

## **New strategies for communication and dissemination of official statistics.**

*Independent statistics is fundamental for presenting and comparing the structures and dynamics of our societies. To facilitate the use of good quality statistics for evidence based policy making contributes to sound and sustainable policies for the collective benefits of citizens.*

*Communicating statistics is a fundamental for transparency and accountability objectives of institutions engaged in official statistics and to crowd out low quality statistics and sentiment based policy strategies.*

*Communication is also a strategic asset and to proactively service the professional user communities with relevant statistics and methodology and to bring statistics closer to citizens. Show how data are presented by Eurostat*

### **Introduction (slides 2-3-4-5)**

The data revolution, intended both as a multiplication of producers and consumers and as an extension of the tools and technologies supporting statistical information itself, requires the National Statistical Institutes to modernize their information offerings in order to capture an increasingly complex socio-economic reality, but with equal intensity requires them to innovate their languages in order to dialogue effectively with the increasingly important digital community.

Communication and dissemination are indispensable factors for ensuring (or rather increasing) the relevance of statistical offices in the digital era. The communication landscape is changing in a revolutionary way.

Statistical offices have equipped themselves for this changing communication landscape by developing a strategy, oriented by Eurostat, which has allowed them to have in many cases a winning and quality position in the complex ecosystem of digital communication with the realization of important communication and dissemination projects.

### **A few concepts to keep in mind (slide 6)**

Communication is fundamental to the goals of transparency and accountability of institutions engaged in official statistics and to rule out low-quality statistics and political strategies based on sentiment.

The market for competitors has expanded due to new technologies that have lowered, the structural costs of surveys.

Statistical information must be presented objectively and impartially and be independent of any political control or influence. This is to preserve the democracies. The fundamental principles of Official Statistics set the benchmarks of independence and objectivity.

All users should have equal access to data, as well as to metadata (statistical methods, concepts, variables, classifications used in the production of statistical results).

Statistical information should be available to as wide an audience as possible through multiple formats and distribution channels appropriate to the audience to be reached.

A modern data communication and dissemination strategy must take into account the current and future needs of users.

## The role of Eurostat **(slide 7-8-9-10-11)**

Eurostat has been playing a leading role in the field of communication and dissemination for some years.

Pioneering work that has since been consolidated into a full-fledged strategy In this context, key changes have been needed to strengthen its ability to communicate effectively with users.

These involved establishing modern communication services, investing in data literacy, and providing more user-centered statistical services while maintaining high quality methods.

### a) Eurostat dissemination and communication policy

- We proactively target various user groups to meet their needs
- We are timely and digital by default
- Our products and services are free of charge

- We are where our users are active and expect to find our data
- We use and apply a consistent visual identity
- We maintain statistical confidentiality and privacy in all our dissemination and communication activities

## b) Eurostat dissemination and communication strategy

On the base of these policy principles, Eurostat has implemented a strategy of communication and dissemination of statistical data according to an integrated and synergic approach between new media, institutional website and other web services, with a strong search for elaboration of communicative registers able to better reach a larger number of users

This synergy aims to contribute to consolidate a constant, active and collaborative dialogue with users, who are an integral part of the process of production and dissemination of statistical information (engagement, loyalty, sharing, etc.).

Every product and every communication and dissemination tool made available tries to respect the criteria of **Human centric design**, in order to better meet the needs of users who can act as "multipliers" with a wide reach.

In this context, key changes in official statistics are needed to strengthen its ability to communicate effectively with users. Objectives at a glance:

- Diversify communication channels to reach a wider audience
- Open possibilities for feedback, to continuously improve the quality of Eurostat products and services
- Get to know additional user segments
- To increase basic statistical literacy
- To increase trust in Eurostat ("we listen and we answer")
- To strengthen Eurostat image of accessibility
- To increase the visibility of Eurostat online

## Key actions to achieve these objectives

**(slides 12-13-14-15) User profiling:** In recent years, the demand for statistical information has grown to an unprecedented extent from the point of view of subject matter, territorial detail and type of information, also favored by the formidable development of the web and new digital technologies.

In this context, the evolution of communication paradigms has produced an increasingly complex relationship between the concept of target and that of stakeholder, which has led to the identification of subsets (groupings) of publics and stakeholders, marked by common structural characteristics, **Public Opinion Group**, students, teachers, **Stakeholder Group**, Institutions, Partners, **Expert User Group**, **Communicator Group**, Information Multipliers. Users can therefore be classified in various ways . With respect to their identity, their data usage, etc...

**(slides 16-17-18-19) Profiling Potential Targets** Eurostat and the NSIs are also trying to learn more about their potential users-people who do not currently use their statistics and tools, but who could benefit from their use. This report is a first step in reaching as broad an audience as possible .

### **Example:**

**Project personas**, implemented by the Hungarian Bureau of Statistics, identified specific visual and textual representations of user groups of Eurostat's dissemination products based on the behaviors, goals, and motivations of real users in order to guide the design of new dissemination products.

These 5 personas are outcome are based on qualitative research (field studies, including observations and interviews). Demographic details such as name, gender, age and even job description were added to make them more human and to facilitate empathy with them.

**(slides20-21) Using a " multi-channel " strategy**, according to different targets, for offering products and services, especially through digital communication channels. Nowadays, users move from one platform to another and from one digital site to another to satisfy their thirst for information and easily share content with friends and family.

That's why it's important to use multiple channels and multiple technologies so you don't decrease your chances of reaching your target audience.

### Example

The flagship publication “**The life of women and men in Europe**” was promoted through the Eurostat **website**, a **News Release**, **social media** (Twitter and Facebook), a **promotional video** as well as through the related General Directorates of the European Commission on a European level. On a national level, several promotion action took place due to the fact that the publication **was translated into all EU languages as well as Norwegian**.

Between October 2017 and March 2018, the English version published on the Eurostat website had over 400 000 page views. The interest in parts of the publication tends to be rediscovered by social media. As an example, on the occasion of International Women's Day Eurostat tweeted the static infographic from the publication about the Gender Pay Gap on 7 March 2018 and it became Eurostat's most popular tweet with more than 3 million views in just a few days. **The impact** of the digital publication on social media and mainstream media was **very high**. For instance, the Bulgarian national TV dedicated 4 minutes during the daily evening news, presenting the findings of the publication in detail and showing most of the visualisations; the French newspaper Le Figaro published a 4 minute video discussing the publication; in other countries the publication sparked interest and led to active discussions in the main media portals (Tagesschau, Corriere della sera, Heute, Kathimerini). Also, numerous embeddings of individual visualisations of the publication were recorded on social media.

**(slides 22-23) Strengthening of the dialogue with citizens** through actions and products with a communicative and informative slant, especially in digital format, NSIs have tried to achieve this goal.

The power of statistics is strongly linked to the way they are communicated. For example, deciding to adopt a **"plain language"** means wanting to make it understood by a lay audience. Declining the linguistic registers is part of a strategy that no longer addresses an undifferentiated public but different groups of users by speaking the language of each, focusing on their information and knowledge needs.

In this perspective, the other major player is **“visualization”**. Data visualization is now recognized as a very powerful tool to understand the dynamism of a phenomenon in time and / or space as well as to allow territorial comparisons, thematic insights, historical series analysis and better accessibility to links of interest and summary texts users there are tools and communicate information.

This is the case of Infographics with a double (or triple) communicative register that makes them capable of developing a narrative favoring the rationalization and hierarchy of content and to communicate complex information in a compressed space.

The size of the audience captured by the messages conveyed through images and graphics is particularly large because visualization is a universal language that can be easily understood by people with different backgrounds and levels of education.

**(slides 24-25) Adoption and implementation of innovative communication standards.** In the constant flow of communication that prevails in our existences, especially on digital channels, the search for unconventional modes of communication assumes a key role in allowing the message to emerge from the flat electrocardiogram of the transmission feed.

NSIs have tried and tested tools that make a difference compared to the models of the past, adopted a new perspective in the elaboration of content, putting experimental solutions on track. The contemporary user has a thousand ways -from mass media to social networks- to transform, choose, adhere, orientate himself among a thousand different proposals.

Certainly the tool that has guided this work in recent years has been **Storytelling**: a real technique for the construction and transmission of meaning, values, identity and knowledge.

Thanks to the development of **Information Technology**, this criterion was then applied to different formats, vehicles and products as well: live web TV, videos on YouTube, blogs on Medium, real-time content on Twitter, posts on Facebook, photos on Instagram, conversations with a community in dedicated Newsletters, communication through Barcamps, Hackathons and more.

**(slides 26-27) Offering tailor-made services and products.** The identification of different targets and their ways of being on the web lead to another consideration: each user or group of users has different needs.

For this reason, it is necessary to offer services and products tailored to ensure the best use of the data they are looking for. **Variety, flexibility, agility** are therefore the criteria that guide the new communication and dissemination strategy.

**(28-29-30-31-32) Increasing Value.** The potential of semantic technologies and dissemination standards with products and tools characterized by reusable content and open data, has favored the creation of added information value by users of official statistics.

**Enhancing the usability and availability of official statistics** means :

**in terms of content** it means explaining the data better, giving strong resonance to emerging themes and new multidimensional analyses, communicating the results achieved in recent years to increase the detail of analysis and the quality of information, to connect at the micro level social phenomena with economic ones and to develop longitudinal analyses of social and life paths, increasing new products and the production of experimental statistics.

**In technical terms** it means providing a broader context to data with portals and platforms, simplifying data export, being accessible on mobile devices, relying as much as possible on automated scripts, navigating using interactive graphs, etc..

Today there are many effective options for data dissemination: from anonymized microdata to interoperable data. Experiences include, just to name a few, the EU-SILC and/or EU-LFS Public Use Files (PUF) published for more than 20 NSIs and the Linked Open Statistical Data hub created by ESSnet. Dashboards, ...

**(slides 33-34-35) Improving statistical literacy.** In this field too, the work done by Eurostat and the NSIs has been impressive and constantly evolving.

Statistical competitions, games, online e-learning tools and an e-learning portal, instructional videos for teachers and students - and for a mass open online course, translation of **Statistics4beginners** have been developed with the aim of growing

statistical literacy that helps a very wide and non-professional audience to 'read' statistics and understand its importance as a fundamental tool to act, know and evaluate daily experiences and more generally the world we live in.

**(slide 36) Measuring and Evaluating.** You have seen how time, attention and relevance have become scarce resources.

A communication and outreach strategy is not complete without proper measurement tools. It is important to monitor the outcome of communication initiatives through big data analysis: identify indicators of communication effectiveness and analyze the data produced by the communication process itself, through user behavior. Done effectively, measurement leads to improvements to communication and outreach Evaluation can guide future activities and strategy development.

Measurement also presents opportunities for continuous improvement and helps organizations develop an understanding of the impact of activities undertaken. In turn, an evaluation demonstrates the tremendous return made. What are the key interventions :

**A. Adopt user analytics.** User analytics is a method of learning about their behaviors , needs, experiences and interactions with different platforms. A user analytics platform, or product analytics, is a type of software that performs these activities and brings out deeper insights than products can typically provide on their own.

Products and services, even statistical ones, must evolve at the pace of user tastes, and platforms help to do that.

**B. Planning systems** to measure the effectiveness of communication initiatives and actions, including through the definition of qualitative and quantitative research/analysis tools and methodologies.

The most common form of measurement of communication activities is the use of key performance indicators (KPI type) that correspond to communication objectives and lead to concrete action.

**C. Systematic "listening to the network** to monitor "sentiment" against official statistics. Listening to the net, or web listening, allows you to understand what is being said about your brand and your products and services, and more generally, gathers habits, perceptions and evaluations of current and potential users.

There are many tools to carry out monitoring and listening activities: thanks to these applications it is possible to keep under control not only social networks, but more generally blogs, forums and everything that is said on the web.

**D. Periodic consultation on strategic positioning.** The individual, in making his choices and evaluations, no longer considers the old influential institutions (such as academia, political parties, trade unions, etc.), but listens to the "voice" of peers.

Reputation is not given (once and for all), but is constantly built through online behavior, opinions expressed, comments collected, and trust earned.

We are living in an age where reputation is the most valuable asset. Reputation is the measure of how much a community trusts you and the measure of your credibility.

We are not dealing with stable communities, but with contexts that are constantly changing depending on the platform within which you operate (Facebook, Airbnb, Research Gate, etc.). Each digital platform builds relationships, establishes truth or falsehood and prioritizes events.



The investment on corporate reputation aims to identify the perception of user groups on the activity of data production, their importance understanding in relation to the risk of losing credibility and the relationship of trust that underlies the work carried out by the producers of official statistics. An experience to be reported is the project of "**Analysis of users' perception and communication of official statistics in the EU**" conducted by Eurostat.

## But there's more....( slides 37-38-39)

As we have seen, in the information network, statistical data enters into a broad "**life cycle**" in which it interacts with different information and is subject to multiple interpretations and possible distortions.

It is also necessary to take into account a series of broader phenomena: the generalized climate of distrust towards institutions; the phenomenon of "statistical sensationalism"; a very competitive and insidious context for the proliferation of informative distortions.

**The social value of informing** people using data and statistics is hard to deny, especially in current times and at the same time there is growing concern about the effects of fake news on people's behavior in everyday life and on citizens' choices in the political field.

We have seen that data visualization can be an effective way to address the problems that have arisen due to the spread of fake news. In this scenario, the constant improvement of existing data tools and the development of new ones has provided data designers with a greater degree of flexibility and enriched the set of expressive resources available. Defining meaningful data design has become more complex but also a tool to address the many challenges that arise in data visualization.

Therefore it becomes challenging to promote actions and products that support **fact-checking, gatekeepers, misinformation and disinformation, and veracity** (data journalist, fake news).

## Conclusions (slides 40-41)

Over the past twenty years, the international context in which official statistics operate has changed profoundly due to developments in digital technology, the number of alternative data providers (competitors), and new communication platforms such as social media that have changed the way people search for and use information.

There are many international projects that aim to rethink the approach and methods for communicating with data users and the general public, to enhance the dissemination of official statistics through user involvement and the development of digital communication, and more generally to modernize communication.

**As we have seen, Eurostat plays a crucial role in providing guidance.**

In particular with the European project "**Digital communication, user analytics and innovative products**" (DIGICOM). Strongly oriented towards innovation, the project aims to identify solutions related to user analytics and innovative and shareable products and tools to promote the value of European Statistics (infographics, animations, ...) and to assess the sustainability of innovative solutions such as the opening/use of sharing platforms for advanced user communities.

Here are some considerations outcome of the activities carried out:

- We should not only disseminate through our social network channels but also by listening to the “websphere” to obtain useful information to orient our communication activities. This could be done e.g. through sentiment analysis.
- Shut up and just listen! We want users to be interested in us, certainly because we have made a “good” and “beautiful” communication, but above all because they understand what we are saying to them. We have a responsibility to make understandable what we communicate and even more to make sure we have been understood. This could be studied by various means of user research.
- Every product, and every communication and dissemination tool that we make available to users should be designed and manufactured according to Human centric design criteria, in order to better respond to user needs.
- The best way to communicate and disseminate our statistics is by interacting with our audience – through interactive publications, Twitter webinars with journalists, academic conferences and joint papers (for researchers) etc. If we co-create, we learn more about our users and their needs. An added advantage is that the users learn more about our services and products – something that can lead to a large impact in case these users are “multipliers” with a wide reach.
- We should evaluate the communication and dissemination actions that we put in place: absence of evaluation frequently leads to non-effective communication.
- “Don’t talk to everyone but talk to each one!” It is necessary to focus more and more on users – all of them – on their information and knowledge needs; speaking their language (or teaching them ours).