International Statistical Institute (ISI)

Item 3(b) Report of the Friends of the Chair Group on Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and open data

The FroCh on the FPOS was set up at the UNSC last year and started its work under the chairmanship of New Zealand.

SI would like express its gratitude for the wok of the FroCh which was organised in two work streams implementation and open data. The FroCh has undertaken a further global assessment and has begun an approach to evaluate perceived non-compliance.

The work conducted by the Froch is very much appreciated and the global assessment provides valuable information. ISI encourages the UNSC to use this momentum to continue the work along the lines proposed.

In short;

- ISI thanks the FroCh for their valuable work
- We note that there has been good progress in thinking about how non-compliance can be evaluated, with various models for assessment including self-assessment, peer review and accreditation. It is important that this work continues.
- ISI supports the setting up of a working group to take this work forward.
- ISI is happy to continue to be involved.

The that time work on open data was added and I was asked to join the Group for ISI. The groups has met via teleconf very six weeks or so. It was effectively chaired by NZ, with good support from Australia, UK, Malaysia, Poland and UNSD. The idea was to report progress this year to mark the 25th anniversary of adoption by the UNSC, and in particular to develop tools for assessing implementation. The intention was also to conduct a further global self-assessment, to look at relevance for non-official statistics, and open data.

There have been two workstreams: implementation; and open data. I have been focusing on the former, stressing the need for the UNSC to be more active in monitoring compliance, and not simply relying on self-assessment. The FroCh has undertaken a further global assessment, mainly using similar approaches to before. It has begun an approach to evaluate perceived non-compliance.

There are two background papers. One presents the results of the global self-assessment. Although I urged for the questions to be kept consistent with those for previous years, there

was a desire to improve them, so there is little evidence of how the results compare with previous surveys. The report notes the lack of awareness of FPOS among statisticians and analysts outside the NSI, and the need improve data literacy among users. More needs to be done to improve co-ordination across national statistical systems, and the use of up to data international standards. The report gives results by region, which might help us in deciding priorities for RSCs etc.

The second paper, on the implementation guidelines is, in my mind, the more important of the two, especially the first half which look at approaches to evaluation. We should note that the Implementation Guidelines published in 2015 already give good guidance and case studies, etc. I contributed some of the thinking, with others, behind the 'criteria for evaluation' in the paper, especially the approach of developing specific criteria based on the risks of non-compliance, and then linking this to sources of evidence. Developing the example in the paper to a full model for the whole of the FPOS would take some resource. The paper suggests three approaches to how the criteria, when developed, should be used as a compliance check: self-assessment, peer review and accreditation (using other agencies tools such as Eurostat, or regional assessments in Africa). In practice a mixture of all three is likely. It is argued that the results of such a compliance check should be published.

Section D has some suggested actions, and important in this is the establishment of a working group (Proposal 2 at the bottom of page 15, and Proposal 3) to develop the criteria, and consider how a peer review might work. I think these are important steps, which we should support and indicate our willingness to continue to take part.

Part 2 of the paper is about non-official data. I have not been much involved in this. It provides a useful reference for the application of the FPOS to such data, and the challenges that NSOs face. This part of the paper concludes that the FPOS are sufficiently robust for this purpose.

Issues

There are some inconsistencies between the proposals in the covering paper and the background documents, possibly the result of the former having to be finalised some weeks ago to meet translation deadlines, while work on the background documents was continuing. As a result, the missing paper on data interoperability is to be tabled.

The covering paper proposes to set up a working group on open data rather than to establish compliance criteria, as proposed in the background document. The Chair of the FroCh will clarify this in introducing the report. The intention is now to get approval for the FroCh to continue for a year, to in effect be these two working groups.

It is difficult to see what the main debate will be about as the subject is wide ranging. What is important from ISI's point of view is that the momentum started on implementation and compliance continues.

Line to take

•   To thank the FRoCh for their valuable work

•   To note that there has been good progress in thinking about how non-compliance can be evaluated, with various models for assessment including self-assessment, peer review and accreditation. It's important that this work continues

•   To agree that a working group should be set up to take this work forward and that ISI is happy to continue to be involved.

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