

Distr.: General  
27 October 2017

English

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## United Nations

### Economic Commission for Europe

#### Conference of European Statisticians

##### Work Session on Gender Statistics

Belgrade, Serbia

29 November – 1 December 2017

Item 7 of the provisional agenda

##### Use of gender statistics in policymaking and policy monitoring

## Use of Gender Statistics in Policymaking and Policy Monitoring in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Note by the State Statistical Office of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia\*

### *Abstract*

Improving the quality and availability of gender statistical data is essential for providing policymakers with reliable data to make informed decisions and plan effective interventions. It is, therefore, imperative to undertake assessment of data availability at the national and regional level in order to formulate a plan for improving the production of gender statistics and indicators using and expanding on the existing sources, devising new ones and building institutional capacities to maintain reliable sources for official statistics.

The analysis of policies and budgets from the gender aspect should provide policymakers with a new dimension in the planning process, which does not consider gender inequality only as a consequence, but also identifies and addresses the causes and processes that created such a policy.

To make data available to users, the large sets of data collected by statistical surveys need to be transformed into concise and relevant information that becomes available to users through different dissemination products. In this way, the State Statistical Office (SSO) meets the needs of different user groups, and above all, fulfils the main task of official statistics to develop, produce and disseminate statistics in an impartial, objective, professional and transparent manner in which all users are treated equitably.

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## I. Introduction

1. The analysis of policies and budgets from the gender aspect provides policymakers with a new dimension in the planning process, which does not consider gender inequality only as a consequence, but also identifies and addresses the causes and processes that created such a policy. These relations determine to a great extent the different needs, interests and priorities of men and women in the economic, political and social spheres in a given society. Therefore, this model takes into consideration the fact that specific needs and priorities of men and women are different and have to be treated differently so that they can equally benefit from them.
2. Such analysis should help us understand that the policies and programmes have effects and implications that vary from one group to another, and that, in order to provide equal opportunities for all beneficiaries, the interventions have to take into account such differences already in the process of policy and budget planning. The Government of the Republic of Macedonia is committed to this concept and shows political will and readiness to promote gender equality and improve the position of women.
3. The State Statistical Office follows the general objectives of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia and its activities towards ensuring and promoting gender equality. General improvements made in the statistical system as a whole have an influence over all relevant gender statistics used for planning and policy purposes. In its activities, the State Statistical Office collects, processes, links, stores, analyses and presents statistical data on the gender structure (Article 19 of the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men).

## II. Policies and practices

4. In order to achieve effective implementation of the legal provisions, several strategic documents have been prepared whose implementation will additionally contribute to the promotion of equal opportunities of women and men.
5. The Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia, in January 2012, adopted the new **Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men**. The new legal provisions have established obligations for the state administration bodies and the local units of self-government (Article 11, paragraph 3 and paragraph 8, Article 14 paragraph 2 and Article 15) and according to these provisions the entities responsible for implementing the Law are obliged within their strategic plans and budgets to incorporate the principle of equal opportunities for women and men and monitor the effects and impact of their programmes on women and men and report on the results achieved and progress with their annual reports that they are required to submit to the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy by 31 March at the latest of the current year for the previous year.
6. The Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia, in January 2013, adopted the **Strategy for gender equality 2013-2020 and the National Action Plan for gender equality 2013-2017**. The Strategy for gender equality is a long-term strategic document that provides a framework for the full equality of women and men such as cross-sectoral, horizontal and universal social and political priority. This document sets out the basic steps and the specific guidelines for introducing a gender perspective in the mainstream societies flows and full achievement of gender equality in the Republic Macedonia.
7. In order to fulfil the legal obligations and implement the efforts of the Government by the responsible entities, and aimed at unification of the methods, procedures and ways of including the gender perspective in the mainstream, the Ministry of Labour and social policy, through a transparent and inclusive process, prepared the **Methodology for Gender Responsive Budgeting**. This Methodology is an instrument and guide for successful implementation of the obligations

arising from the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men and the Strategy for the introduction of gender responsible budgeting in the Republic of Macedonia.

8. In the process of preparation of the Methodology, representatives were included from all relevant institutions, experts in the field of gender equality and representatives of civic associations and the social partners. Representatives of the government also joined in the preparation of an interdepartmental, consultative and advisory group for equal opportunities of women and men.
9. The Methodology does not require special budget allocations for women but requires gender-responsive approach in prioritising and financial forecasts within existing programmes and measurement of their implementation through appropriate indicators.
10. The purpose of this Methodology is:
  - To provide a single understanding of the gender responsibility budgeting;
  - Give directions on the ways in which they are developed, implemented and linking policies / programmes for the promotion of gender equality with the processes of budgeting and the strategic plans of the bodies of the state administration through defining gender-sensitive results, activities and indicators as well as measuring progress;
  - Describe the procedure and explain the selection criteria for programmes that will be subject to gender responsive budgeting;
  - Define the organization and management of the process of gender responsive budgeting;
  - Explain the process of monitoring and evaluation, through which progress is measured with regard to the achievements of programmes for men and women.
11. The process of gender responsive budgeting, described in the Methodology, is fully aligned with the existing strategic planning system and budgeting in the ministries of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia and procedures for policy co-ordination and decision-making.
12. In accordance with the obligations from the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, state administration bodies and local units of self-government are obliged to submit, once a year, a **Report to Ministry of Labour and Social Policy on the activities and progress they have made in the field of equal opportunities for women and men.**
13. The reports that were submitted so far by these entities were written without prescribed standards and guidelines for the content of a single report, and therefore they contained very little data and information that can be used, sublimated and included in the annual report that the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy submits to the Government of Republic of Macedonia.
14. In order to unify the notification and get more information on the undertaken activities, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy develops reporting forms that will help the state administration bodies and the local self-government units to prepare the report and show all the activities they have undertaken, and all this will help the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy to prepare a sublimated report that will include the results achieved and the positive practices in the field of equal opportunities both at central and local level. Also, the delivery of unified reports would allow obtaining data that can be used for the preparation of various other reports or analyses which will include gender equality as an issue.

### III. Gender statistics

15. Gender statistics reflects the relation between women and men in different socio-economic and political life, and serve as a basis for changing the current and creating new policies. For statistics to

be useful in gender sensitive policy making and planning, it must be disaggregated by sex and reflect gender issues in society. All data on individuals should be collected, analysed and presented by sex, in accordance with the Law on State Statistics.

16. In order to implement this objective, the State Statistical Office has included sex as a variable in all statistical surveys that concern individuals (population, families and households, education, employment, crime, etc.), which means that the capacity for collecting, processing, analysing and data dissemination based on gender is really well developed. The activities of the State Statistical Office towards improving gender statistics are based on national as well as international experiences, bearing in mind that improving gender statistics is a long-term process, which could be achieved by cooperation of producers and users of statistical data.
17. The State Statistical Office formed a Working Group that works as a team on gender statistics development and improvement. The members of the group are people from the State Statistical Office, which cover the greater part of gender statistical data. This means that the State Statistical Office uses the available human and financial capacities, which sometimes show as insufficient for more successful results.
18. This organizational structure depends on several causes:
  - (i) current organizational scheme,
  - (ii) legal framework, which limits the new employment in public administration and
  - (iii) limited budgetary resources.
19. According to the current organizational scheme of the SSO, there is no separate Department for gender statistics. This means that the members of the gender statistics working group have many other responsibilities and they could not be fully devoted only to the gender issue. But, we consider that the existence of a horizontal working group is not a limitation but rather an advantage, because the members of this group can contribute in reflection of different gender aspects.

#### **IV. Data sources and communication tools**

20. The SSO, within its Programme for publication and dissemination, ensures the regular production of a statistical publication on gender called "Women and men in Macedonia", which is available free of charge to all users on the following link: [http://www.stat.gov.mk/PrikaziPublikacija\\_1.aspx?rbr=684](http://www.stat.gov.mk/PrikaziPublikacija_1.aspx?rbr=684)
21. This publication is a very good source of basic data on women and men, and it presents and interprets topical data on women and men in a form suitable for a wide range of non-users;
22. In addition to data in the publication, data from gender statistics are also available in the internet database "Indicators of gender statistics in the Republic of Macedonia", also available free of charge to all users on the following link: [http://makstat.stat.gov.mk/PXWeb/pxweb/en/MakStat/MakStat\\_PoloviStat/125\\_PoloviStatistiki\\_en.px/?rxid=46ee0f64-2992-4b45-a2d9-cb4e5f7ec5ef](http://makstat.stat.gov.mk/PXWeb/pxweb/en/MakStat/MakStat_PoloviStat/125_PoloviStatistiki_en.px/?rxid=46ee0f64-2992-4b45-a2d9-cb4e5f7ec5ef)
23. The Communication Strategy of the State Statistical Office (SSO) is a document that in general defines the policy for public relations of the institution. This document specifies the standards on which the communication of the SSO is based. These standards stem from the vision of the State Statistical Office to be recognised as an institution that provides quality, timely and internationally comparable statistical data.

## A. Defining public relations

24. The public relations represent an overall strategic communication which is known as corporate communication resulting from the sum of the communication goals and objectives. In fact, the process consists of three phases:
- Determining and evaluating public attitudes;
  - Identifying the policies and procedures of the institution that are of public interest;
  - Development and execution of communication plans and programmes that are designed to influence understanding and acceptance of the public's message.

## B. Target groups

25. The priorities and objectives of the communication strategy are direct activities of the State Statistical Office towards the following target groups (which may occur in the role of providers and the role of data users)
- **Government and state bodies;** The activities aimed at this target group should include: establishing a practice of regular informing regarding the developments and results in the operations of the State Statistical Office, thus providing support for the planned activities of the Office.
  - **Local self-government;** Establishing regular communication with the local authorities by sending promotional materials, press releases as well as their presence at events organized by the SSO for their introduction to the production of SSO data at the local level.
  - **Authorized bodies in the statistical system of the country;** The role and duties of the authorised bodies in the statistical system of the Republic of Macedonia is precisely defined in the Law on State Statistics. The SSO should take a proactive role in the exchange of information with the authorised bodies in order to continuously improve and enrich the statistical system of the country.
  - **Business entities;** Contacts with providers and users of data by sending promotional materials, press releases and their presence at events organized by the SSO. The role of the Economic Chamber of Macedonia should also be emphasized, which acts as an intermediary between the State Statistical Office and the business entities and as promoter of the benefits to the business community arising from the successful implementation of statistical surveys.
  - **Educational and research institutions;** Organizing joint projects that will promote statistical products and services that can be used for educational and research purposes. This entails intensifying the cooperation with scientific research institutions by organizing thematic conferences, lectures by distinguished lecturers for the employees of the SSO, as well as lectures by the employees of the SSO for the faculties and institutes within their educational activity.
  - **NGOs** play an important role in the contemporary socio-economic life of the Republic of Macedonia. Maintaining close contact with this type of organizations and associations is an opportunity for the SSO to obtain information on the demand for certain statistics, promotion of the products and services of the Office and a channel for presenting the Office as an institution that is open for cooperation of any kind.
  - **The public (citizens, pupils and students);** This target group is particularly important for building the image of the SSO as a state body that offers information of any kind which may be interesting for different categories of citizens. The State Statistical Office should continue its

practice of organizing open days for pupils and students, but also for citizens and family members of SSO employees, during which they will be introduced to the work of the SSO, the use of statistical methodologies, working methods and statistical products and possibilities for their use and function.

- **Media;** The media are a target group that should be approached with particular attention. They are participants in the dissemination of statistical products and, therefore, dialogue needs to be established with them in which all will be treated equally. The Office should always be open and available for the information the media needs because they are one of the biggest creators of public opinion for the institution.
- **International statistical organizations and institutions'** Promoting cooperation with national and international statistical organizations and active participation at all levels of cooperation through presence of the Office in meetings, workshops, symposia, congresses, at which the representatives of SSO will take active part and contribute to the acceptance of the SSO as a competent and relevant factor in international cooperation, and will gain new knowledge and information that will help to further improve the Macedonian (gender) statistics and international comparability of official statistics produced by the Office.

### **C. Channels and tools for external communication**

26. With regard to the channels of external communication, the SSO, as before, uses all available channels for disseminating information: printed and electronic media, the Internet, direct meetings with target groups, attendance at events.
27. With respect to the communication tools, in the first place is the website of the SSO, which represents a mirror of the overall activity of the SSO. The development of the website and investing continuous efforts to make it more accessible for the users is one of the main priorities of the SSO. The website is the starting point in any representation of the Office and, therefore, it is the primary tool by which the SSO communicates with the public and through which it measures user satisfaction. The communication tools of the SSO will include preparing promotional and informational brochures for different target groups, workshops, panel discussions and debates with target groups. In order to facilitate the access to statistical data, the State Statistical Office is introducing a new feature on the website. From now on, by simply filling in a form, which will not take much time, they can regularly receive e-mail announcements about news releases of the State Statistical Office. Also, through the website, users can send requests for statistical data which they particularly need, and they will be informed as soon as possible, via e-mail, about the availability of the requested data. We hope that with this new feature our data will become more available to a large number of users, thus widening the range of users even more.

### **D. Monitoring and evaluation**

28. A strategy does not always fulfil its purpose unless its implementation is monitored and evaluated. For this, there are established mechanisms and the SSO, as before, will monitor the traffic on its website, the representation of the State Statistical Office in the media, the presence of journalists at press conferences and briefings, attendance at organized forums and workshops, and on the basis of these observations, will make analyses of the results in terms of achieving the set strategic objectives. Also serving this purpose are the regular surveys of user satisfaction monitored via the website and regularly conducted every 2 years. In addition, the implementation of the Strategy will be monitored through the execution of action plans that will be prepared annually, and from which detailed action plans will arise for each specific activity.

29. In order to obtain the opinions of users on the products and services, the State Statistical Office conducts a **User Satisfaction Survey**. The first survey was conducted in 2009, the second in 2012, the third in 2015, and at the beginning of 2017 the SSO conducted the survey for the fourth time.

## V. Plan of action

- *Objective 1:* Revise of current national set of data and indicators
- *Objective 2:* Revise and innovate the content of publication for gender statistics (transferred from the concept of "available" data to the concept of "needed" data).
- *Objective 3:* Increasing the cooperation with producers and users of gender statistics
- *Objective 4:* Finding additional resources for building the State Statistical Office capacity (human and technical)
- *Objective 5:* Developing the regional and international cooperation

## VI. Conclusion

30. The increasing realization of the important role that women can play in the development process of a country has underlined the need to generate gender-sensitive indicators and sex-disaggregated statistics. These indicators help to highlight the existing differences between women and men, and contribute to creating equal access to opportunities for both. This development has resulted in the “revival of gender statistics” and stressed the importance of considering the role of women and men separately without masking over gender difference under the pretext of one population.
31. The State Statistical Office works continuously on improvement of gender statistics, in terms of coverage and data quality, and ensuring the regular production of statistical data on gender for a wide range of potential users.
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