

Case study for Road Map on Statistics for SDGs 2.0

Turkey: Country experience in the production of non-official statistics

Description

In Turkey's case, since all nationally applicable global SDGs indicators were assigned to national data producers, even non-official (in this situation, not yet officially produced) indicators were linked with potential data producers. As a fruit of the national coordination mechanism led by TurkStat, this assignment has channelled national data producer's efforts to estimate some of these (previously) non-official indicators within national capacity. The results were satisfactory especially on improvement of data quality perspective and therefore published in TurkStat's "Sustainable Development Indicators, 2010-2018" news release in 2020.

Two specific examples will provide more details on how some non-official indicators were produced:

- 4.2 Mountain green cover index
- 5.1 Coverage of protected areas in relation to marine areas.

Advantages

15.4.2 Mountain Green Cover Index:

This indicator was formulated as an output of FAO's global governance and measures the changes of the green vegetation in mountain areas – i.e. forest, shrubs, trees, pasture land, crop land, etc. – in order to monitor progress on SDGs 15.4 "conservation of mountain ecosystems" target.

The first data estimated on global level was provided to countries by FAO in order to receive confirmation that this non-official data was representing country's values. This first estimation provided data for 140 countries with over 170 000 observation points. FAO's initiative on informing NSOs and national data providers, in this case TurkStat and responsible ministry, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MoAF) included exchanging correspondence that spanned over more than 2 years for this indicator. Thanks to the FAO's initiative, this cooperation included opportunity for national focal points to examine FAO's global estimations as well as provision of training workshop for them as well. These efforts led responsible data producer to assemble a small team and work on this indicator on national level. As a result, new estimation was provided for the green vegetation of Turkey. This estimation, also based on UNEP-WCMC classification of mountain areas but with much larger sample points, indicated 83.26% green vegetation for mountains, which is 8% lower than FAO's 91% estimation (this comparison is based on estimation of 46 942 sample points for Turkey versus 170 000 sample points for 170 countries).

This new estimation is welcomed by FAO as well and provides a baseline data, which will enable new estimations with much fewer sample points. Therefore, cooperation between FAO and national statistical system in this case not only improved the estimation quality of this (previously) non-official indicator, but also provided a roadmap for future estimations in a relatively cost-effective manner.

14.5.1 Coverage of protected areas in relation to marine areas:

This indicator aims to measure trends in the coverage of important sites of marine biodiversity that is covered by designated protected areas, in order to measure SDGs 14.5 "conserving the coastal and marine areas" target.

The data for protected marine areas indicator have been previously collected from a non-governmental organization. On the other hand, TurkStat's coordination efforts to produce these SDGs indicators officially, required inquiry of 3 different ministries' purview in order to be able to accurately provide the full coverage of marine protected areas. The responsible Ministry, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MoAF) have reached out to other relevant institutions in this regard.

Having acquired the full coverage of the data, this indicator that was published in TurkStat's "Sustainable Development Indicators, 2010-2018" news release showed 50 fold protected marine area coverage, compared to the previously compiled non-official data (14 442 km² compared to 270 km²). So for both of these examples, it can be argued that national alternative data sources provided better quality assurance.

Challenges

Not for these two indicators but for Custodian Agencies who have not been prepared beforehand for a country-side data provision (in most cases this option is presented), It is still unclear for Turkey, how these situations will be solved.