook and the introduction of new products
- United States: Experiences developing and using a writing style guide in a statistical agency
- Eurostat: Attracting new audiences to statistical dissemination
- United States: Improving the customer experience with analytics

17. The following points were raised in the discussions as lessons learned:

- User-centric approach and analytics and metrics to measure user needs
- Use and develop style guide (including writing for the web) to ensure consistent messages
- Use attractive visuals

18. Small groups discussed the following topics and identified areas for future work:

- Develop analytics and evaluation tools to steer web content
- How to measure impact
- Cost-Benefit analysis of user segmentations
- Session on infographics and tools
- Role of editors and style guides for including focus on web publishing

F. Topic (v): Building and Maintaining the Credibility of Official Statistics

19. This topic was organized by Michael Levi (United States). It included the following presentations:

- Germany: Federal Statistical Office's reputation and acceptance by selected target groups
- Turkey: Statistics user survey, experience of Central Bank of the Republic of Turkey
- United States: Maintaining credibility in an increasingly sceptical world

20. The following points were raised in the discussions as lessons learned:

- Reputation management important (built and maintain status, damage control)
    - Support from external reputed stakeholders
    - Relates to reducing response burden

- Availability of data and explain quality and issues
- Make sure we meet users' needs (keeping an eye on the concept of delighters vs basic needs)

21. Small groups discussed the following topics and identified areas for future work:

- How to ensure and maintain independence
  - Independence from interference, does not exclude consultation with stakeholders
  - How does budget relate to this

- Guidelines and best practices on reputation/crisis management
  - Build reputation proactively
  - Value proposition of official statistics (How to explain it to the public)
- Strategies to improve response rates (e.g. communicate back, reward respondents)
- Share experiences with customers satisfaction surveys (and their use) and users' feedback

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