Towards better communication channels
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1. INTRODUCTION

The way and quality of communicating information determine the recipients’ perception of socio-economic reality and their attitude towards the official statistics. In the face of new technological advances, statistical institutions as official data producers face the challenge of improving communication channels with various groups of users. Attractive designs, intuitive functionalities, interactive applications, data visualisation are nowadays of crucial importance for statistical data recipients. Effective communication is key to mutual satisfaction of both data users and producers.

2. MAIN OBJECTIVE

With the aim to address this challenge, the Central Statistical Office of Poland has taken activities aiming at enhancing communication channels with users. Taking into account the growing public demand for more innovative data communication services, a special system (called STRATEG) has been created, which perfectly fits the requirements of a novel statistical product. It is a modern database application used for monitoring of development policies and reinforcement of social cohesion. Users will find here valid texts of all strategic documents (the Europe 2020 strategy in force at the EU level, and strategic documents binding on country, sub-regional and regional level) and details of the coordinating entities. Apart from extensive information resources in the database, the system enables visualisation of indicators in form of charts and maps, which considerably facilitates data analysis process. Visualisation modules are equipped with a range of functionalities enabling the creation of various graphic forms. Apart from static visualisation, it is also possible to view charts and maps in an animated form, with visible changes occurring in subsequent years. The function enabling export and visualisation for different formats makes it possible to use the system resources directly for publications or reports, which considerably improves the process of reporting on the implementation of strategic documents.
Ensuring an accessible and attractive form of data presentation was one of the biggest challenges when determining the system construction principles. The first step was a review of information systems available throughout the world, including databases of international organisations, in order to identify good practices that could be applied in the developing system. The needs of future users of the system were crucial for determining its structure as well. The dialogue with users was at each stage of the project implementation. Particularly important were workshops during which the trial version of the system was presented. The meetings offered a great opportunity of showing users the structure of the system and its functionalities, which allowed for constructive discussion and identification of comments and suggestions to be considered in the project. Thus, the target users of the system had the possibility to co-create it and influence its final shape.
Owing to its rich content and transparent, attractive design, the STRATEG system is becoming incredibly popular among users. A special group of the system recipients are representatives of public administration (both at the central and regional levels). For the purpose of a successful promotion of the system and support for this user group, a series of training sessions has been organised to provide their participants with the necessary knowledge on the STRATEG system, its content and functionalities.

Besides STRATEG, Geostatistics Portal serves as a further modern channel of communicating georeferenced information using GIS technology. It is an advanced tool for interactive cartographic presentation and dissemination of data, which constitutes a comprehensive solution tailored to the European standards.

3. CONCLUSIONS

While improving communication channels with users, their sustainability and visual attractiveness of services offered need to be taken into account.

A dialog with users at the early stage of a project is very productive for both sides – it allows to identify the users’ needs and give them a opportunity to co-create the system. The training sessions/workshops, apart from the possibility of presenting the product to a larger group of users, also provide an opportunity to hold further discussions with them on the system functions.