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Topic: Building and maintaining relationships

DEVELOPING STATISTICAL LITERACY IN RELATION TO HELPING USERS UNDERSTAND STATISTICS, INCLUDING THE MEDIA

Submitted by Statistics Lithuania[1]

I.   INTRODUCTION

1.   The need to better understand, serve and meet individual user needs and to offer them targeted products and services were reflected in both the Strategy of Statistics Lithuania, 2005–2007 (identification of the problem and planning phase) and the Strategy of Statistics Lithuania, 2008–2012 (actual execution, analysis, projection and development of services phase).

2.   During the respective strategic periods, the System of user-satisfaction surveys has been established, the Statistical literacy project initiated, the Methodology for the evaluation of the Customer satisfaction index developed and activities to improve statistical literacy and meet individual user needs launched.

3.   The follow-up activities undertaken demonstrate considerable improvement in user satisfaction and wider usage of statistics by all user groups.

II.   USER-RELATED PROJECTS IN STATISTICS LITHUANIA

A.   The System of User- satisfaction surveys in Statistics Lithuania

4.   Prior to 2005, Statistics Lithuania ran only ad-hoc irregular user surveys, organised by employees of Statistics Lithuania with a few questions posed, not covering the country, population, etc. This lead to just rough understanding of user needs and trends. To enable objectivity of replies, more detailed analysis of target user groups and the survey coverage based on sampling principles the System of user-satisfaction surveys was developed at the beginning of 2006, surveys planned and started on a regular basis. The identified shortcomings and treatment of Customer satisfaction surveys as an effective means to respond to user needs and improve quality of products and services as well as a marketing and statistical literacy raising tool evolved into targeting at reorganisation and advancement of the dissemination system, taking into account ever-changing more individualised needs of national and international users.

5.   The System of user-satisfaction surveys covers three Internet-related user surveys (1. Internet accessibility – monthly, quarterly; 2. Users registered to the Alert-me web services – monthly, quarterly; 3. Opinion survey of web visitors – monthly) and six traditional surveys (1. General public opinion poll on Image perception (annual); 2. Specialised selected target user group (2 surveys per year on rotation, repeated after 2-3 years for the same group); 3. Eurostat data users (ESUS) (quarterly); 4. Visitors at the Library-bookshop and

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Visitors' corners in Regional statistical offices (quarterly); 5. Incoming user-requests (quarterly); 6. Opinion on statistical publications (annual)).

6.   To stimulate more objective replies, obtain full territorial coverage, employ professional advice of opinion poll companies the annual General public opinion poll on Image perception and Specially selected target user group surveys are outsourced and carried out by Public opinion poll companies, selected by public tender.

7.   All surveys maintain a uniform structure, approach and described procedure (1. Survey objective; 2. User-group surveyed; 3. Periodicity; 4. Survey programme, data collection means and form; 5. Anticipated results and their application; 6. Feedback with users). Regular target user groups have been identified (1. Students and school children; 2. R&D community; 3. Media; 4. Politicians; 5. Business community (respondents); 6. International organisations; 7. Embassies; 8. Public administration institutions (inc. municipalities); 9. NGOs; 10. General public) and surveyed. All surveys maintain one block of uniform questions (covering 4 principles of the European Statistics Code of Practice (CoP) + quality-related and ad-hoc questions of national interest relevant to a specific surveyed target group or topical events.

8.   During the period of 2005–2007, three annual General public opinion polls on Image perception were run, 1 Public administration survey (inc. municipalities) held in 2005, 1 R&D community survey organised in 2006, 1 Secondary school survey and 1 Business community held in 2007.

9.   However, as not all target user groups have been approached yet, to grasp an objective opinion and expectations of the media, an outsourced Media opinion survey has been launched to be carried out in 3Q 2008 (tender procedures finalised). According to the set system, the regular annual General public opinion poll on Image perception and repeated Public administration (inc. municipalities) survey will be also held in 2008 July and 4Q).

10.   The value added of User-satisfaction surveys to Statistics Lithuania is increased awareness of Statistics Lithuania activities (Public administration knows about the scope of services they can expect, are trained to use databases of Statistics Lithuania and Eurostat; R&D community – stimulated primary data usage and expression of opinion on the Population census aims and questions; Secondary schools learn about the survey process, key definitions, can find data on the web, draw graphs and tables and use for projects; Business community gets an active feedback from the subject matter divisions and is able to extract data from the web for analysis and decision-making.)

11.   Media is trained in using the website, understanding key definitions, correctly interpret cross-sectional data, make comparisons and inform the public at large). Trainings are held with every new generation of journalists entering the market or depending on changes in known personalities, but approaching new topics. Negotiations are run to hold a brief course (half-semester) in statistics for students of the Institute of Journalist at the Vilnius University.

B. **Statistical literacy project**

12.   Analysis of the User-survey results enabled to grasp more individual needs of every user group and identify gaps in understanding and interpretation of statistical information.

13.   To raise awareness of the importance of statistical information for decision-making, understanding of individual place of enterprises in the business environment, application of statistical information in schools and universities for projects and diploma papers, correct interpretation and information of the society on the social and economic development of the country by the media, the Statistical literacy project was launched end of 2006.

14.   During the course of the Pilot phase the Statistical literacy concept was defined and agreed upon, the needs and gaps identified, work with individual user groups (incl. media and schools) planned, traditional means for raising statistical literacy developed and produced, brainstorming on using internet as a key media

and visualisation of statistics held, statisticians–potential trainers selected and their training started, training kits for individual user groups developed and actual training activities launched.

15.　　To emphasise the importance of the said activities, the Strategy of Statistics Lithuania, 2008–2012 incorporated an extensive chapter on User relations, also covering Enhancement of availability of statistical information, Possibilities to use primary data for research purposes, Cultivation of users' statistical literacy and introduction of CRM. Monitoring of user satisfaction and performance criteria were established.

16.　　As a result and follow-up activities, by April 2008 the Statistics Lithuania website (www.stat.gov.lt) advancement has been performed, the web School corner launched, annual "Statistics days" begun in all Lithuania (a week end September set), some tools for visualisation of statistical information (e. g. Personal inflation calculator) developed, training blocks for various user groups planned and started, User corners established in Regional office, R&D community involved into the Census (Agro and Population) planning phase, etc.

C.　**Evaluation of the Customer satisfaction index and future plans**

17.　　The systematic approach to User-satisfaction surveys, analysis and follow-up of user opinions and consideration of individual requests expressed by survey respondents on quality and further development of statistical services and products and improvement activities embarked on have enabled to better meet user needs, improve their perception of statistics and enhance usability of statistical information by the public large, reaching the majority of general users with the aid of the media, especially by means or regional media.

18.　　Monitoring and performance criteria are based on the CoP principles and national needs. They are submitted to the Government of the Republic of Lithuania and regularly reported on. They are: **1. Effect** (Website average visitors per day); **2. Result** (Information spread and coverage by key national and regional press; Terms for submitting statistical information to users (Monthly information by Annual Press release calendar, Quarterly information by Annual Press release calendar, Annual information by the Catalogue of Statistical publications); Average response time to incoming user-requests; **3. Product** (Datasets of statistical information in DB; Number of press releases by statistical domain; Number of publications by statistical domain, Methodology on the web – brief and detailed; Quality reports on the web, etc.) and **4.　Additional sub-criteria for national needs** (e. g. replies user requests in both headquarters of SL and Regional offices per year by reception mode, type of user, statistical domain, visitors in the Libra-bookshop and User corners in regional offices, etc.).

19.　　This enabled to assess and measure the progress in user satisfaction. The Methodology for evaluation of the Customer satisfaction index was approved in Jan. 2008. It relates to the CoP four quality characteristics: relevance, sufficiency, clarity, reliability / trust, as well as quality and visibility. The general Customer satisfaction index has been calculated from results of the 2005-2007 annual General public opinion polls on Image perception. In 2007 the Customer satisfaction level was 61.4. The same approach and formulas will be applied in calculating the Customer satisfaction indices of specialised target user groups, when relevant surveys are repeated to follow changes in their approach and satisfaction.

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