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For information

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**INDICATORS AND PRACTICES OF REPORTING THE OUTPUT OF THE
STATISTICAL OFFICES**

Note prepared by the Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia

INTRODUCTION

1. The CES seminar on efficiency and effectiveness of statistical offices was held in 2007. The Conference concluded that the discussion on this topic should be continued in future with the aim of collecting and sharing best practices in the field of measuring effectiveness, efficiency and productivity. At the October 2007 meeting of the CES Bureau, proposals on the possible follow-up to the CES seminar were considered. The Bureau asked Statistics Latvia to collect indicators and practices of reporting the output from statistical offices of different countries and to prepare a report.
2. In order to collect the experiences of different countries, the information on the home pages of national statistics institutes was studied, but this approach was not successful because of the heterogeneous design and structure of the homepages. The indicators were usually hidden in different documents and reports, and in order to obtain the necessary information, a lot of searching and reading was needed, with the risk of missing something important. We therefore decided that, in order to obtain systematic information on this issue, we would organize a survey to clarify practices applied by different statistical institutions in the evaluation of the efficiency of their own activities.
3. The short survey questionnaire was drafted. It consisted of 7 closed questions and free space for feedback to provide information on the indicators used for output reporting. The questionnaire was e-mailed to selected countries all over the world (EU, CIS, North and South America, Asia). We would also like to note that the time period chosen for the survey created some extra difficulties for us, as we received a number of out-of-office notifications (about 30%).
4. By the deadline for replies, we had received responses from 28 countries (Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Israel, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, Slovakia, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom). We would like to thank these countries for their efforts in completing the questionnaires and preparing reports on indicators used for output reporting.

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

5. The results indicated that 25 countries out of 28 are using performance indicators to report on output. The indicators are not used by Azerbaijan, Belarus and Luxembourg. Azerbaijan informed us that they are planning to implement the evaluation of the output of statistical activities in the near future. Luxembourg is not using indicators to measure output, but the output and functioning is analyzed during the annual planning meeting, during which exercise goals and results are discussed among the direction committee and heads of units. The findings are published in the annual activity report, which is available on the website.

6. Concerning kinds (or types) of output, 88% of respondents measure overall improvements in data processing, 76% measure overall performance of the institution, 72% are using performance indicators to measure fulfillment of certain functions. Less than half are using performance indicators to measure data processing in certain fields, or output of structural (including regional) units.

7. When analyzing practices used to measure the kinds of output, it is necessary to stress that different approaches are used. Some countries use specific indicators for each type of output, whereas others apply almost the same indicators to measure different types of output. As an example, we would like to note that quite often the results of user satisfaction surveys or public image surveys are used to measure only the performance of the whole institution. And, for example, the indicators like timeliness, punctuality and respondent burden are used to measure different types of output.

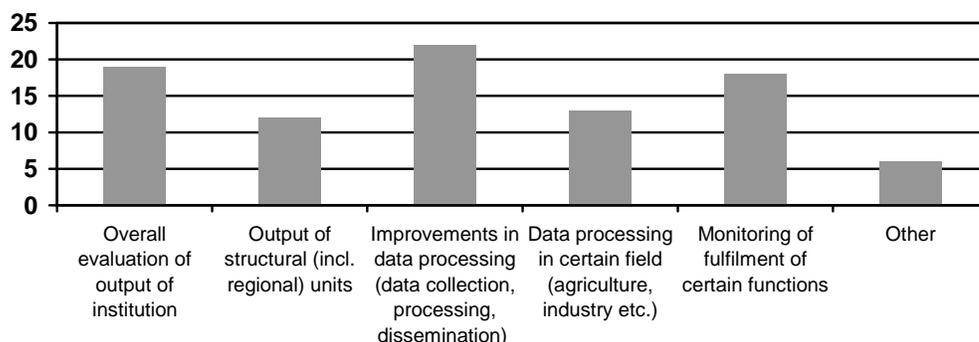


Figure 1: Type of output measured.

8. All respondents use performance indicators to monitor fulfillment of short-term and long-term strategies and action plans. 60% of respondents mentioned that, if the planned output is not reached, financial sanctions can be applied. It sounds very harsh, but from comments provided it is clear that cases where financial sanctions on an institutional level are applied occur very rarely. However, financial sanctions may be applied where requirements related to the output in an EU contract (with Eurostat) have not been met. Moreover, financial sanctions are imposed in cases where structural units underperform. Many countries have indicated that usually financial sanctions are not applied but that, in order to avoid them in future, reasons for not reaching the goals are analyzed and reported to the senior management. There are also cases when performance monitoring is very closely related to the remuneration of the staff; this means that, if the targets are not reached, the salaries can be affected.

9. Another interesting aspect of performance monitoring is historical data. Respondents indicated that most of them have time series of performance data. For example, Statistics Canada noted that some indicators have time series data from year 1976 (response burden), Statistics Finland have time series for the most important indicators of 10-15 years. Due to the technological developments and changing nature of output measurement, it is impossible to have the same indicators over a long time period. Therefore, most of the countries indicate that the length of time series is less than 10 years.

10. The results of output measurement are disseminated by the majority of countries (84%). The most common form is as an annual report, where the performance indicators are included. There are other forms of reporting, for example, Statistics New Zealand has monthly internal reports and a quarterly report to the Minister of Statistics; an annual report is also published (Statement of Service Performance - reports on outputs over the year and where targets have been missed; it includes information on quality, quantity, timeliness and presentation). In the case of Statistics Canada, a Departmental Performance Review should be approved by parliament, and then it is made available to the Canadian public in electronic form and on the web.

11. When coming to conclusions on reporting of performance, it should be noted that in most countries the reporting of performance is regulated by national laws. The amount of information made available to the public differs; a wider list of indicators is available internally.

OVERVIEW OF OUTPUT INDICATORS USED IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES

12. Analysing the indicators which the respondents of the national statistical institutes have included in the list of indicators used to measure output, the following groups of output indicators can be distinguished:

- indicators characterising the amount (quantity) of output;
- indicators characterising the quality of output;
- efficiency (productivity) indicators;
- user (and other stakeholder) satisfaction.

A large number of respondents have also noted input (resources) indicators in the list.

13. Statistics Finland's output indicators are divided into two groups:

- output indicators of productivity measurement;
- other output indicators.

14. In most countries, the statistical offices in the list of indicators which are used for measurement of output have shown indicator "Number of publications (number of releases)". Statistics Finland and the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) report separately on number of releases of annual publications, quarterly publications, monthly publications and other publications (ABS by subject matter). The CSB of Latvia reports separately on the number of new publications, as well as on the number of publication copies sent to subscribers. The Statistics New Zealand monthly reports also indicate number of new or changed outputs.

15. Other popular output indicators in many statistical offices are "Number of answers submitted on the requests for information", "Number of informative news (press) releases", "Number of visits to the statistical office's home page on the Internet", "Number of indicators

accessible in the Internet databases”, “Number of tables viewed in the Internet databases”, “Number of visitors to the Information Centre of statistical office” (also “Library of Statistics loans” in Statistics Finland), “Number of reports to international organizations” (“Number of international questionnaires received and responded to on time” in Statistics New Zealand), “Number of participation in legislative work in the EU”, “Number of external training sessions hosted by statistical office”.

16. The NSO of some countries (for example, Estonia) also reports on such indicators as “Number of analytical articles”, “Number of contracts for microdata”, “Number of user trainings”, “Number of presentations on conferences and seminars”, “Number of media reflections by subject”, “Percentage of surveys that use administrative registries to produce statistics”. In some countries (for example, in Austria) the indicator “Number of references to statistical office in mass media” is used as an output indicator.

17. The Australian Bureau of Statistics achieves its outcome through the provision of two products and services: Output 1.1.1 – Economic Statistics, and Output 1.1.2 –Population and Social Statistics. Performance information for Output group 1.1 is as follows:

- improve the quality of output;
- increase the quantity of output;
- achievement of cost-effective outputs.

A large amount of data of the ABS is released as data cubes and spreadsheets. The ABS measures output also as a number of accesses by the type of access, for example, Website: number of pages viewed, number of pages published, number of products downloaded; National Information and Referral Service: number of E-mails, number of telephone calls completed (ABS Annual Report, www.abs.gov.au - About Us).

18. Many statistical offices measure not only the amount (quantity) of output, but also the quality of output. For example, the Statistical Office of Czech Republic (CZSO) reports on non-punctuality (in percentage), which is calculated as number of publications not issued in time in proportion to the total number of publications in the Catalogue of Publications; on length of delays – delay in days against the date of issue presented in the Catalogue of Publications (1. Average, 2. Median); and on availability (in percentage), which is calculated as a number of publications issued in foreign language or bilingually in proportion to the total number of publications in the Catalogue of Publications.

19. Statistics New Zealand reports monthly on the number of errors discovered in published information, number of errata, percentage of outputs released after target date and percentage of Ministerial targets met. With the help of output indicators, Statistics Canada characterises the relevancy, accessibility, accuracy, interpretability and coherence of statistical information. Statistics Netherlands reports on the percentage of press releases published on the planned date, on percentage of obligated EU deliveries that were delivered on the planned date, and on the number of formal corrections in released publications.

20. Some countries have shown such quality indicators as number of revisions in statistical database, number of mistakes in statistical database, average mark of implementation of quality indicators, number of comparable time series available to the public in the public database, and number of indicators with comparable time series presented in the public database.

21. A large number of statistical offices have included the user satisfaction index in the list of output indicators (in the CSB of Estonia also the index of satisfaction of users of regional statistics). The main data source for calculation of the user satisfaction index is the data of user satisfaction surveys. The Department of Statistics of Lithuania, in addition to the user satisfaction index, reports on the level of satisfaction of users. The CZSO and the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic uses the respondent satisfaction indicator and employee satisfaction indicator (both expressed as average mark in the CZSO and as percentage of stakeholders that marked a certain grade on the scale in a question asked in the satisfaction survey).

22. In the majority of national statistical offices, most output indicators have a defined plan (target value). The performance of the statistical office is evaluated comparing the actual output indicators with planned indicators (target values).

23. Output indicators are usually measured annually, but in many cases also quarterly and monthly (for example, in Statistics New Zealand). Some output indicators in Statistics Finland are measured 3 times a year (for example, number of tables in free statistical databases, punctuality of releases), some indicators (Statistics Finland's reliability and customer satisfaction index) – every second year. Other internal program indicators in Statistics Canada are measured quadrennially. There are also quinquennial reviews (with 5 year periodicity for annual surveys) and triennial reviews (with 3 year periodicity for quarterly and monthly surveys) in the United Kingdom Office for National Statistics. Some output indicators in Germany are half-yearly, in Ireland – biannual. In the CSB of Latvia, the plan of output indicators covers a half-year, the fact of output indicators are accumulated quarterly.

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