

World Statistics Day

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The UN Statistical Commission¹ decided, at its plenary session of February 2010, that 20 October 2010 be celebrated as World Statistics Day. Subsequently, the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 64/267 setting up World Statistics Day, with the general theme “Celebrating the many achievements of official statistics”, evoking fundamental values of official statistical services, such as integrity and professionalism, autonomy and transparency.

The UN General Assembly marked the event according to the national and regional traditions of celebrating official statistics, particularly stressing the **good practice of co-operation within the big family of statisticians that form part of the global statistical system**, starting with the acknowledgement of the fact that statistics represent an essential element in fact-based decision-making, irrespective of the cultural and historic characteristics of the countries and of their level of development.

UN Resolution 64/267 clearly emphasises the fundamental role and importance of sustainable national statistical capacities, meant to ensure a production of reliable statistics and timely indicators. Quality and relevant statistical data are a necessary factor in the making and monitoring of important decisions, particularly as far as the monitoring of the Millennium Development Goals at national, regional and interregional level is concerned.

If we were to sum up the activities performed in an attempt to describe the involvement of the UN Statistical Commission in the statistical activity at international level over time, an inventory of achievements should definitely include:

- improving quality in statistics, with significant progress achieved in the drawing up of the Human Development Report;
- being involved in the organisation and co-ordination of the 2005 round of the International Comparison Programme (which provided data on the GDP, among other indicators);
- the 2010 round of the Population and Housing Census;
- encouraging global efforts with a view to compiling comparable international statistics and improving the quality of the censuses organised by countries;
- revising statistical fields, such as services, energy, education and labour force;
- the last revision of the System of National Accounts.

The UN Statistical Commission had a remarkable success in the development of standards for economic statistics (in this respect, the System of National Accounts is, in our view, the most illustrative example), for the classifications related to trade and industry.

With regard to the same field, statistical infrastructure, it is worth mentioning that in 1994 the *Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics* were adopted, principles that were essential for the development of official statistics, particularly in the countries undergoing transition and in the developing countries, serving as basic commandments which were later incorporated in the national statistical legislations.

¹ The UN Statistical Commission is the supreme body of the global statistical system. It was founded in 1947. It influences the building and functioning of the national statistical systems. The plenary sessions of the Commission take place in New York on an annual basis, being attended by the representatives of national statistical institutes from more than 100 countries and international agencies.

International agencies firmly support the implementation of the principles on the organisation and functioning of official statistics. What the future seems to have in store for them is a greater influence at national level, especially with regard to the adoption of optimal solutions and adequate and efficient procedures in case the principles are not observed.

According to the first principle, quality international statistics that are also accessible to all categories of users represent key elements of information systems. Other principles stress the importance of impartiality, professional standards and the transparency of concepts, definitions, classifications and methods.

All these principles should be observed as such, without derogations and deviations, by all national statistical offices and international agencies, with a view to having a solid global statistical system.

Talking about the progress of the global statistical system, we cannot fail to mention the development of the statistical databases of international agencies, whose main source is represented by national statistical agencies. The Internet obviously made this information easily and directly accessible.

Another achievement is the fact that the UN Statistical Commission encouraged close co-operation among the national statistical agencies with a view to quantifying the indicators that monitor the progress made in reaching the *Millennium Development Goals* as well as in improving the standards of the system's metadata.

The UN General Assembly invited all Member States, national statistical institutes, UN agencies, international and regional organisations, civil society to duly mark World Statistics Day.

Approximately 80 countries annually celebrate an official statistics day, including the National Institute of Statistics of Romania, which celebrates Statistician's Day every July.

This year, the National Institute of Statistics celebrated 151 years of official statistics in Romania. In October, the celebration will acquire a global dimension through a series of activities marking World Statistics Day. The National Institute of Statistics, the Romanian Statistical Society and representatives of the academic environment will contribute to the organisation of these activities.

At present, the main concern we Romanian statisticians have is the successful carrying out of a series of extremely complex and important actions, of national, European and international interest:

- the Population and Housing Census (PHC);
- the General Agricultural Census (GAC);
- the planning and carrying out of the actions resulting from the Community Law on statistics and the European Statistics Code of Practice;
- the improvement of quality in statistics;
- the compilation and provision of relevant, quality and timely data that can be used for monitoring the national targets set in the framework of the Europe 2020 Strategy, in the actions of the government and of the entire society in an attempt to overcome the economic and financial crisis.

20 October 2010, World Statistics Day, will remain as a homage to the history of our evolution, that is to say the evolution of statisticians, as a scientific community, as a profession and as a human destiny.