

## PROMOTING STATISTICAL LITERACY

### OVERVIEW

A good understanding of statistical concepts and methodologies and their correct interpretation is essential to the proper and effective use of Official Statistics. To improve the utility of statistics and their relevance to the country's social and economic developments, the National Statistics Office continuously works to promote statistical literacy in the community.

### NSO POLICY

Active measures in promoting statistical literacy take different forms and are organised and designed to meet the needs of different sections of the community, including statistical users in business and government, mass media, students and the general public. In view of this, the NSO shall:

1. Prepare and publish brief and easy-to-read leaflets and pamphlets on selected statistical series and activities for free distribution. The same and/or similar information shall be made available to statistical users in electronic format.
2. Regularly provide background information about data sources, the scope and definitions of the statistics being produced and the methods used in statistical collection and compilation. Whenever, for practical reasons, such information cannot be given in specific data releases, the NSO shall indicate ways whereby such information may be acquired.
3. Organise conferences, seminars and public discussions on selected statistical topics and/or compilations in order to better explain relevant subject areas and statistical outputs.
4. Liaise with other public and private sector institutions, including the constituted bodies, in order to discuss matters of mutual interest resulting from the collection, compilation and release of official statistics.
5. Publish a bi-annual journal featuring articles on a wide variety of official statistics. Additional articles on various statistical aspects shall be published in other local publications including the print media. Apart from elaborating on official statistics and providing explanations on concepts and methodologies, these articles may serve to introduce data users to certain statistical topics.
6. Participate, where appropriate, in radio and television programmes in order to promote the proper understanding and use of official statistics.
7. Provide advice on the correct use and interpretation of official statistics in the event of their misuse and in the case of any misunderstandings of the concepts and methodologies used and in the event of misleading statistics produced by non-official parties.

### PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS OF POLICY

As a matter of policy the NSO will support activities and programmes aimed at increasing general statistical literacy and statistical studies. In view of this, the National Statistics Office will:

- ◆ Introduce and support an annual statistical project competition for secondary school students;
- ◆ Introduce and support an annual statistical project competition for university students;
- ◆ Produce a statistics teaching kit aimed at promoting statistical literacy among students. Apart from providing teachers with teaching and reference materials on statistical methods and commonly used official statistics, the teaching kit will also highlight potential pitfalls in the use of statistics. The Office will also promote and assist the publication of other statistics-related teaching aids aimed at younger children in hard copy or in electronic format;
- ◆ Introduce a number of short courses covering statistical techniques and the practice and use of official statistics. This, in addition to seminars that are organised periodically for data providers. Furthermore, the Office undertakes to introduce the teaching of official statistics at the University of Malta;
- ◆ Continue with the series of talks on statistics to university and secondary school students. These talks provide an overview of the national system of official statistics, the nature of data, as well as a range of the statistical methods most commonly in use. The Office firmly believes

that students who are exposed to statistics develop an interest in the subject, with the result that they not only resort to statistics as a component of their studies but they also make correct and intelligent use of them;

- ◆ Continue to host visits to the Office by students. Through these visits, students can attain a first-hand perspective of the work of the Office. On its part, the Office does not miss out on any to foster interest in statistical work.

### **Statistical Literacy and the Mass Media**

The Office recognises the crucial role played by the mass media in furthering the level of statistical literacy of the general public through the correct reporting of statistics. In view of this, the NSO will:

- ◆ Organise seminars for members of the news media in order to improve their level of appreciation and understanding of statistics and their methodology and compilation processes. Particular attention will be placed on the use and misuse of statistics. Such activities aim to improve the type and quality of media reporting of official statistics;
- ◆ Hold briefing sessions with the media when important and newly available statistics are released or when new statistical methodologies are adopted. Such activities will provide further background information to the new releases issued regularly.

### **Statistical Literacy and the Public and Business Sectors**

Official statistics have substantial implications for the government and business sectors. Therefore, the NSO will:

- ◆ Work with public sector training institutions in order to provide statistical training to public officers. Opportunities for the increased application of statistics and the use of statistical surveys have increased for civil servants across the board. Therefore these sessions will address the enhancement of knowledge of official statistics in their application to policy-making and evaluation;
- ◆ Foster contacts with the business community by giving talks and presentations on statistical matters to members of the constituted bodies;

Prepare and promote a "Statistics for Business" training programme in order to provide members of the business community with the opportunity of acquainting themselves with the practice and use of official statistics.