

Case study for the CES Road Map on Statistics for SDGs

Addendum to the 2nd edition: Guidance on Assessing and Conceptualizing SDG Indicator Availability

Poland: Analysis of global indicator availability on the national level – pilot testing of the 2024 Self-Assessment Tool for Indicator Availability

Background

The *Self-Assessment Tool for Indicator Availability* was developed and released by the UNECE Steering Group on Statistics for SDGs in 2017 just after the adoption of the global indicator framework. It was based on the assessment templates of Denmark, France, Mexico, Turkey, USA, CIS-STAT and Eurostat. Originally, the tool was intended to support NSOs in identifying data producers for the global indicators (it was launched as a questionnaire for collecting information on data availability which NSOs could send to potential SDG data providers).

Thanks to its flexibility, the tool has naturally evolved and expanded its application since its launch in 2017. At the halfway point of the 2030 Agenda, NSOs can also use it internally to assess and enhance their progress in SDG data availability. To better tailor the tool to today's needs and future challenges ahead of NSOs (e.g. the follow-up of the 2025 Comprehensive Review of the global SDG indicator framework), it has been updated as a result of extensive discussions of the Steering Group, followed by pilot testing of the revised tool by Poland, Germany, Sweden and UNECE.

Before using the *Self-Assessment Tool*, Statistics Poland has already assessed the global indicator availability with other instruments. One of them is "Indicator Reporting Status" feature (sdg.gov.pl/en/statistics_glob/status/) available on [Poland's National Reporting Platform](#) (NRP). This NRP functionality provides basic availability statistics (expressed in absolute numbers and as a percentage) and availability status for indicators across all SDGs. There are four types of availability status assigned to indicators on the Polish NRP:

- *Reported online* – refers to nationally available indicators
- *Experimental Statistics* – refers to nationally available indicators based on non-traditional data sources and new methods and tools
- *Statistics in progress* – refers to indicators that are currently being compiled and will be soon available
- *Exploring data* – refers to nationally unavailable indicators (for which the process of identifying data sources is still in progress)

In addition, just before the release of the first version of the *Self-Assessment Tool* in 2017, Statistics Poland developed a device to facilitate SDG data updates on its NRP. In simple terms, it is an Excel template with detailed information on data providers, data sources and dates of data availability for the global indicators (including both indicators compliant with the UN methodology and proxies). However, under closer scrutiny, the template seems to be a

compact version of the *Self-Assessment Tool* since it likewise generates information on the indicator availability.

As a consequence, Poland's active participation in the pilot served two purposes, namely, to test the revised *Self-Assessment Tool* performance and to enhance Statistics Poland's system of indicator availability assessment on that basis.

Pilot Test

Statistics Poland used the tool to assess approximately 40 global indicators in terms of their availability on the national level. To gain better insight into both indicator availability and tool performance, it was ensured that the assessment covered at least one indicator per goal, and that the assessed indicators had a different status in terms of their applicability (for the country specifics, e.g. geographic location, socio-economic situation), compliance with the UN methodology, data provider, data type and disaggregation categories. On the other hand, in order to control the complexity, the availability assessment was limited to the indicator-level. As a consequence, multiple indicator series and sub-indicators were not taken into account. By implication, "at-least-one-series-published" approach was used in the pilot testing.

The definition of indicator availability applied in the assessment was based on the explanation proposed in the tool's Read Me section, which primarily relies on the publication of the indicator: "An indicator is *nationally available* if it is made available to the public by a mandated public sector body (for example by the NSO, or by the responsible agency), regardless of who produced it."

The revised *Self-Assessment Tool* passed the test for all indicators assessed by Statistics Poland. The tool proved well-adjusted to analysing global indicators across all the SDGs regardless of how complex their availability status was on the national level. Despite its broad scope requiring detailed and specific information on SDG indicators, the tool turned out to be manageable thanks to its user-friendly design and guidance (instruction on how to use it and explanation of basic SDG terminology), which proved a great facilitator for the availability assessment. Nevertheless, as a result of the testing, some conceptual and technical refinements were introduced into the tool, upon mutual agreement, to make it even more applicable, flexible and accessible to NSOs.

Conclusions – Advantages of the Self-Assessment Tool

The pilot test revealed that the tool's usefulness goes far beyond the sole assessment of indicator availability. From the perspective of staff dealing with SDGs in Statistics Poland, the tool seems to cover a much wider range of applications than that. For example, it can be used in NSOs as:

- an SDG information organizer and planner
 - ✓ by listing, classifying, labelling and describing information on national SDG data availability, the Tool helps to manage SDG complexity and is a real time saver ("all you need on SDG indicators in one place")
 - ✓ allows for making plans for future indicator availability
- a data update tool

- ✓ provides information on data producers, time coverage and frequency of data, which is essential for SDG data update
- an availability calculator
 - ✓ offers a Statistics Sheet that instantly sums up complex information on various aspects of global indicator availability at the national level

In addition, thanks to its adaptability, the tool can be further customized to meet country-specific needs, e.g. it can be applied to the assessment of other indicators availability, including the national ones.

Except for its original purpose (global indicators availability assessment) and its other applications (mentioned above), the tool also provides value added to:

- practical matters in NSOs like:
 - ✓ SDG knowledge sharing among NSO employees (especially junior staff)
 - ✓ catching up with the latest advancements in the global and regional indicator availability
 - ✓ enhancing national indicator availability
 - ✓ preparing for the Comprehensive Review
- conceptual matters in NSOs like:
 - ✓ clarifying terminology used for SDGs, which is crucial for efficient task management and task completion in NSOs, e.g. cooperation with custodian agencies and global reporting, and for new SDG projects (research and development activities)
 - ✓ better understanding of the indicator availability concept and its relevance for SDG monitoring on the national level

Conclusions – Challenges of the Self-Assessment Tool and Lessons learnt from the pilot test

Although flexibility is the built-in advantage of the tool, it might seem a challenge at the same time. The tool leaves the responsibility for NSOs to make some choices about conceptual and technical matters based on their country-specific circumstances/needs. There are alternative ways of filling in the tool (e.g. with regard to multiple indicator series or national indicators). Likewise, NSOs can either limit or expand the scope of availability assessment and, furthermore, they need to decide on the definition of indicator availability applied for the assessment. Still, the tool provides NSOs with recommendations and indicates appropriate solutions.

Therefore, prior to the indicator availability assessment, discussion on its practical and theoretical aspects might be necessary and/or unavoidable within NSOs. However, effort put into that reflection will pay off in a more mature and complete assessment. Furthermore, it might help to see indicators from a broader perspective. It seems the most important lesson learned from the pilot test of the tool is the conclusion that indicators are not meant to be available for the sake of availability, but they are made available to be used.

Future steps

Statistics Poland carried out a thorough comparison between its own data-update-and-assessment template and the revised *Self-Assessment Tool* to determine their intersections and advantages as well as differences. The *Self-Assessment Tool* proved to be complementary to the template as it offered new and relevant information on indicator availability, not

elsewhere classified nor collected by Statistics Poland. Therefore, Statistics Poland's SDG Team is currently considering "the pros and cons" of replacing the template with the *Self-Assessment Tool*, however after some adjustments to the latter, which will be feasible thanks to the tool's built-in flexibility.