

- Statistics in development cooperation - National Strategies for Development of Statistics

Statistics Explained

This article is part of a [set of background articles](#) providing an 'outline of knowledge' of international statistical cooperation between the [European Union \(EU\)](#) and developing countries, for non-statisticians needing to deal with statistics in development programmes and projects. The outline serves as an entry point and introduction to the much more detailed [Eurostat](#) publication 'Guide to statistics in European Commission development cooperation', downloadable in [PDF format](#)] in English, French and Spanish (further down referred to as 'the *Guide*').

Many developing countries have weak statistical systems and mechanisms for measuring results. Good, reliable statistics are essential for measuring progress in reaching development goals and provide essential information about the effectiveness of policies and programmes. They help governments improve their policies and to be transparent and accountable about the delivery of development results. Reliable statistics are a key element towards better measurement, monitoring and management of the results of [development assistance](#) .

A statistical strategy provides guidelines to strengthen the statistical capacity of the national statistical system (NSS). It shows what and how statistics will be collected and published and identifies the financial, human and technical resources that will be available to the NSS. The core element is the medium-term objectives of the statistics system. The statistics strategy is an explicitly political document and requires authorisation and active participation from decision makers. The most common methodology for developing a statistics strategy is the [National Strategies for the Development of Statistics \(NSDS\)](#) .

Performance measurement of the national development strategy

The **aid recipients** :

- should be able to set their own national (overall) development strategy and the related objectives;
- should choose indicators that will allow them to measure progress;
- should adopt targets for the chosen indicators.

The **performance assessment framework (PAF)** :

- both indicators and the targets should be assigned to the objectives;
- the set of indicators as a whole forms the indicator matrix or performance assessment framework.

The **donors'** commitment:

- should conform to recipient countries' national strategy for development;
- should conform to recipient countries' indicator matrix.

Indicators :

- provide information in summary form, are communicable and are subject to relative consensus;
- are generally statistical (but also potentially logical) and defined by:

- the function of the indicator;
- the means of obtaining the indicator;
- the quality of the indicator;
- the limits on the use of the indicator;

- typology of indicators: input indicator > output indicator > outcome indicator > impact indicator.

Statistics to inform the indicators:

Guide examples and practical information

The function of the indicator	What is measured?	Strategies for the development of statistics should focus on the demand for information
The means of obtaining the indicator	What are the formula and the necessary data?	What statistical data is available?
The quality of the indicator	To what extent can it be interpreted and monitored over time?	How to assess the quality of the statistical data?
The limits on the use of the indicator	What does it <i>not</i> measure or measure poorly?	The importance of metadata (methodology and source)

- Box 3.1 *Typology of indicators*
- Box 3.2 *Typology of indicators by the use made of them*

A strategy for the development of statistics?

Why define a strategy for the development of statistics?

- To ensure that quality statistical data is available.
- To meet the demand for statistical data.

What should a strategy for the development of statistics be?

- It is a political document, with authorisation and active participation from decision makers.
- It should be based on and consistent with:
 - national (overall) development strategies;
 - their related performance assessment framework, and;
 - the national budget.
- It should define the vision of the medium-term objectives of the national statistical system.
- It should define what statistics will be collected and published, and *how* .
- It should identify and analyse the constraints of the national statistical system:
 - the legal framework of official statistics;
 - budget and finance of the NSS;
 - institutional coordination inside the NSS;
 - physical resources of the NSS;
 - human resources of the NSS.
- It should be accompanied with an action plan, typically for five years.

Action points for statistics strategies:

- Strategies for the development of statistics must be demand-driven, modest and realistic.
- Strategies for the development of statistics should build on existing processes.

- Strategies for the development of statistics should take a realistic approach to managing for development results, i.e. focus on key indicators.
- Strategies for the development of statistics should take into account limited national capacity and resources.
- Strategies for the development of statistics should focus and coordinate donor support on country priorities for statistics.
- Implementation of the strategies should be monitored.

Guide examples and practical information

- C.6.1.1 *Why a Statistical Strategy?*
- Box 6.1 *Action points for statistics strategies*

National Strategies for the Development of Statistics (NSDS)

National Strategies for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) is the recommended methodology for elaborating a strategy to develop statistics.

- The choice of methodology is for the partner country to take for itself.
- The most common methodology is the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics.
- The main alternative to the NSDS methodology is the 'Plan for Change': it is of interest to countries that are working closely with the [IMF](#) on general data dissemination system (GDDS) compliance and where advocacy at the decision-making level is less of an issue.
- NSDS are technically supported by the [PARIS21 consortium](#) , which was created and is supported inter alia by the [European Commission](#) .
- The methodology is described in PARIS21's " [Guide to Designing a NSDS](#) " and in the " [NSDS Approach In A Nutshell](#) " booklet.

The NSDS methodology approach

- **Advocacy** towards key decision-makers is a particular strength of this methodology.
- Elaborating a NSDS requires an **inclusive approach** :
 - All institutions and structures with an interest in the NSDS should participate; this creates a common ownership of the NSDS, thus the commitment to the NSDS increases.
 - This process should be in the hands of the [national statistical system](#) , under active political direction and support.
 - Consultation and input from users and stakeholders should include political decision-makers.
- There is **no uniform template** for an NSDS and no uniform set of terms of reference for its development.
- However, there are six vital **stages to the elaboration** of a NSDS:
 - launching,
 - road map,
 - design & vision,
 - strategies,
 - action plans,

- implementation.
- What does a NSDS usually include?
 - mechanisms for consultation with all main stakeholders in a statistical system;
 - assessment of the status of the system;
 - a vision, setting out what stakeholders want from the statistical system;
 - identification of what strategic actions are required to achieve the vision, including prioritisation of actions;
 - a detailed action plan with a timetable and a financing plan;
 - identification of mechanisms to monitor progress, including indicators.

PARIS21 tools:

- [Knowledge Base](#) : a key resource for methodological and practical advice and examples, in particular concerning NSDS elaboration and implementation
- [NSDS Status Report](#) : an up-to-date overview over countries' NSDS elaboration and implementation
- [NSDS tools](#)

Guide examples and practical information

- C.6.1.2 *National Strategies for Development of Statistics*
- Box 6.2 *An effective National Strategy for the Development of Statistics*
- Box 6.3 *Overview table for developing a National Statistics Development Strategy*
- Box 6.4 *NSDS development: Sample 16-month calendar for phases 0 to 4*
- Box 6.5 *NSDS status in International Development Association (IDA) countries*

Other articles

- [International statistical cooperation](#) (online publication)
- [Statistics in development cooperation](#) (online publication to which this article belongs)

Dedicated section

- [International statistical cooperation](#)

Publications

- [Guide to Statistics in European Commission Development Co-operation](#)

External links

- **PARIS21** :
 - [A Guide to Using a System-wide Approach to Implement NSDS](#) (also available in summary format)
 - [Knowledge Base](#)
 - [National Strategies for the Development of Statistics \(NSDS\) website](#)
 - [PARIS21 country and regional activities to assist in design, implementation, and monitoring of NSDS](#)
 - [Summary report on country progress in designing and implementing NSDS](#)
 - [The NSDS Approach in a Nutshell](#)