European Statistical Advisory Committee

Recommendations of ESAC based on the report on the ESAC workshop

New perspectives and priorities for EU 2030 Indicators - Indicators and methodologies for describing society in the Information Age

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Recommendations for Indicators and methodologies for better describing society in the Information Age

1. Some introductory words

The workshop titled '*New perspectives and priorities for EU 2030 Indicators: Indicators and methodologies for describing society in the Information Age*', organised by ESAC, Eurostat and the Department of Statistical Sciences of Rome, was held the 8th of June 2018 at Sapienza University, Rome. This workshop followed the one held in The Hague in May 2016, which focused on 'Indicators: user requirements, methodological issues and communication challenges'.

Four sessions were organised at **the Rome Workshop**:

SESSION 1: Timely and meaningful indicators for describing and identifying new developments in our Society in the Information Age
SESSION 2: Role of new technologies and geospatial indicators in the Information Society.
SESSION 3: Selection and synthesis of indicators for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Innovative methodologies and applications.
SESSION 4: New ways of communicating indicators

The sessions dealt with the priorities of new or 'adapted' indicators and methodologies to better describe the European societies from the point of the users of statistics and with a time horizon up to 2030. The economic performances, societal and technological changes and sustainable development are complex phenomena challenging official statistics, statisticians and researchers.

2. Recommendations

The recommendations presented here derive from the ESAC Workshop held in Rome in June 2018. Not surprisingly, the outcome of the ESAC Workshop previously held in The Hague in May 2016 supports in principle many of the recommendations.

General or overarching recommendations

1. **The users request *meaningful* indicators, i.e. meaningful content (based on quality labelled statistics) in a context and communicated in an understandable way using accessible tools or means.** To meet the users' demand **a continuous re-assessment of existing indicator sets** is necessary. A procedure and checklist for fulfilling this task could be helpful. The procedure should embrace continuous interaction and engagement with users and also collaboration with research (universities and research institutes). Maybe, an indicators SWOT analysis carried out by an ESAC multi-stakeholder group could be a start.

2. **The indicator or rather the indicator set monitors change; but what should the space and time horizon be?** Though rapid social, economic and technological changes in today's societies on all levels (on global, EU, national, regional and local level), it is not enough having short-term indicators only. It is necessary to **track and describe the evolution of various phenomena,** to understand patterns of change over long periods of time or over many occasions. This in turn demands time series providing comparative statistics and indicators over time and space.

3. **Going beyond the use of few indicators for describing phenomena introduces the concept of complexity in statistics. Dealing with the complexity in the context of developing indicators calls for broad collaboration** (joining forces of academia, official statistics, and government at all levels, industries, media, education, in other words all relevant actors of society and the citizens).

4. **Complex phenomena and geographies**. Establishing a system of indicators for complex phenomena and the appropriate multivariate statistical analyses and knowledge extraction

would **benefit from research** rooted in science **and statistics of high granularity**. A strongly requested dimension of the system of indicators is **geography**, **an extension of the territorial dimension** of the indicators. To better represent the reality there is an evident need for harmonised spatial data.

Indicators and statistical information are for all

5. **Official statistics and indicators are for all.** When choosing the strategy and means for reaching out to various user groups it is important to take into account their *statistical proficiency and statistical literacy*. Special attention and efforts, such as educational and training measures, are to be targeted at children, students and young people. For the producers and providers of statistics it is crucial to pay serious attention *to content and context,* because numbers or visual presentations do not speak for themselves. The users need not only easy access to statistical data and indicators but also explanation of the indicators, including contextual information.

6. **A systemic view** on delivering a synthesis of indicators (such as SDIs) for complex phenomena (such as SDGs) is needed. To obtain a synthesis one may apply a monitoring and analysis approach. Monitoring over space and time is useful both for synthesising sustainability in each goal of the system, and for analysing choices for building future scenarios. More research is requested on this topic area.

Co-operation, partnerships and co-production

7. **Actions are needed for greater stakeholder participation and intensified cooperation, partnerships and even co-production** with media, data retailers, education system, and research. In taking action for enlarged cooperation, **commitment to the ethics of official statistics** is important.

8. **New data sources** create great opportunities for a more comprehensive set of statistical indicators, but the **risk of poor sustainability needs to be managed**, especially when creating time series. Special attention is to be paid to ensuring stable data flows and “a pattern of Prevention, Protection and Correction” might have to be allowed and adopted.

Communication

9. **Targeted communication and interaction of statistics and indicators.** There is still room for improvement in the communication and interaction between producers and users, between producers and non-users, and between producers and intermediaries.

   Official statistics could be more visible on the information market and more proactive in its role of delivering a truthful picture of the world and what is going on. Taking *co-operation with media* as a case, statistics providers could improve and nurture their relationships with journalists through various ways: for example, minimising obstacles to obtain data, supporting daily news work through online data sources and quick statistical consultancy, maintaining the interest in statistics among journalists and training them to make the most of statistics, learning from them and recognising them (e.g. awards for best practices in conjunction with professional journalism associations).

10. **Trust in official statistics** should be regularly measured and evaluated.