



STEP

Statistics
Through
Eastern
Partnership

NEWS

STATISTICS THROUGH EASTERN PARTNERSHIP NEWSLETTER

STATISTICS THROUGH EASTERN PARTNERSHIP (STEP) FORGES AHEAD

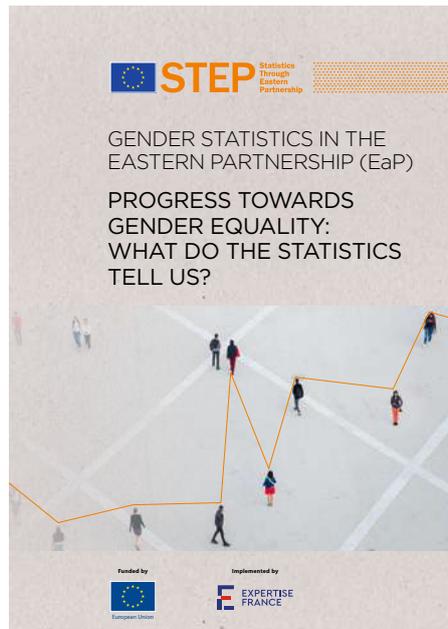
It is now official: as highly anticipated, the STEP programme has been extended for an additional nine months, until the end of July 2022. This gives us all the opportunity to successfully complete the activities planned in the STEP work programme and continue the momentum that was established in 2021.

Throughout the year, STEP has launched several larger activities in the partner countries. In June 2021, data were collected for the **pilot time-use survey in Armenia** following technical assistance from STEP on survey methodology, sampling and IT issues. Another pilot, the **quarterly labour force survey in Azerbaijan**, was also recently launched. STEP is providing technical assistance on the survey methodology and sampling as well as direct funding for expenses related to the survey.

The innovative training programme for journalists and statisticians, **Communication for Statistics (C4S)**, is now training statisticians, communication professionals and journalists from the six partner countries. Read on for more details about this exciting training.

STEP was also involved in one of the largest statistical initiatives in the world, namely the **International Comparison Programme (ICP)** where support was provided to Georgia and Ukraine for the calculation of purchasing power parities (PPPs).

In addition, STEP carried out a large number of trainings and workshops since the last newsletter. Among them, the **training course on labour cost index** (April 2021) was particularly appreciated by participants. The training course also taught participants on the use of the Eurostat-developed seasonal adjustment software Demetra+.



Even study visits have been carried out online with good results. The **study visit on the design and implementation of communication and dissemination strategies** (September 2021) for example enabled participants to learn from the experiences of Statistics Slovenia who has been leading the way with regard to the use of digital media to share statistical information with the public. The online format also allows to include junior staff members as well as more representatives from other producers of official statistics. The **study visit on energy statistics** (October 2021) for example included participants from partner countries' ministries of territorial administration and infrastructure, the economy and other energy-related state agencies.

During the Fifth National Coordinators (NC) meeting, which was held on 16 September 2021 with all six partner countries, NCs highlighted their appreciation for all the activities organised within the framework of STEP. In particular, they emphasised their appreciation of the combination of both theory and practice as well as the quality of the selected experts. Eurostat and the STEP team would like to thank

them in return, for their high commitment as well as their contribution to the success of the programme.

We are also excited to inform you that **the first regional publication** produced within the framework of STEP, "**Gender Statistics in the Eastern Partnership (EaP), Progress towards Gender Equality: What Do the Statistics Tell Us?**" will soon be available in both English and Russian. Keep an eye on our Twitter profile (@EU_STEP) and check out the STEP website (eu-step.eu) to stay updated on this and other STEP activities!

STEP'S IMPACT IN PARTNER COUNTRIES: NATIONAL COORDINATORS SHARE THEIR THOUGHTS ON STEP (PART 2)

The STEP National Coordinators (NCs), one from each of the six partner countries, are crucial for the implementation of STEP. The NCs are the main link between their national statistical institutes, Eurostat and the STEP programme team within the contractor Expertise France. Their role includes efficient communication with the STEP programme team, communication with other producers of statistics in their countries, supporting the implementation of activities, as well as monitoring and reporting on the programme at national level.

The third edition of the STEP newsletter focussed on the impact STEP has had on the work of the State Statistics Service of Ukraine (SSSU) and the National Statistics Office of Georgia (Geostat). In this edition, we spoke with Ms Anahit Safyan, NC from Armenia, and Mr Igor Mocanu, NC from Moldova, about the actual changes in their NSI's work as a result of STEP.

“STEP provides time for discussion and exercises which is beneficial for the understanding of the learning material shared. The roadmaps created through some activities also make them very change-oriented.” Ms Safyan, NC of Armenia

Both NCs highlighted that the regional nature of STEP enables participants to gain useful experiences from other countries in the Eastern Partnership with a similar statistical system. Ms Safyan highlighted in particular her office’s appreciation of the inclusive and participatory approach of STEP. STEP provides time for discussion and exercises, which is beneficial for understanding the STEP learning material. The roadmaps that participants create in some activities are very change-oriented. They aim to achieve specific targets, e.g. the introduction of international standards in ICT statistics. Ms Safyan also underlined that many of the short-term experts from the EU Member States working on STEP are familiar with the statistical production processes in the Eastern Partnership region. This is a huge advantage in understanding the issues at stake in partner NSIs.

Mr Mocanu emphasised that in several cases STEP activities have improved the quality of statistical areas. The regional peer-to-peer aspect, where countries learn from each other and share best practices, is beneficial for concrete changes. In particular, he remembers that a question from Belarus on the inclusion of transport from special vehicles led to a revision of the definitions applied in the Moldovan road freight statistics. STEP has also enabled Moldova to get acquainted and establish sustainable relationships with high-quality experts who have been able to support partner countries beyond the programme.

The STEP programme would like to thank Ms Safyan and Mr Mocanu for their valuable contributions to the successful implementation of STEP.

“Questions from other partner countries make us reconsider our own statistical solutions in that area which is of great help in improving the data.” Igor Mocanu, NC of Moldova



JOURNALISTS ARE SUPER-SPREADERS OF STATISTICS - STEP COMMUNICATION FOR STATISTICS (C4S) TRAINING COURSE ON DATA DISSEMINATION

The media plays an important role for statistics as it relays information to both decision-makers and the general public. Journalists often have difficulties understanding statistics, how they are produced, what they measure and how they can be interpreted. Understanding statistics is important, because how they are understood and reported may have an impact on the trust and confidence that people put on official statistics.

The **STEP Communication for Statistics (C4S) training of trainers’ course** assists the Eastern Partnership countries in their relations with the media. The course covers several phases, including a regional phase (May to October 2021) with the objective to train a critical mass of trainers in each country and assist them in preparing a “ready to deliver” national training project. The newly trained trainers will deliver the national training projects during the first quarter of 2022, under the guidance of STEP experts. Each

national training is given by a national team composed of three members: a statistician specialised in employment statistics, a communication/press officer from the national statistical institute (NSI) and a journalist. These three specialists are working closely together throughout the training course, bringing their talents and experiences in the design and delivery of training projects to the particular needs of their individual countries.

During the last session of Phase 3 of the activity, aimed at the cross-fertilisation of projects among partner countries, participants highlighted their appreciation of the training and the pleasant and safe working environment that had been created among all countries throughout the past several months in which they collaborated. Ms Karine Asatryan, journalist from Armenia, underlined in particular the usefulness of the role play sessions in which participants carried out mock trainings and received feedback from each other on how to improve their presentations. She indicated that it was great to meet and work with peers from other countries.

STEP, together with the Eastern Partnership countries, ensures that the training projects prepared by the future trainers are fine-tuned with the communication strategy of each NSI in order to have a maximum effect on institutional capacity building. We wish the national teams lots of success with their trainings!

STEP SUPPORTS THE USE OF THE STATISTICAL SOFTWARE PACKAGE R IN PARTNER COUNTRIES

Statistical software for processing large quantities of data is important in a statistical institute. But introducing new software can be very costly, hence the need to make the right strategic decisions. The statistical software package R is a very powerful statistical software that has gained ground within national statistical institutes around the world. R is a free software environment available for statistical computing and graphics. However, since R is a free software, there is no support hotline that can be contacted in case of technical issues (bugs). Therefore, it is imperative that problems are solved via a community-based approach, through online consultation and communication with colleagues.

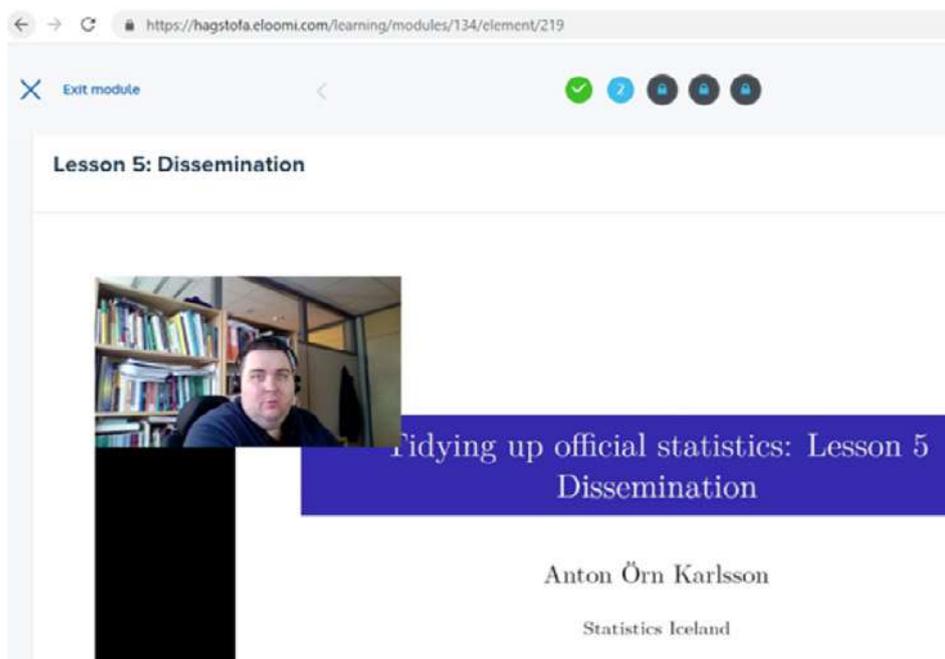
The establishment of a virtual group on the statistical software package was a

way to support the introduction of R in the NSIs of STEP partner countries as well as to create an environment for sustaining R in the future, by enabling users to find solutions to issues through a community-based approach. The **virtual group on R** was a combination of recorded presentations that the participants could study in the morning, followed by two-way live discussions and debugging sessions in the afternoon. The debugging sessions were particularly important for participants to solve specific problems they had encountered. The R training, which lasted from February to May 2021, was specifically tailored at using R in the generic statistical business process model (GSBPM). The concept of this training was developed by the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) who kindly made the material available to STEP. The training was conducted by two short-term experts from Statistics Iceland.

STEP has also integrated the use of R in subject-matter activities, which is a good way to support the IT strategy on the introduction and use of statistical software. For example, the training on

sampling methodology (March-April 2021) used R for its practical exercises. The partner countries' NCs reported back during the fifth NC meeting held in September 2021 that the NSIs have been putting what they had learned into practice by integrating the R software into their work. This is a good testimony to the usefulness of the training!

Don't forget that we are on Twitter. You can follow our activities on @EU_STEP and on our website www.eu-step.eu



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