Session 2: Engaging with hard-to-reach audience

Reaching out to non-advanced users: Eurostat's Education corner

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1.   Introduction

With the wide spread of new technologies and sources of information, it is becoming more and more important for citizens to understand data presented in the media, on the internet and elsewhere. Making official statistics easier to grasp is a key element of improving statistical literacy in society.

This paper outlines Eurostat's approach to statistical literacy and presents the main tools and products of the Education corner.

The document focuses specifically on products that are more accessible to non-expert users, while Eurostat also provides a range of services and initiatives to promote statistical understanding at various levels, such as support services for different types of users, online webinars, educational visits, social media presence, the European Statistics Competition and the European Master in Official Statistics.

2.   Eurostat's Education corner

In recent years, Eurostat has developed a range of products to promote the understanding of statistics and make statistics more accessible for non-advanced users. This range of products includes:

-   Explanatory tools that help improve the understanding of statistical concepts;
-   Products that combine explanations of statistical indicators and data analysis;
-   Visualisations that offer a quick and interactive access to data and help fact checking.

The aim of these products is to increase users' ability to understand statistical concepts as well as to analyse, interpret and evaluate statistics.

To make these tools easily available, Eurostat developed an Education corner section on Eurostat's website, centralising all tools and products that help users grasp statistics. It is mainly geared towards students and teachers and is also a useful resource for all users with basic statistical knowledge.

2.1   Main products and tools

Statistics 4 beginners is one of the Eurostat's main products for statistical literacy. It is a collection of articles that provide simple explanations of statistical indicators and concepts through simple texts, visualisations and animations. They are grouped under 'workbooks', corresponding to different topics,

which include one or more articles on the related topic. Each article explains a different essential concept such as GDP and inflation, so the user can build up the necessary knowledge to understand how complex data records are made and the meaning of the different figures.

In 2023, Eurostat expanded the existing topics to include two new workbooks: one on energy and the second on environmental statistics. The other topics are: population, labour market, GDP, inflation, balance of payments, government finance, business and international trade in goods. Additionally, a workbook on 'statistical concepts' provides methodological information and an explanation related to statistics and data processing.

Statistics 4 beginners is part of a larger Eurostat product – **Statistics Explained**. Statistics Explained is one of Eurostat's key dissemination products for presenting data and statistical analysis through storytelling. While Statistics 4 beginners is aimed more at users with basic or little statistical knowledge, Statistics Explained is aimed at intermediate users with a certain level of knowledge about statistics but who are still not experts.

The website includes over 900 articles and glossary items on all statistical domains.

Interactive publications provide an overview of a specific topic in an easy to understand way, using simple language and a short text presenting the main statistical findings. As the name suggests all the visualisations used in the publications are interactive, allowing the user to engage with the content, and be able to compare EU countries through different indicators.

The combination of storytelling and interactive visualisations gives non-specialist users the opportunity to get a clear and simple overview of a broad subject and, at the same time, visualise and check data.

The existing collection, which covers subjects such as demography, energy, housing, regions, is being expanded in 2023 with two new interactive publications: one on digitalisation, and the second on migration and asylum.

The section dedicated to **data visualisations** includes different tools focused on making the access to data as intuitive and interactive as possible. Data visualisations give quick visual access to the main statistical indicators on a specific topic. They are built around the idea of making fact checking easy for everyone, allowing users to have a quick but meaningful look at the data. Eurostat has significantly expanded the range of data visualisations tools in the last few years, covering a wide variety of topics including all statistical themes: economy, business, environment, energy, transport, population, social conditions, and regional statistics as well as crosscutting topics.

Videos provide additional materials for teachers, where statistical concepts are explained, in English, under the framework of the "Statistics in the classroom" project. Designed to support work in the classroom, each video is accompanied by an exercise sheet that can be used by students to practice the topics presented.

2.2   Materials by language

The education corner also includes literacy materials in different languages grouped under the section 'Materials by language'. These materials are produced by the National Statistical Institutes (NSIs) of each EU Member State and hosted on the NSI website. The aim of the section is two-fold: on the one hand, it promotes the variety of tools and resources made available by the NSIs and, on the other hand, it gives users the opportunity to access additional materials in languages other than English thus removing the language hurdle.

3.   Podcasts

In recent years, Eurostat has diversified its products and increased its presence on various channels in order to reach more non-users of statistics, for instance people who think that statistics are too difficult to understand or who are not aware of the relevance and availability of data as well as people who are not present on more traditional dissemination channels (e.g. social media or mailing lists).

In 2022, Eurostat launched a series of monthly podcasts – '**Stats in a Wrap'**. This was a response to the increased interest in statistics and audio-visual products resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic and a way of reaching people who prefer listening/audio to reading.

Each episode brings together one or more Eurostat speakers and an external expert, interviewed by a professional journalist.

While not a literacy product as such, the podcast contributes to promoting statistics to new audiences outside the pool of traditional data users. The aim is to inform the public, not only about data on different themes, but also about how statistics are produced and what makes them reliable.

4.   Building partnerships

Within the framework of Eurostat's cooperation on dissemination with the NSIs, Eurostat and the NSIs established an informal group on statistical literacy to exchange practices, share experiences and mutually promote existing products and activities. The section of the Education corner named 'Materials by language' represents one of the outputs of this cooperation.

Eurostat has also strengthened its partnerships in the education sector. In 2022, Eurostat participated in a Testing Panel meeting organised by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Communication (DG COMM). The panel includes primary and secondary school teachers from all over Europe as well as representatives from the Europe Direct centres. The panel meets once a year, giving the general-directorates the opportunity to present latest products and tools for young people and test products in development.

One of the challenges of reaching non-users is finding new ways and channels to reach them. Over the past year, Eurostat has been reaching out to different platforms to showcase the available products to new audiences. Among them is DG COMM's dedicated website for teachers and students (EU Learning corner) which links to Eurostat's Education corner. Additionally, we have published several articles in newsletters on statistical literacy and STEM.

5.   Brand alignment

In 2022, Eurostat revamped its brand identity to strengthen the recognition of Eurostat dissemination products by users. The aim of the rebrand was twofold: first, to ensure the consistency of Eurostat's visual identity across different platforms, leading to increased trust and recognition. Second, to highlight Eurostat's European identity, thus positioning itself as the leading European provider of reliable statistics.

By having a consistent look of the different products available, such as the Eurostat website, portfolio of publications and tools, users can immediately recognise that a given visualisation or product comes from Eurostat and carries the 'official stamp of approval'.

An important part of the brand alignment exercise was also improvement in user experience for all products, which includes user research, usability testing and web accessibility improvements. This

ensures that users can access the Eurostat products and services on a range of different devices, find information easier and can access them without obstacles.

6.   Way forward and challenges ahead

In the light of the increasing importance of statistical literacy, and the evolving needs of users, Eurostat will continue to strengthen its cooperation with the NSIs in the area of statistical literacy.

In particular, within the partnership between Eurostat and the NSIs a project was started to streamline and structure existing approaches and activities and to exchange best practices and experience with respect to the current and future challenges and the needs for statistical literacy. Among topics identified were: how to expand the range of statistical literacy products and increase their uptake; better engage with the education community at different educational levels; better tailor statistical literacy products to different types of users, and how to reach out to age groups not yet covered by current initiatives.