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**A STRATEGY FOR THE DISSEMINATION OF STATISTICAL INFORMATION:
THE KAZAKHSTAN EXPERIENCE**

Submitted by Agency on Statistics of Republic of Kazakhstan¹

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Development of interaction with users of statistical information is the strategic direction of statistics in Kazakhstan. The Agency on Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan constantly carries out work to improve the dissemination of all statistical indicators. During the recent year, four main components can be defined in which progress is noted:

- a) **A draft of a new instrument was developed to inform the public about statistics - a graph of dissemination of statistical information.** In 19th of March 2010, the Law "On State Statistics" was approved, in which a separate chapter focuses on the dissemination of state statistics. The graph supplies information to the public about the list and timing of statistical indicators developed by all the authorities responsible for statistical activities.
- b) **A special unit "Division of dissemination of statistical information" was created which ensures the dissemination of statistics in electronic format.** To ensure the availability of statistics last year, the emphasis was made on the dissemination of statistics in electronic form: all the developed statistics were posted on the official site; electronic delivery of statistical data more than doubled; the work on the integration of regional sites is under implementation.
- c) **Publishing activities were extended.** In order to make statistical publications more attractive and recognizable, at the beginning of the current year, a new logo and corporate identity of the Agency on Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan were approved and publication standards were imposed. In order to increase the number of users, publishing activities were initiated for mass media, students, business – such as brochures and pamphlets.
- d) **Training was provided to users of statistical information.** Every year, the training of at least 3000 users is planned. The training provides an overview of the statistical publications and website, information on industry statistics; moreover, it includes an explanation of the methodology of calculation of statistical indicators.

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II. ORGANIZATION OF DISSEMINATION OF STATISTICAL INFORMATION

A. The policy of dissemination of statistical information

2. A fundamental principle of dissemination of statistical information is the satisfaction of the needs of users in a variety of statistical information by providing free access to a wide range of users.

3. In order to improve the policy of dissemination of statistical information, a Strategy of dissemination of statistical information has been developed that focuses on the needs of different groups of users of statistical products and services at three levels:

Basic needs of the public in information

4. The main task of this level, from the view of statistical authorities of the Republic of Kazakhstan, is to make the most common statistical indicators public. They are so-called "numbers for all"; they include aggregated indicators of all sections of statistics, that are of interest to the general public. The Agency on Statistics provides a free form of presentation of such information. Dissemination of "for all" statistical indicators is implemented by placing the information on the website of the Agency on Statistics www.stat.gov.kz, distributing publications to libraries of major universities and public libraries. An important channel for providing access to statistical data is the media. For them, press releases are prepared and press conferences are conducted. Representatives of the general public can also obtain statistical information for free through the Enquiry Service of Information Computing Center of the Agency on Statistics and its territorial bodies.

The needs of target groups in the standard information

5. This segment includes products and services that meet the needs of individual groups of users in information which can be standardized. Preparation of standard information is normally carried out in advance with the expected demand of specific target groups of users.

Products and services of this kind usually are distributed in the shape of spreadsheets, publications and databases.

Preparation of specific data on individual requests

6. Specific data represent information that is not provided for the general public or in a standardized format on paper and electronic media. These data are produced to a special order of specific users. Preparation of such data requires a certain amount of time and involves working with databases, executing sampling, grouping, and aggregating of primary data. In some cases, it requires consultation with experts, etc. Responses to specific inquiries are prepared by the Enquiry Service of Information Computing Center of the Agency on Statistics on a payment basis. In the case of major orders contracts are issued.

B. Publishing activities

7. The Agency on statistics is constantly working on improvement of the structure, content, design and quality of publications.

8. To make the statistical publications more attractive and recognizable, at the beginning of the year, *a new logo and corporate identity* (corporate colors) were approved for the design of statistical publications. For the recognition and promotion of statistical publications, "Operational Manual of Corporate Style" was developed; and, at present, in the design of publications at the central and regional level, the single corporate identity is used.

9. *The standards of publications are introduced.* At the beginning of 2009, rules for design layout of tables, newsletters and press releases are developed. For the convenience of users and for easy perception of statistics on the formation of digests, bulletins, express information and press releases, "Publications Design Guide of Agency on Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan" is used with a detailed elaboration of the rules of design (brand-book) in order to maintain a uniform stylistics of design. "Design Standards for Registration Papers and Express Information" and "Guide for Writing Press Releases" reflect the general requirements for the

formation and design tables and graphs. All the statistical publications of the regional offices are transformed to the same style.

10. In order to popularize the statistical information from 2008, *work began on producing statistical publications for a wide range of users*. More than 20 booklets by sectors of the economy were issued; the attractiveness of this type of publication is in a brief and accessible statement of statistical information by individual sectors of the economy and in colorful design. In addition, summary statistics digests are released with a dynamic series for more than 15 years, which simplifies the process of searching for statistical information in the dynamics of age.

11. Since January 2009, *a new format for representation of monthly information-analytical magazine "Socio-economic development of Kazakhstan and its regions"* was introduced. First of all, internal structure of the publication was reformulated. The magazine is published in three volumes in the State and Russian and English languages. All information is presented in the format of convenient charts, tables and text with descriptions of the main trends in socio-economic relations in the Republic of Kazakhstan. Separately, short information about the development of each region of the Republic is introduced with an indication of main socio-economic parameters and economic specialization. The structure of the magazine is designed to reflect international standards; and it has been refined to ensure ease of use.

12. *The structure of all aggregated statistical publications of the the Agency was also reworked*. In this regard, the work to revise the structure and presentation of statistical publications of the regional departments of statistics started. Within the scope of this process in 2009, the formation of regional statistical yearbooks conducted jointly with the central statistical office, layout and design development are carried out on the central level.

13. In improving the publishing activities, good progress has been observed. And with it, the improvement of the industry collections is essential; it is our plan for the future.

C. Dissemination of statistics in electronic format

14. Dissemination of statistics in hard-copy form is rather limited; the number of copies of publications ranges from 300 to 1000 units; and it depends on state budget funding, as well as on the state bodies that demand statistical publications. On payment basis, the paper based statistical publications are not realized. Thereby, the community is under the impression that statistics is too little. A good way out is to disseminate statistics in electronic format.

15. In May 2009, *a special unit the Division of the Dissemination of Statistical Information was created that consists of 5 people*. The main purpose of the new *Division* is the support and promotion the web site and dissemination of statistical information in electronic format.

16. Since 2008, *all statistical publications have been posted on the official site*. From 2009, the territorial statistical bodies also place all the publications on their websites. This is a good result, but still insufficient, because the publications are placed on excel and PDF formats, that is not always convenient for users. At a later date, this matter has to be solved.

17. One of the main problems, with which we associate a significant increase in convenience of users, is *an implementation of dynamic tables for interactive dissemination of statistical information*. For the purpose of an automated execution of requests for the formation of statistical data in various splits, the development and implementation of information systems "Storage of primary statistical information", "E-statistical reporting." are performed. This work is intended for publication on the site of statistical data as interactive analytical reports containing selected indicators with the possibility of constructing graphs, charts, maps, and providing online access to statistical data.

18. It is planned to *integrate the regional sites of the territorial bodies on a single Web portal of the central office*. This will maintain a unified structure of statistical information from all regions; in addition, for users, it is more convenient to use a single site.

19. *Database of subscribers for the electronic dissemination of statistical information* has been created and is constantly updated. The subscribers' base consisted of about 150 e-mails last year, now that number verges towards 400. Half of them are staff of state bodies. Upon the request of users, the necessary statistical information is sent to them.

20. Separately, the *subscription for press releases is conducted*. For the 6 months of the current year, the number of subscribers for the electronic distribution of press releases was 60 units. Press releases are published according to an established schedule, and are posted on the website not later than 10 am. Since 2008, the press service is functioning, which is responsible for coordinating the work with the mass media. Now, a database of electronic distribution of information includes 9 national and international news agencies, 20 print media, several of which include special statistical headings and 6 TV channels.

21. On a regular basis, there *takes place the distribution to/exchange information with national statistical offices and international organizations*. The data are sent on monthly, quarterly and annual basis to international organizations such as the UNECE, ILO, IEA, UNICEF, FAO, UNESCO, IMF, WCO, UNIDO, UNCTAD and others. For 6 months of 2010, 140 requests from foreign institutions were worked. The number of private requests from companies, research institutions and universities is under constant growth.

22. To ensure availability of statistics this year, the focus was made on the dissemination of statistics in electronic format; furthermore, a number of necessary steps were launched. At the same time, there is still much work for the promotion and dissemination of statistical information and website.

D. Training of users of statistical information

23. One of the strategic directions of the ARKS is to improve communications with users of statistical information: train the users and receive feedback from them. Of course, users prefer to simply make a request and get an answer than to seek their own statistics, but we need help to understand them a large volume of information. In accordance with the Strategic Development Plan for 2009-2011, the activities to train users were provided that take place annually for at least 3000 people.

24. Since last year, monthly training of users of statistical information is performed. In the first stage, the main audience was the representatives of state bodies, national holdings. Since the beginning of the academic year, workshops will be held for students. In addition, anyone can apply through the website and visit our workshops. Users are given the opportunity at no cost to listen to seminars conducted by statisticians. The training provides information on statistical publications, information on industry statistics, as well as explanations on the methodology of calculation of statistical indicators.

25. We pay special attention to *relationships with the media, journalists*. We understand that the media is the best partner in the dissemination of statistics, and the fastest way to attract society. It is important to ensure a better mutual understanding between statisticians and journalists. For this purpose, the press service conducted training and seminars for journalists and for agency staff on the topic "Basics of writing press releases" where employees were trained by professional journalists for rules and nuances of writing press releases. A training course was held for journalists "Questions of media coverage of demographic processes and socio-economic situation in Kazakhstan"; this topic was relevant to the National Census in 2009; it was important that the journalists can understand and correctly interpret statistical information gathered during the census to the society. Every journalist needs the skills to find statistical data and to use the data in their work.

26. Education will enable journalists and others to make more use of statistics in their work: to help navigate the large number of statistical indicators; easier to find the necessary parameters in printed form and online (including the timing of their official publication, by type of content and frequency of publication of statistical indicators). We are planning to implement this type of communication regularly.

III. CONCLUSION

27. The importance of dissemination of statistical information and communications is high. It is important to produce high quality statistics in a timely manner and in accordance with international standards. Not less important is the accessibility of statistics and feedback from users. Development of interaction with users of statistical information - the strategic direction of Statistics of Kazakhstan; therefore is reflected in the Strategic Plan for the medium term.

28. At the turn of 2009, there was a survey of users of statistical information on the activities of the Agency. Mostly, the attitude of users to the statistics was positive. There were suggestions on the format of the data: more analytics, more graphical material. The practice of recent years showed a very low interest of state bodies in a subscription for the publications in paper format; therefore, today, we focused on the distribution of statistics in electronic format. However, for representatives of business, a subscription in electronic format is not convenient - business prefers statistics on hard-copy form. We must, therefore, address the issue of publications on a paid basis.

29. We will conduct further work to achieve a high level of trust in official statistics; according to a summary of 2009, it was aimed to reach the figure of at least 65%; in 2010 - not less than 75%, in 2011 - not less than 80%.