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INTERRELATION WITH USERS AND POLICY ON DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION

Supporting Paper

Submitted by State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan (SSCAZ)[1]

I. INTERRELATION WITH USERS

1. The processes of democratization and formation of market relations in the economy of Azerbaijan have inevitably entailed reorganization of state statistics, according to international standards. The policy and strategy of preparing and disseminating economic-statistical information was reorganized due to its role in forming public opinion. Conditions were created to give users rights of access to aggregated statistical data and methodology of production of statistical information, as well as transfer of information to mass media.

2. The provider of the statistical information in Azerbaijan is the State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan (SSCAZ). It is fully adherent to a policy directed to interests of users, and provides timeliness and flexibility in response to inquiries.

3. The community's level of confidence in official statistical information depends on specifying the concepts behind state statistics, as well as the implementation of an open and unbiased policy of data dissemination.

4. The fundamental principles guiding the state statistics of Azerbaijan in the process of preparing and disseminating statistical data are described as follows:

- assure confidentiality of the data received from respondents;
- study customer demand and determine of the necessary output of data
- prepare high-quality data
- specify the scientific approach used in preparing information
- satisfy needs (interests) of users relating to size and character of supplied information
- access of users to data source
- timeliness and accuracy of information

[1] Prepared by Meri Amirova (mary@azstat.org) and Nemat Khuduzade (nemath@azstat.org).

5. By following the abovementioned principles in preparing and disseminating statistical data, the SSCAZ is consistent with requirements regarding to timeliness, relevance, as well as objectivity and democracy.

6. Dissemination and marketing of statistical information has changed radically. The knowledge and experience gained during implementation of the TACIS project has brought major achievements. Today the prevailing means of dissemination of the information in the Azerbaijan is printed publications. The program of publications was expanded and the structure, contents and mode of publications were improved. The statistical yearbook is issued in the form of a book in both Azerbaijan and English languages, and a CD. Moreover, SSCAZ prepares corresponding information such as leaflets and booklets for different events of state importance. Yearbooks and other issues are improved regularly. According to results in 2004, the yearbook now contains information on different points of economy, and an alphabetical index has been prepared for the first time. As from this year, the yearbook will type in Venture 10. Some part of the yearbook is distributed as free of charge and others at a cost. By means of these publications, statistical data is disseminated among wide circle of users. Moreover, various statistical yearbooks for particular fields are published by different sections of the SSCAZ in Azerbaijan, Russian and English languages: national accounts, industry, construction, agriculture, transport and communication, prices, education and culture, healthcare, environment, labor, retail and wholesale trade, food security, household budget.

7. In connection with Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan, dated 30 September 2005, № 1024IIQ "On reception of the information", the corresponding structure on dissemination of information, and on work with users, was created. An edict was issued and the plan of activities on realization of this Law was confirmed. The SSCAZ provides all users with information on socio-economic development of the country, and this information, as well as press releases and statistical yearbooks, are distributed through a website for the general public. Catalogues of issued products are published and distributed through the website annually.

8. Supplying users with quality and necessary statistical information mostly depends on the respondents that provide information. Taking this into account, the SSCAZ conducts regular works with them. With the aim to decrease the load on respondents, the volume of presented reports is reduced from year to year. Appropriate measures are taken to use administrative data and to increase its quality. Agreements are signed with the aim of the creating a partnership with respondents. There are currently 6 595 agreements already signed, 13.4% of the total number of entrepreneurs.

II. POLICY IN THE FIELD OF DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION AND MARKETING

9. A database of users, created on August 2000 and based on MS Access, works more than five years, and is renewed regularly. The creation of this database was based on recommendations in the framework of TACIS. It has simplified of the process of dissemination. The contents of the business-register of the SSCAZ were used for commercial dissemination of publications. Generally it includes ministries, public institutions, research institutes, international organizations, embassies of foreign states, large-scale firms and joint enterprises, mass media and natural persons. The SSCAZ has the right to provide paid services according to the new Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On Official Statistics" and "Statue on the SSCAZ".

10. The web site of the SSCAZ contains monthly information on main macroeconomic indicators, as well as press releases. The SSCAZ issues monthly reports on "Economic and Social development in the country".

11. Work on marketing is conducted. The local statistical bodies, which also publish statistical collections and bulletins, are actively involved in this work, and distribute material among inhabitants of the region (town).

A. Relations with press

12. One of the main channels of dissemination of information is mass media. Non-state organizations' need for statistical information increases every year. Practically, presentation of the

results of statistical work to the public would not be possible without mass media. Press conferences are organized with mass media quarterly. Progress in the development of e-technology is focused on distribution of statistical materials, which meet the requirements of users, by means of e-communication facilities.

13. The server is functioned in the SSCAZ that is used for providing of the users with statistical information.

14. During the last few years, there were significant changes in IT that has had serious consequences in the collection, processing and dissemination of information. The SSCAZ, being the basic supplier of the official information, uses modern methods of processing and dissemination of information.

15. Depending on the kind of activity, the SSCAZ is connected with different suppliers and customers of information, inside and outside of the country. Primary information from various sources enters the corresponding area (rural or urban sections, or head office) of the SSCAZ, where input, control and primary processing are realized, after which the whole of the information is directed to the main office for the further processing. All primary information is gathered in the head office of the SSCAZ, where further aggregation occurs and information is presented for dissemination.

16. At present, a number of software products and services allowing the entering, processing and forwarding of the SSCAZ's information, are developed in the Statistical Institution of the Republic of Azerbaijan. There are programs for processing of reports or questionnaires received from various sources, which the user can download from the Internet and install on their computer.

17. Until recently, the basic means of dissemination for the SSCAZ were publications. Now there is a website, which includes all of the information received as a result of activity of the SSCAZ, and any user can get access to it, at any time. A renewal of the information is periodically conducted, according to periodicity of the reports.

18. A number of software and hardware products that allow the SSCAZ to receive actual and precise statistical information at any time, were developed. This is an information system to gather, process and distribute statistical information. This system is developed with regard to the specific work features of a statistical institution; the system requirements of the given software product are minimal, and the system is cross-platform. To work, all that is necessary is a computer connected to a global network. Operational characteristics of the given system are rather high, and users of the system appreciate its simplicity and convenience. Each user of the system works at their own workplace, and all of the information can be viewed in one of several modes.

19. A flexible control system for access, allows control over the change and renewal of statistical data. Each user has certain privileges, and according to them, he/she has a right to modify existing, or add new data. , Unauthorized change of the information is fully excluded.

20. The user interface consists of two parts: internal (information that is only accessible to the administrator) and personal, which contains statistical data by branches of statistics.

21. The information is available for any user, who has an access to the network of the SSCAZ. These resources will be accessible to internet users in the near future.

22. Authentication of the user (persons having a right for updating of the information) is possible from any place within the system.

23. Taking into account that each branch has about one hundred indicators of different periodicity (the periodicity is differed from monthly to annual indicators), the system currently contains about 2,000,000 units of information, by different branches of statistics.

24. Detailed information on the monthly socio-economic situation of the country is published by SSCAZ in leading newspapers of the country. Press releases are published regularly and press conferences are conducted quarterly. The specialists of the SSCAZ periodically discuss the statistical indicators with journalists and other users. Employees of the SSCAZ give interviews by radio, television, and in the press, about the changes that take place in statistics.

B. Publication of the problematical data

25. All data that attracted higher interest (such as GDP, price index, inflation, employment), is included in the reports published each month. The data are issued in time. Users of all categories have equal access to the statistical information. The dates of publications and press releases are fixed and made public. Certain works are carried out by SSCAZ concerning joining the IMF Special Standard Data Dissemination. The SSCAZ is a coordinating body on this matter, and systematically carries out activities with Ministry of Finance and National Bank of the country.

C. Tracking of the demand for statistics

26. The management of the SSCAZ tries to track various inquiries for statistical information in the country. The SSCAZ regularly receives inquiries from a range of users. The amount received by e-mail, from both local and foreign users, is increasing. According to Law "On reception of the information" the work has started on creating an electronic register of the required information.

D. Library

27. For simplified dialogue about statistical services, it is necessary to create conditions where consumers can see different statistical products. The statistical library is one of the priorities, and was created in 2002 with funding from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

28. The abovementioned fund provides the library with necessary statistical materials. A workshop on creation of an e-library catalogue has been organized by CSB Sweden. The book fund, with different thematic contents, by country and international organization, as well as two computers with internet connection, pattern-tracing machine, and projection device, are available in the library. The users have opportunity to take the statistical documents home, work in the reading room, or make copies.

III. INTERRELATION WITH THOSE WHO REPRESENTS THE DATA

E. Access to administrative data

29. Concerning data exchange, the SSCAZ maintains relations with different organizations such as: Custom Committee, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Tax and National Bank. The SSCAZ receives administrative data from the Ministry of Education, Ministry of the Healthcare, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Justice, Office of Public Prosecutor, National Bank, and others. The SSCAZ has direct access to the register of tax-payers, from where the information on natural persons is taken. The SSCAZ gives attention to using administrative data for statistical purposes, and for decreasing of the load on respondents.

30. In spite of the abovementioned, we should recognize that the satisfaction of the expectations of all users is unrealizable task. The majority of statistical data distributed by statistical services has universal character and is intended for use in various purposes, by persons with different level of knowledge concerning use of the information. Some users couldn't define in advance which type of information they really need, as well as which type of information corresponds to their expectations. Attempts to raise the authority of statistics among our users should be characterized by continuous review of the activities carried out by statistical services, in light of stated and prospective needs of users.