

How do we reach the general public without losing our credibility?

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Abstract

The only valuable data are those that are being used. However, today probably more than ever before it is not necessary that decisions and public opinion are formed on the basis of official data. In the world of information overload it seems that it is most important to be first, not even to be true anymore. So how do we compete with that? How do we achieve the visibility of our data? How can we make data useful and interesting for everyone not only the policymakers and how far are we prepared to go to reach our goal?

At the Statistical Office of Slovenia we are more and more aware of the limits we do not want to cross. We feel that our data are interesting and compelling enough without having to oversimplify them or even to get involved in the competition for being the first, the most shocking or the funniest. The quality of our data is our brand and because of our quality we gained the trust of our users. Trust is a very fragile thing and once lost it is very hard to get it back.

There are many activities that help us get the reach we want, such as infographics, social media, events, media statements, quizzes, etc. But above all the key to success is to be able to connect our data with the current events in our society. Each dataset has the potential to shine but it is important to know how and especially when to use it. In that way we can show the society that we have something to say about the general, everyday topics, either the fun ones or the more serious ones. We go beyond our release calendar and our plans by identifying hot topics and responding to them. This does not mean that we give opinions; we simply write what the data show in an objective manner and let the event set the tone of our data.

If we want to offer an alternative to unverified or even fake news, we need to listen to what people are interested in, what they need and, if necessary, adjust our products and outputs. Official statistics should be where people can find them and in a form most suitable for them.