Engaging with users to modernise the dissemination of European statistics

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Abstract

Modernising the Eurostat website and products is driven by the objective to better respond to users' needs and to facilitate access to official statistics. Following current trends, the aim is to be more visual and attractive and also to provide more structured and precise texts replying to the most common user questions. Thus, engaging with users serves as the fundament and impetus for any changes in this modernisation process.

In 2017, several user research activities were launched at Eurostat as part of the DIGICOM project – an ESS project aiming to modernise the dissemination and communication of European statistics. The aim of these user research activities was to learn more about our users and their needs, and get recommendations on what we can do to modernise the dissemination of European statistics. Two methods were used: field studies and usability tests.

In the field studies, sessions covering 40 different users (light, intermediate, advanced) were organized over a period of 6 months. Users were asked about their profile and their use of statistics, and observed as they interacted with a number of dissemination products on the Eurostat website. The outcomes were descriptions of the main user profiles identified, a list of high-level recommendations on how to improve the dissemination products tested, and personas of the users of European statistics. The user profiles identified are valuable as they confirm not only the diversity and often contrariness of different users' needs, but also facilitate to assess specific aspects in more depth.

The usability tests, conducted with smaller groups of users and focusing on a smaller number of products, resulted in more specific recommendations to improve the usability of the tested products. Implementing these recommendations is in reality not just a "copy and paste" process, but has partly proven to be challenging due to different or even contradicting user opinions.

In practise, this is a circular process: Eurostat proposes new or improved dissemination products to users who then provide their feedback; on this basis recommendations are drawn which subsequently

result into additional improvements of the products. Learning from users now will help Eurostat in the future to disseminate better custom-tailored products. This presentation will include concrete examples of user feedback and its translation into improved dissemination services.