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Statistics Korea

High-level Seminar on the Process Oriented Approach to Statistical Production

(Seoul, Republic of South Korea, 19 – 21 April 2017)

SUMMARY REPORT OF THE SEMINAR

1. Statistics Korea (KOSTAT) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) jointly organised a High-level Seminar on the Process Oriented Approach to Statistical Production, which took place on 19 – 21 April in Seoul, Republic of South Korea.
2. The objective of the seminar was to discuss with chief statisticians and senior managers of national statistical organisations and international organisations, how best to organize a statistical office to ensure efficiency of processes as well as quality of outputs. The seminar focussed on practical experiences, case studies and lessons learned.
3. It was attended by participants from Australia, Canada, Ireland, Italy, Kazakhstan, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Philippines, Poland, Republic of South Korea, the Russian Federation and Viet Nam. Eurostat, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the United Nations Statistical Division (UNSD) were also represented.
4. The seminar was opened by Mr. Gyeongjoon Yoo, Commissioner of Statistics Korea. Ms. Lidia Bratanova, Director of UNECE Statistical Division and Mr. Pádraig Dalton, Director General of the Central Statistics Office, Ireland also gave opening addresses. All speakers highlighted the opportunity the seminar provided to senior managers to reflect and think innovatively about the strategy, structure and culture of statistical organisations.
5. Ms. Thérèse Lalor, Head of the UNECE Statistical Division's Statistical Management and Modernisation Unit, presented an overview of the in-depth review on the process-oriented approach to statistical production prepared by the statistical office of Turkey (Turkstat) in 2014.
6. The agenda contained the following substantive topics:
 - i. Transition to process-oriented structure
 - ii. Organisational structures to support modernisation
 - iii. Portfolio management of innovation processes
 - iv. Providing statistical services to government
 - v. Tools to support a process-oriented approach

Key outcomes and next steps

7. The main points highlighted during the workshop include:

- There are many incentives and drivers for modernisation (for example: government requirements, user demands, cutting red tape, reducing respondent burden).
- Modernisation is a process, not a state. It encompasses everything in an organisation. It is important to identify the triggers for change and capitalise on opportunities to obtain funding and support.
- There are many factors that affect which organisational structure is best suited to an organisation and how it should be implemented. There is no a 'one size fits all' solution.
- Organisations should look at where they are on the modernisation maturity model. This will help determine what approach an organisation could take.
- What does a relevant statistical organisation look like?
- A modern work environment is important. Flexible working arrangements can attract staff and help with gender balance. The environment should encourage innovation and collaboration. There are advantages to being a more adaptive organisation.
- How do we create modern working environment and culture for continuous development?
- Portfolio management can help to ensure that there is no duplication in innovation work. Innovation can be risky. However, the risk is not about innovation, it is about losing relevance. This risk needs to be managed. The biggest risk is to do nothing.
- Portfolio, programme and project management should support innovation, not stifle it.
- Should we still be focussing on improving process? Is it time to look at products?
- We are not just providing data, we are providing services.
- Customer needs are changing daily. Statistical organisations are changing their methods and using new data sources to increase their capability to remain relevant. If it is a continual change environment, then we need to have continuous development.
- We are in a post truth age. This puts us in a defensive position. We could be more proactive in our communication, but also need to consider where to draw the boundary.
- We should not just value the statistics, but also value the official statisticians. National Statistical Offices have a competitive advantage in the skills of their staff (for example in data management, access to data, data integration). We should use these skills as the corner stone for the services we offer.
- There is a clear need for capacity building for all national statistical offices in so-called "soft skills", such as management and communication. How do we build the capacity of official statisticians to bring statistics to people?
- We can learn from our communication experts. Users want answers to questions based on data. We can tell stories that link a number of statistics together. We can produce statistics that are more effective and add value to our statistics by putting the data in context and producing broader stories.
- Innovation portals are a terrific way to release innovative products and seek feedback on them.

8. Proposals for follow up activities include:

- **Add contextual information to the Modernisation Maturity Model** – The Modernisation Maturity Model (MMM) and its Roadmap focus on how to build organisational capabilities through implementation of the models and standards identified as key to statistical modernisation. They should form the basis for future capacity-building activities. Different approaches to undertaking a modernisation program suit different triggers, goals and levels of maturity. The MMM should include information to help organisations understand the impact of these different approaches and lessons learnt.
- **Hackathon on statistical products** – A Hackathon is proposed to be held during 2017. It will focus on putting together user-oriented products that put data into context to tell a broader story.
- **Evergreen list of innovations** – It was noted that meetings such as these are a great way to find out about innovations in other statistical organisations. A mechanism to share this information regularly, perhaps through a wiki, will help statistical organisations learn from each other more readily.
- **Sprint for chief statisticians** – The group agreed that another sprint session with chief statisticians would be beneficial. Suggested topics included “How do we become customer centric organisations?” “How do we address the culture behaviours?” The topic will be confirmed in June, and the sprint session will be held in November 2017.

Further information

9. All documents and presentations for the meeting are available on the website of the UNECE Statistical Division (<http://www1.unece.org/stat/platform/x/SYbCBw>)