

Measuring success of Eurostat social media activities

Baiba Grandovska (Eurostat)

Baiba.GRANDOVSKA@ec.europa.eu

Context

In November 2016, Eurostat started a new project: expanding its social media presence. The project consists of 2 parts:

- increased use of the existing Twitter account @EU_Eurostat (opened in 2011), with a broader coverage of subjects and a more active interaction with followers,
- opening a Facebook account. The account /EurostatStatistics is active since January 2017.

The project period is 12 months, after which the follow-up will be decided, depending on the success of these social media activities.

How will we know if they have been successful?

Moreover, in the daily operation of the accounts, how do we know what works and what needs to be changed.

Eurostat is using monthly reviews of social media activities and has selected indicators that it considers important for measuring success and providing input for the daily operation of the accounts.

Measurement tools

Eurostat uses the following tools for reviewing the social media accounts:

- daily monitoring of the accounts (observation)
- dashboards of the social media platforms: Facebook Insights and Twitter Analytics
- Brandwatch (for Twitter only)

Regarding social media metrics, dashboards on the social media platforms and Brandwatch provide a vast amount of data, e.g. followers, views, likes, mentions. However, the social media is a conversation tool, and metrics may actually mislead if not combined with "social listening". Much of the gains from our social media presence are what we hear and what meaningful long-term relations we establish, beyond the "selling" part of it - how far the posts travel. We also want to know if we have added to the public discussion; if we have made official statistics more relevant and visible.

Criteria for selecting indicators

The indicators were selected according to the following guiding principles.

1. Indicators should correspond to the communication objectives

When Eurostat decided to expand its social media presence, it defined the following objectives:

- diversify communication channels in order to reach broader audience
- engage more actively with users: maintain the relationship and help find information
- open possibilities for feedback, which will contribute to continuously improve the quality of Eurostat's products and services
- get acquainted with additional segments of users
- increase basic statistical literacy
- increase trust in Eurostat ("we listen and respond")
- strengthen Eurostat's image of accessibility
- increase visibility of Eurostat online

Monthly success indicators of Eurostat social media accounts (listed in the next chapter) have been selected in view of these communication objectives.

Not all of these objectives are covered by monthly social media reports, as some are more difficult to measure with the available tools and are included in other reviews, e.g. annual user satisfaction survey of Eurostat or the overall reviews of Internet mentions of Eurostat.

Besides, social media is part of our communication mix; therefore we try to assess the activity in the context of the overall communication of Eurostat.

2. Reporting should not create an unnecessary burden

Reporting is not a goal in itself.

We try to keep the resources spent for reviews in proportion to overall resources available for communication.

Therefore, one of the criteria for the selection of indicators is how easily they can be obtained.

3. Indicators should lead to a practical action

When selecting the indicators, we asked ourselves what we are going to do with the information – what are the insights that it provides. We tried to avoid vanity metrics that look good on paper but lead to no practical action.

Selected indicators

Based on the above, Eurostat has selected the following indicators for the monthly analysis of the social media activity:

1. Followers

Is the number of followers growing? Are there un-follows, and when do these happen? Who are our followers?

2. Interaction

Do people like/share our content? Do they engage in a conversation or send direct messages? What comments/questions do we receive? How do we react?

3. Online buzz

Are people talking about Eurostat? What is the tone of the conversation? Which subjects are picked up? Who are the people talking about Eurostat?

4. Performance of individual posts

Which posts had the largest/lowest reach and interaction? Can we identify patterns? What kind of engagement the posts triggered?

In practice, the reports are as follows.

For **Facebook**, the following metrics, monthly, in comparison with the previous months and same of the previous year:

- Number of followers
- Number of posts
- Actions on page (clicks on Learn More that lead to Eurostat website)
- Page views
- Page likes
- Reach
- Engagement

In addition, the following is reviewed:

- Posts with highest/lowest reach
- Posts with highest engagement
- Posts with highest/lowest engagement rate
- Direct messages and comments
- Comparison with other statistics related pages
- Demographics and geographical distribution of the followers

For **Twitter**, the following metrics, monthly, in comparison with the previous months and same of the previous year:

Twitter Analytics:

- Number of tweets
- Number of impressions
- Profile visits
- Number of mentions
- Number/growth of followers
- Engagement rate
- Link clicks
- Retweets
- Likes

- Replies
- Top mention
- Top media tweet

As for the demographics, interests and geographical distributions of Eurostat Twitter followers is rather stable, these are not reviewed monthly.

Brandwatch:

- Number of Eurostat mentions in Twitter
- The tweeters that mention Eurostat most
- Most mentioned keywords in connection with Eurostat
- Most mentioned tweeters tweeting about Eurostat
- Most clicked links
- Top influencers

In addition, the following is reviewed:

- Messages, replies and questions

We then discuss the reports in the team, together with insights from the observations. The team looks for possible trends and causes of the fluctuations, and the social media activities are adjusted accordingly. The reviews help find the most suitable topics, wording, visuals, or scheduling time for each platform.

To mention a few examples, there are some of the decisions taken following the reviews:

- increase the use of infographics, as these generate a higher user engagement
- when possible, tweets should highlight relative information more than the absolute values, e.g. the country with the highest value or the peak over a certain time period
- some Facebook posts should be scheduled for weekends, when our Facebook community is more active

The questions/comments that are outside the scope of the communications teams are passed on to statisticians for drafting replies or taking on board in their work. Only the communications team have access to the social media accounts and can post replies.

As mentioned above, the metrics are treated with caution – in context rather than stand-alone. This in particular applies to those which are partly influenced by external factors (e.g. the total number of impressions/reach) and cannot be easily changed.

Next steps

A metric that is not currently used on regular basis due to technical issues but would be really helpful is the traffic to the website that the social media presence generates.

An option to consider in future is the use of targeting for posts that are not of great interest for public at large, e.g. corporate news or methodological publications. A post that reached far and wide can be as successful as a post that is particularly meaningful to a smaller audience.

Depending on the resources available for social media, another field to explore further is the analysis of the operations, e.g. response speed or the optimum posting time. Regarding the responsiveness, we are looking for the right balance between being responsive (and thus increasing the visibility of Eurostat and the image of

accessibility) and the resources. It is always the trade-off, as increase in responsiveness raises the expectation of users and triggers more interaction that we need to be ready to meet.

The reviews show that the next step in expanding the social media presence would be proactively adding to the existing conversations in addition to generating new ones.