

Quality Declaration of the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic

Introduction

Important changes in the global economy and the rapidly changing economic and social conditions in the society requiring prediction of further development in all spheres, put an increasing pressure on the scope and quality of statistical data provided.

While in previous years the most important quality criterion was data accuracy, nowadays, an increasing number of users of statistics, the variety of their demands, but above all the integration of the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic (hereinafter: "SOSR") into the European Statistical System required the extension of statistical quality assessment by means of the following criteria: relevance, accuracy and reliability, timeliness and punctuality, coherence and comparability, accessibility and clarity.

The Quality Declaration expresses basic visions and commitments of the President and Top-Management of the SOSR to Quality Policy of the SOSR, as well as to increase of effectiveness and efficiency of the Integrated Quality Management System of the SOSR.

1. The Concept of the SO SR management for ensuring the quality of statistics

The SOSR management commits to follow the Quality Policy based on requirements of users of statistics, on rules, principles, recommendations and requirements of the ISO 9001 standard for Quality Management Systems.

For the successful implementation of this commitment, the management of the SO SR will ensure the following tasks:

- to set-up and maintain the Quality Policy and Quality Objectives of the SOSR,
- to ensure permanent maintenance and periodic review of the efficiency and effectiveness of the Integrated Quality Management System implemented in order to achieve these objectives,
- to ensure availability of all necessary resources,
- to make decisions on activities for improving the Quality Management System (hereinafter: "QMS").

2. Quality criteria of statistics and control

2.1. Quality criteria of statistics

The management of the SOSR will assess the quality of statistics through the following criteria:

A. Accuracy and reliability

Statistics need to accurately and reliably reflect the present state. The rate of accuracy is set by size deviation between the statistical estimation and actual state of the event examined while accuracy is linked to reliability. Estimation accuracy cannot be determined by internal analysis of estimation because further estimations must include more data and statistical analysis. Greater effort should be made to obtain further data and detailed analyses of

environment which will result in more accurate final results. The management of the SOSR will elaborate rules for achieving accurate statistical results by means of comparison of results estimations and will analyse the causes of insufficient credibility of sources during the statistical estimation process and will further prepare measures for their elimination or mitigation.

To ensure the reliability of statistics, the SOSR will create conditions for production of statistics which will be reliable and credible to users. This calls for:

- professional independence and impartiality of the SO SR,
- professional approach of the producers of statistics,
- application of standard and science-based methods of collection, processing, archiving and publishing of statistical data, as well as the methodologies used,
- transparent dissemination of statistical results,
- active users' training on possibilities and limitations of statistics.

B. Relevance

Relevance refers to the level of fulfilling the users current and potential needs by means of the statistics provided. It reflects whether all the required statistics is produced and to what extent the production tools (definitions, classifications, etc.) respect the users' needs.

Statistics has to meet the users' needs. Therefore, the SOSR declares its readiness to identify the current and potential users of statistical data and to monitor their needs and expectations, as well as their satisfaction. It will also regularly monitor the current development in the society and its impact on changes of users' needs so as to respond to them in a flexible way.

C. Timeliness and punctuality

Timeliness of information refers to the time difference between the availability of the information and the occurrence of the described event.

Punctuality refers to the time period between the actual release date of the information and the specified in advance in the calendar of first data release set by legislation or partner agreements.

Statistics are valuable for their users only if the statistical results are up-to-date and released in time (following the prescribed manner), meeting prescribed deadlines in the shortest time possible between the information availability and the occurrence of the described event. The management of the SOSR is bound to guarantee the timeliness and punctuality of statistical information in this sense.

D. Coherence and comparability

Coherence and comparability of statistics means an adequacy to credibly combine (in various ways) and to use interconnected data taken from various sources (and for various purposes) and to compare them in different time periods, geographical regions and non-geographical (but statistical) domains.

Statistics has to be internally and time consistent and geographically comparable as well. It must provide coherent picture of the society. Therefore, the management of the SOSR will ensure coherence of produced data from the following viewpoints:

- international comparability - in all spheres, wherever possible, the production of statistical data will follow international standards and norms to ensure their international comparability,

- comparability over time - consistent time series will be implemented, so that statistics will be easily and credibly comparable in different time periods,
- content (conceptual) comparability - statistical concepts need to respect various users' needs. Therefore, using uniform definitions of indicators, classifications, items and standard processing and evaluating methods of statistical data will be provided.

E. Accessibility and clarity

Dissemination is an important part of statistical production process. Statistics must be easily accessible and provided in proper format (user-friendly) and in a form enabling its proper interpretation and meaningful comparison. It has to include information about its production (supporting metadata) and about the quality, as well as suitable tools increasing its comprehensibility (graphs, maps, etc.). Therefore, the management of the SOSR will take the following steps:

- to continuously inform users about currently available data,
- to increase user access comfort to statistical data,
- to prepare the documentation to statistical results including information about methods and content of their production and their quality evaluation methods,
- to permanently communicate with providers of statistical data who are also the potential users of statistical information.

2.2 Achieving quality criteria

The importance of individual quality criteria of statistics is not always the same. It depends on demands of users and on the purpose individual statistics are used for. It is necessary to determine the importance of individual criteria for each statistical survey to get a complete overview on the quality of statistics. Individual quality criteria can be further profiled into measurable indicators and standards enabling fast and precise control of their fulfilment. Results of the control will be properly documented and a close attention will be paid to possible causes of discrepancies.

3. Quality of statistical production process

The quality of statistics depends on the quality of its production. In the statistical production process only activities based on following criteria will be applied:

- user-orientation,
- effectiveness,
- flexibility,
- transparency,
- integration,
- harmonisation.

The management of the SOSR will regularly monitor the effectiveness of all the implemented processes and activities leading to the fulfilment of declared quality criteria of statistics, with the effective support of the Integrated Quality Management System based on process approach according to the standard ISO 9001.

Implementation of this approach will result in:

- systematic definition of all necessary (key) activities to acquire desired results,
- clearly specified responsibilities, competencies and duties in relation to the management of key activities,
- measurement and analysis of the competence of key activities,

- Identification of interconnection of key activities with/or among individual components of the organisation (institution),
- focus on factors such as resources, methods and materials, which will improve the key activities of the organisation,
- assessment of risks, consequences and impacts of activities on the users, reporting units and other interested parties.

4. Quality planning

The management of the SOSR will ensure the elaboration of quality objectives and quality plans of the SOSR. The development of plans and objectives will take into account the following principles:

- objectives and plans must be based on analyses of external environment and of internal possibilities of the SOSR (SWOT analysis),
- objectives and plans must follow the Quality Policy,
- objectives and plans must be clear, measurable and controllable,
- specific responsibility must be assigned to implementation of objectives and plans,
- every employee of the SOSR must be familiar with its objectives and plans.

5. Quality and the users of statistics

The reason for the existence of the SOSR are the users of statistics. The management of the SOSR therefore appreciates its users and closely co-operates with them to ensure successfully all their specified and expected demands and needs. The management of the SOSR will promote the user orientation within all its organisational units. Moreover, it will create preconditions so that users could play much more important role in the process of development and statistical planning

6. Quality and management of human sources

The management of the SOSR is aware of the fact, that employees are the key resource of the organisation and will therefore create preconditions to recruit and maintain qualified employees. The SOSR will pay close attention to improving the qualification level of employees by means of continuing education not only in the professional and linguistic sphere, but also in the field of quality management systems and methods. The top management of the SOSR will provide personified, active and transparent management of employees leading to quality support and enforcement in all its units. Systematic assessment of priorities of individual activities and stimulation to self-reliant work will ensure high-quality work performance of employees and will stimulate their quality improvement efforts. The SOSR will promote mutual communication between the top management and the employees in order to improve systematically the quality of work.

7. Other provisions

Besides the above-mentioned provisions, the following quality-improvement measures will be carried out:

- development the SOSR's information system and ICT related to it,
- introduction of the newest models of continuous assessment and improvement of the overall quality of the organisation (e.g. the EFQM model),
- using comparative methods (benchmarking) within individual departments and units, as well as between the SOSR and advanced statistical organisations and institutions,

- setting-up the bodies for implementation and improvement of the Quality Management System,
- supporting quality improvement projects,
- performing regular analyses on documentation of the system in the SOSR.

Conclusion

The above-mentioned Quality Declaration of the SOSR expresses the basic tasks of the SOSR management in the field of production, maintenance and improvement of the QMS. This document is binding for further documentation of the QMS concerning the activities of individual organisational units of the SOSR, and for other documentation concerning the quality assurance of statistics.

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Alexander B a l l e k, signed
President