

CONSULTATION GROUPS FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

The development of an effective consultation process is an essential component in the production of relevant, accurate, comprehensive and timely official statistics. It will

- enable the NSO to monitor the main uses which data and publications are put to;
- ensure that the statistics produced meet user needs;
- ensure that appropriate data collection methodologies are being employed.

Furthermore, it will help the NSO to understand the perspectives of data providers, as well as to gauge the impact of statistical processes on individuals, households and enterprises. The departure point for the organisation of these groups is that increased consultation is likely to enhance confidence in official statistics.

An Effective Consultation Process: Benefits to Users and Data Providers

The development of an effective consultation process has benefits for the NSO and other relevant agencies. It also has real benefits for users and data providers. Some of these are:

- a. Filling of gaps in the current scope of consultation.
- b. Input of users/providers into prioritisation of work on existing and new sources of statistics.
- c. Establishing clear links to an overarching group in order to ensure that subject groups are not working in isolation.
- d. Enabling wider consultation.
- e. Providing easier access to other colleagues, within and without government.
- f. Providing a high level of openness (availability, access to methods, collection and methodologies).
- g. Providing greater scope for electronic consultation.
- h. Involving colleagues engaged in high-level research and policy-making.

Stakeholders in the National Statistical System

The stakeholders in the national statistical system are:

- a. Users of national statistics.
- b. Producers of national statistics.
- c. Providers of raw data.
- d. Society as a whole.

Statistical Users

The NSO has a wide range of users. Three main user groups may be identified as follows:

- a. Users within government.
- b. Specialised users outside government.
- c. General users: members of the public as citizens and as users of public services.

Statistical user groups normally aim to:

- a. Understand user perspectives, at the same time checking whether existing consultation arrangements are working properly.
- b. Command the trust and confidence of society at large.
- c. Identify problems in the collection, provision, use and understanding of statistics and discuss solutions with the responsible authorities.
- d. Provide a forum for the exchange of views and information between users and providers of statistics.
- e. Encourage the proper use of statistics through publicity and education.

Cooperation with Data Providers

- a. The full cooperation of data providers is necessary if the NSO output is to meet the highest standards.
- b. Proper weight must be given both to the burden on providers of raw data and to ensuring that the design of instruments for the collection of information accommodates the management and information needs of providers.

Nature of Proposal

This proposal aims to bring together the producers and users of official statistics as well as the data providers in a meaningful forum where the issues arising from ongoing and statistical work and practice are discussed regularly.

As a start, it is proposed to establish Consultation Groups in respect of the following statistical domains:

- Macro-economic;
- Labour market;
- Tourism;
- Education and training;
- Gender statistics;
- Trade and industry;
- Agriculture and Fisheries.

The Consultation Process

- a. The Consultation Groups will be composed of those statistical users or data providers having an interest in the subject area under consultation. The Director-General of the NSO, the divisional director and the theme manager will be members of each or any relevant Consultation Group as the case may be.
- b. A lead unit within the NSO will manage and coordinate the related Consultation Groups.
- c. The lead unit will set the agenda of each Consultation Group. Each member of the Consultation Group may propose items for the agenda.
- d. Consultation Groups will be convened either quarterly or bi-annually.
- e. Information about the Consultation Groups and their proceedings, as well as a list of the members of the Consultation Groups, will be posted on the NSO website.

Consultation Groups should ensure that there is a balance between the needs of users and these of data providers.