

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

**ECE Work Session on Statistical Output
for Dissemination to Information Media
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Topic (c): Use of new audio-visual, electronic and print technologies in disseminating data to the media

DATA DISSEMINATION TO THE MEDIA

Submitted by Hungarian Central Statistical Office¹

The Hungarian Central Statistical Office (HCSO) has been publishing its data on the Internet for five years. The address of our website is: <http://www.ksh.hu>. We are part of the European statistical offices that early on recognized the possibility to forward large quantities of data to users through the Internet in a short period of time. We have been modifying the appearance and the content of the system on the Internet during the last months. The Stadat system installed by the HCSO is under continuous development both in terms of data content and tools.

I. A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE STADAT SYSTEM

One part of the Stadat system is static, i.e. it consists of ready-made tables prepared by the different departments of the HCSO, which can be accessed via the local computer network. The tables are produced in the database by linking tables, covering various periods (months, quarters), so that they can be retrieved as a single table. The database also includes tables containing time series. There, it is not necessary to select a specific period because data on the various years, quarters and months can be found within one table. From 15 July 2002 onwards, users can reach the dynamic database, the other part of the Stadat System, on the Internet and they can create charts tables in Excel format, can produce time series, etc.

The system exists in English and Hungarian. Part of the data is accessible free-of-charge, but the other part against payment. The free-of-charge data include general information, the main figures introducing Hungary, the latest data of interest to the general public, and the most important annual economic indicators. The chargeable part includes the following:

- ON-LINE access to monthly, quarterly and annual data in the form of tables dating back to 1996;
- Download of first releases. First releases are in Winword and Excel formats and encompass the latest statistical data of the HCSO. The publication consists of an analytical section (about 5 - 10 tables) and a methodological section. The latest publications (around 30) can be downloaded in Hungarian, some of them are also available in English (about 6 can be downloaded).

II. DATA SOURCES OF THE STADAT SYSTEM

As mentioned in the introduction, the Stadat system is static, which can be seen from the methods used for processing, storage and publication of data. The tables in the ON-LINE section of the Stadat system

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are taken from the publication in which the data in question have been first published. This is important because the HCSO publishes the same data in several publications.

The monthly data are published in the first releases, and then in the "KSH Reports" and, finally, in the "Monthly Bulletin of Statistics". The first releases are prepared and recorded in Winword and Excel format by the professional departments of the HCSO.

After the first release is approved by the President or the Deputy President of the HCSO, it is made available by the authors on the HCSO local network. The other HCSO experts can download the release from the Statat system to their own PCs, and on the Internet server, using file transfer (FTP). External users can download the first releases from the Internet at 9 o'clock on the day of the first release's dissemination.

III. TERMS OF PAYMENT OF THE CHARGEABLE BLOCK OF THE STADAT SYSTEM

Prices, Allowances

The use of the ON-LINE access to monthly, quarterly and annual data costs USD 80.- per month. As there is no accounting system connected to the network, we are charging the flat rate. In this way, subscription to the system is favourable mainly for regular users. Those who only use the system occasionally can subscribe for a single month, but they must indicate their intention well in advance. HCSO grants a 60 per cent price allowance to the universities and colleges, and 50 per cent to the central administrative bodies.

Contracts

HCSO makes a contract with the users of the system, which can be terminated without any explanation at the end of a quarter.

Identifiers

Access to the system is possible through a pair of identification codes which give access to the various services and which are mentioned in the contract.

Entry Forms

The chargeable block of the Statat system contains the Order Form, which can be printed and sent after completion to the HCSO by fax or e-mail.

IV. USERS OF THE STADAT SYSTEM

The majority of users of the system belong to the entrepreneurial sphere: 55 per cent of a total of over 100 subscribers, 20 per cent are educational institutes and 16 per cent the state administration.

It appears from statistics that the entrepreneurial sphere badly needs rapid, precise and easily accessible data. Given their scope of activity, the simplest way for them to access statistical data is to receive the data through the Internet. The HCSO disseminates the data in paper or fax form to the state administration and to the editors of newspapers more-or-less free of charge. Therefore, there are no subscribers among the editors of newspapers. However, the HCSO does not forward information to enterprises, so their only access to our data is through purchasing it. As it is easier to subscribe to an Internet database than to buy and store books and publications, they choose the Internet. It is much simpler to look for retrospective data in a database than in a mass of books.

There is keen interest among foreign users as well. International organizations such as the UN and the OECD receive the HCSO's data through the Statat system. We have learnt through feedback channels that they are satisfied with the services of the system.

The questions received by the Statat Office on the Internet are forwarded to our Dissemination Department and to the responsible departments of the HCSO. These indications are important for us because of our EU-association.

V. COMPARISON OF INTRA-INSTITUTIONAL COSTS OF PRINT AND ELECTRONIC PUBLICATIONS

It is important that users can rapidly access statistical data, but another issue of equal importance is the question of financial matters. First releases from the HCSO can be downloaded from the Internet at any time. This is important because only the latest publications are available in downloadable form in the database. As the first releases are published monthly, they are changed every month. The dates are listed in a release calendar on the Home Page of the News Block. Every user can find out on which date or, in the case of consumer price indices, at which hour the data he/she is interested in, becomes available.

The price of a first release is US\$5. If any user wishes to buy all 50 publications downloadable from the system, the business price is US\$250 including only one copy of each publication. In an agency where staff members have work places far from each other, several copies of the same publication must be bought. If an agency subscribes to the Statat system, any responsible staff member can download as many copies as required of all the publications at a price of US\$50 per month.

It is essential that, using a single user name-password, several staff members can simultaneously have access to the system. Not only a single person, but a whole institution is thus authorized to use the same user name-password. It is obvious that costs can be saved through the use of Internet.

Naturally, it is advantageous for the persons using the data not to have to search for the required publications, and all information is available to them at any moment. Last but not least, large quantities of paper can be saved.

It is of course, in the HCSO's own interest to have an ever-growing number of users connected to its Statat system because it is also a source of income. The Ministry of Finance stipulates an income for the HCSO as equal to 10 per cent of the total financing of the HCSO from the state budget. Naturally, the data of the HCSO are available at the Library of the HCSO free of charge. The HCSO's Library has 40,000 visitors annually.

VI. MODIFICATIONS AND FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF THE STATAT SYSTEM

On the basis of the experience gained during the three years of the Statat system's operation, we are continually modifying the system. Our main objective is to depart from the "publication approach". The users need to have access to the latest monthly data as soon as possible and to receive time series from the annual data as early as possible. In order to produce long time series in tables the data must be homogenized. When the annual data were published in yearbooks, the problem of comparability did not exist. But if, on the Internet, the data appear in several tables, they cannot be copied together into a single table because the data have been prepared using different methodologies and over different periods of time. Now we can solve the problem because we have a dynamic database too.

We have decided to indicate the homogenized and modified data, which has been included in a table of long time series, with different letters in order to distinguish them from other data.

As mentioned earlier, one part of the Statat system is static, i.e. the database contains ready-made tables. This has some advantage as many users need the data collected in one table. They could compile the table

by retrieving data from a dynamic database, but that would require typing a series of questions, which takes time and leaves possibilities for errors.

While taking these demands into consideration, we have to depart from the “publication approach” and must create special tables for electronic dissemination. As there are no limits to the size of a table on the Internet, long time series can be released in a single table. For the long tables, we have solved the problem of freezing the table headings and rolling the data under it.

VII. STADAT: ELECTRONIC DISSEMINATION SYSTEM OF THE HUNGARIAN CENTRAL STATISTICAL OFFICE FOR SUBSCRIBERS

In order to meet user’s needs in the STADAT-system, the Hungarian Central Statistical Office provides tools for getting information in a block of tables, access to multidimensional database, downloading of statistical publications besides the conventional possibilities of data access. Copyright: Hungarian Central Statistical Office, Budapest.

The detailed data segment of the STADAT-system is at the disposal of subscribers, containing the following blocks:

1. Block of tables

The thematically selected information is based on tables issued in printed form in the Statistical Reports, First releases, Periodical publications, Monthly Bulletins of Statistics and in the Statistical Pocket-Book of Hungary and the Statistical Yearbook of Hungary. The regional blocks follow the same structure and include interim quarterly information derived from the regional directorates of the HCSO.

Data from external data suppliers (the National Bank of Hungary, Ministry of Finance, National Health Insurance Fund Administration) are recurrently incorporated in HCSO figures.

1.1 National data

In harmony with HCSO's reporting system, statistical figures are contained here in tables, monthly and quarterly data from 1997, annual data for longer period, and in HTML format. Data is regularly updated.

1.2 Regional data

Tables of quarterly reports coming from county directorates can be found here, dating back to 1997 in a HTML format. (Only in the Hungarian part.)

1.3 International data

Tables of HCSO's Monthly Bulletin of Statistics are accessible here in HTML format.

2. Database

The database contains more statistical variables, in more dimensions, with more details, than the block of tables. The dataset from the database can be manipulated. You can modify the details of data, for example: the counties within the region. You can change the position of dimensions in the table.

3. Downloadable national publication

This block contains HCSO's First Releases, Most recent data and periodical publications, in Word 97, Excel 97 and PDF format. Publications can be downloaded to end-user's PC. Only the latest versions of publications are stored here, as soon as the newest version has been published, the former version will be deleted.

First release publication dates are fixed. They are included in the **Dissemination Calendar of HCSO**, accessible from the Home Page. On the day of release the publication can be downloaded from the system at 9:00 a.m.

4. Downloadable regional publications

This section covers quarterly publications of HCSO's regional directorates with analyses and tables downloadable in Word 97 format. This section always covers the last quarter of the year at the following dates:

- Data on Quarter 1: May 30
- Data on Quarter 2: August 30
- Data on Quarter 3: November 30
- Data on Quarter 4: February 28

The tables of publications can be retrospectively found from 1997 in the On-line-block. (Only in the Hungarian part.)

How to use the STADAT-system?

1. On-line inquiries from the database using a key word.

By clicking on the search icon, a table appears to which max. 4 key words can be typed in and the search starts.

The result of search (table, publication or any document) may be accessible either to everyone, or only to subscribers.

Clicking on the title the full document appears.

2. Accessibility of statistical tables through menu pages

Selecting the year, the statistical field and the title of table will show the required data.

3. Using the Database

In the database you can create statistical tables or graphs from the selected data. The elements of the operation are:

- selecting a category
- selecting measures
- selecting dimensions
- editing a statistical table
- manipulating the layout of a table.

Short overview:

1st step. Selecting a category:

- Click on the button "Database" in the left pane. The list of subjects appears.
- Select from the categories that are of interest to you.
- By clicking on a subject title you select the category.

2nd step. Selecting measures:

Click on the right icon in this window, to see the list of "Selectable measures". You can select a measure by clicking on the button "Select", or all measures by clicking on the button "Select All". In the window of "Selected measures" you can now see the selected measures.

By clicking on the button "Remove" the window of "Selected measures" will be empty again if you want to modify the selected measures.

By clicking on the button "Methodology" you can see the definition of the indicators and the related statistical concepts.

3rd step. Selecting dimensions:

Click on the right icon - to see the list of "Selectable dimensions".

You can select a dimension by clicking on the button "Select", or all dimensions by clicking on the button "Select All".

Now, in the window of "Selected dimensions" you can see the selected dimensions. Some dimensions have been pre-selected in this window. Without these dimensions the table cannot be generated. For example: period of time.

By clicking on the button "Remove" the window of "Selected dimensions" will be in the first position again if you want to modify the selected dimensions.

4th step. Editing the statistical table:

By clicking on the button "Data table", after selecting the measures and the dimensions, the statistical table appears.

5th step. Manipulating the layout of a table:

You can change the layout of a table, tailor dimension-values, create graphs, export data, print tables etc., after generating the table. Use the Help button (?) for details.

4. Downloading of publications

HCSO's first releases. The most recent figures and periodical publications can be downloaded from the system in Word 7, Excel 97 or PDF format.

Quarterly publications of HCSO's regional directorates can be downloaded in three separate parts, owing to their large size, (analyses, tables, periodical information) or in a zipped version.

5. On-line inquiries and downloads from the Gazetteer of Hungary.

5.1 On-line inquiries

Writing in the name of settlement, information can be gained on the area of the settlement, inner and outer parts, history and the data of population census of the last 10 years, etc.

5.2 Downloads

The codes, population, number of households in a county can be found in the downloadable file.

Technical preconditions:

The registered parameters of system access:

- A PC configured in Internet access, min 28,8 Kbps transmission bandwidth.
- Microsoft Internet Explorer 5.0 or later with JAVA SCRIPT and JAVA VM support (JAVA VM is needed to access the database).
- Minimum 800*600 resolution for SVGA video displaying.

Data of the database are displayed by a Java applet. The program is downloaded with the browser from the central computer to the local computer. Using Microsoft Internet Explorer (5.0 or later) the system downloads and installs the program to the local computer only for the first time. Compared to other operations, the downloading needs more time. It depends on the speed of the network. (The size of the applet is 4 MB.) Next time only the requested data will be downloaded.

Preconditions for using the applet:

- enabled to execute Java in the browser
- enabled to download files in the browser

- enabled to download files in the local network (proxy, firewall, etc.)

Payment conditions:

- a) ON-LINE inquiries from the STADAT database in tables, in HTML format, in Hungarian and in English USD80/month
- b) Download of first releases, most recent publications and periodical publications of 38 types, but in always enlarging number in Word 97, Excel 97 and PDF format, in Hungarian and in English USD50/month
- c) Download of quarterly information from 20 regional directorates of the HCSO in Hungarian, in Word 97 format USD100/month.
- *) All our services (a+b+c) USD190/month.
- d) ON-LINE inquiries from the Detailed Gazetteer of Hungary, USD15/month. (In case you subscribe for one of the services under point a/, b/, c/ then the Gazetteer can be used freely.)