

# Statistics in development cooperation - Guide to statistics in European Commission development cooperation

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*').

The ambition for the *Guide* is to be an interactive tool guiding on different aspects of technical cooperation in statistics. The *Guide* informs about the international statistical co-operation and provides access to a wealth of information and information sources concerning official statistics and their relevance for good governance. The *Guide* also explains why statistics are important for partner development countries and for development cooperation. However, the *Guide* is *not* intended to be a course in statistics and statistical methods.

## Why a Guide to statistics in European Commission development cooperation?

There is an increased interest in assessing the performance and the impact of development policies and cooperation programmes, mainly driven by result-based management approaches in development cooperation. Management of aid cooperation needs indicators and indicators are usually produced by official statistics.

The official statistics that provide data for such indicators may come from different sources: from national statistical institutes, from other national institutions, from UN agencies, etc. The *Guide* aims at supporting anyone involved in the design and formulation of development policies and support programmes to identify potential data sources relevant to their work, whether at regional, national or sector level. It also provides guidance on how to correctly interpret the data and use them in meaningful ways, in particular aimed at users that are not statisticians.

An important issue is also being able to identify areas where data are missing or of insufficient quality to support policies and programmes. The *Guide* gives an insight into the functioning of national statistical systems, how to assess their strength and weaknesses and the quality of the data they produce. It also provides guidance on how to support the development of strategies and actions to improve the capacity of a partner country or region to produce high quality statistics, at national/regional level as well as in a wide range of specific sectors.

The *Guide* also gives an overview over the main international initiatives and tools to support the development of high quality official statistics in developing countries, as well as over key international principles and standards.

## Who could benefit from the Guide ?

The guide is mainly designed for:

- EU staff confronted with statistical issues (request for support from a partner, search for indicators to feed result-based management tools, look for data to monitor development partnership and/or to assess performance of policies and interventions),

- Staff from third country institutions (national and regional) involved in statistics looking for background information, references and examples of good practices for designing/strengthening national statistical systems and/or mobilizing external support to their strategic plan,
- Statisticians/experts involved in development cooperation (implementation of externally-funded support projects and programmes looking for information and guidance on statistics for development cooperation),
- Academics and researchers in the area of statistics for development cooperation.

## Presentation of the Guide

The structure of the *Guide* is:

**Part A: *Introduction*** helps you to understand the objectives and the content of the *Guide* ;

**Part B: *Statistics in Development*** describes the international development aid frameworks which involves statistics;

**Part C: *Support for Statistics*** considers when and how the European Commission needs to act to make sure that good quality statistics are available to support the development goals;

**Part D: *Statistics for Policy Issues*** looks at how statistics can be used and supported to achieve European Commission policy aims in specific sector policy areas. The organization of Part D follows the sector policy areas of the European Consensus on Development. To know more about the sector policy covered in Part D, see the Statistics explaine article on '[Statistics by policy area](#)' .

The chapters of Part D generally follow a standard structure:

- Sector policy applications: what these data is used for;
- Concepts and definitions of sector statistics;
- Sources of data and metadata in the sector;
- How to analyse data quality and identify problems;
- How to improve sector statistics and build statistical support in the sector.

For a few chapters, this structure has been adapted to fit specific aspects of the topic covered.

## Why is the Guide useful to you?

The *Guide* may help you to find answer to specific statistical issues that frequently arise. Here are some examples on when you could use the *Guide* depending on your needs.

### **Issue 1: You want to better understand statistical processes and the organisation and functioning of a National Statistical System ...**

... go to Section B.2 of the *Guide* "*How statistics are made*".

This section explains the production process behind official statistics. It contains interesting background information to know more about the organisation of the statistical system, or to understand why the needed statistics are sometimes not available.

### **Issue 2: You want to know what are the instruments used by the European Commission to deliver aid for statistics and to support statistical capacity building ...**

... go to Section C.7.3 of the *Guide* "*Providing European Commission support for Statistics*".

This section describes the various types of instrument (project, sector-wide approach, budget support) used in European Commission development cooperation, as well as Eurostat's role in the framework of statistical development cooperation. It contains interesting information you may have already heard of but which are dealt with

in details and linked to the EU framework for development cooperation.

### **Issue 3: You want to know what could be done to increase the effectiveness and sustainability of a support project to statistics ...**

... go to Section C.5.4 of the *Guide* "*Looking at the National Statistical System as a whole*"

This section contains useful information to be used as a check list when designing a statistical project/programme.

### **Issue 4: You want to know more about the role of statistics in the cycle of development projects/programmes of the European Commission. . .**

... go to Section B.3.3 of the *Guide* "*The indicators and statistics in the European Commission Development Cycle*"

This section presents for what purposes indicators and statistics are used in the cycle of project/programme management of the European Commission (budget attribution, programming, identification, formulation, implementation, evaluation and reporting for accountability).

## **E-learning**

An e-learning course based on the contents of the *Guide* has been developed, with the aim of advising staff in the EU Delegations to use the *Guide* to support their work and how to retrieve information efficiently. The [Guide e-learning](#) is divided in two modules; one basic module and one more advanced module:

Module 1, the basic module, describes in more detail how the *Guide* is structured and how to use it efficiently. It contains 4 lessons:

- An introduction to the *Guide*
- Why official statistics of high quality are essential for good governance
- How is the *Guide* structured and how can it be used efficiently
- A practical example of 'How to formulate a statistical project/programme'.

Based on the discussions in the Forum section of the e-learning, Module 2 was developed; it contains 6 lessons, based on the contents of the *Guide* and directly addressing challenges met by the EU Delegations in their work. Module 2 covers the following topics:

- Deciding on supporting a census or a large statistical survey
- Strengthening a sector information system that produces regular statistics necessary for the monitoring of sector policies (case of the health sector)
- Supporting a long term statistical capacity building programme
- Statistics in fragile states
- Tools to identify the reliability of statistics
- Choice of appropriate statistical indicators considering the priority: the case of poverty statistics.

## **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](#)