



REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA
STATE STATISTICAL OFFICE

Dissemination Policy

Dissemination Policy

1. Purpose

Dissemination is the release of data obtained from a statistical activity to users through various media. The purpose of formulating the dissemination policy is to present the major principles used by the State Statistical Office (SSO), which are put into practice via internal guidelines and procedures.

The Dissemination Policy is a document which is in line with the existing Strategic Plan, Dissemination Strategy and Quality Policy. The SSO makes continuous efforts to ensure efficient dissemination of its products and services.

2. Main principles

To make data available to users, the large sets of data collected by statistical surveys need to be transformed into concise and relevant information that becomes available to users through different dissemination products. In this way, the SSO meets the needs of different user groups, and above all, fulfils the main task of official statistics to develop, produce and disseminate statistics in an impartial, objective, professional and transparent manner in which all users are treated equitably. The SSO is committed to providing high-quality, timely and internationally comparable data on the conditions and trends in the economy, demography and society, which are necessary for decision making and policy making, as well as for scientific research purposes. Dissemination also has a role in improving statistical literacy of the public.

To achieve these objectives, the publication of data should be in accordance with:

- Law on State Statistics;
- Programme of Statistical Surveys;
- Dissemination Strategy;
- Quality Policy;
- European Statistics Code of Practice;
- Other internal guidelines and procedures.

Taking into account the common dissemination practices and national needs, the SSO adheres to the following principles in its dissemination activity: relevance, accessibility and clarity, impartiality and objectivity, timeliness and punctuality, coherence and comparability and trustworthiness.

Relevance

Relevance is the degree to which statistics meet the needs of current and potential users.

It refers to whether the statistics that are needed are produced and the extent to which the concepts used (definitions, classifications) reflect user needs. The SSO conducts a User Satisfaction Survey on a regular basis, which provides the Office with valuable feedback from the data user community about the relevance of disseminated data. Based on the collected and analysed feedback, the statistical outputs and services are constantly being improved and user satisfaction increased.

Accessibility and Clarity

Accessibility refers to the physical conditions in which users can obtain data. Clarity refers to the data's information environment, whether data are accompanied with appropriate metadata, illustrations (graphs and maps), available information on their quality and the extent to which good services to users are provided by the SSO.

Statistical data are most valuable when they are readily available to a wide range of users, in a form suited to user needs and adequately documented. Available metadata, quality reports, conceptual and other explanations, serve this purpose. User support for data interpretation is provided as well.

Impartiality and Objectivity

The statistics shall be disseminated in a manner that is impartial and objective, with equal treatment for all statistics users.

Statistics are compiled on a scientific basis. The methods applied for data collection, processing, storing and dissemination are chosen on an objective basis determined by statistical considerations only. Statistical release dates are pre-announced in the Advance Release Calendar, thus ensuring that there is no external influence on the time of publishing statistical results and statistical data are available for all users at the same time. Statistical data are published according to the Advance Release Calendar at 12:00 noon.

The Advance Release Calendar contains the titles of the dissemination products and the date of their publication and is available on the website of the Office.

Timeliness and Punctuality

Timeliness reflects the length of time between the occurrence of the phenomenon which is observed and the dissemination of statistics that describes it. Data are published within the deadlines in accordance with the Advance Release Calendar.

Punctuality refers to the time lag between the release date of data and the target date defined in the Advance Release Calendar.

There are always user requests for improvements of the timeliness and they are responded only if it is possible without damaging accuracy.

Timeliness of the statistics is defined in the Programme of Statistical Surveys and is ensured through the Advance Release Calendar. For all changes in the Advance Release Calendar, users are informed by an announcement at least three working days before the publication date, with exact information about the new release date.

Coherence and Comparability

Coherence of statistics is their adequacy to be reliably combined in different ways and for various uses.

Comparability aims at measuring the impact of differences in applied statistical concepts and measurement tools/procedures when statistics are compared between geographical areas or over time.

Coherence and comparability are ensured by production and dissemination of statistics based on common standards. By applying international standards, and especially the statistical methods of the European Statistical System, the majority of the statistics are comparable with those of EU member countries.

Trustworthiness

The picture provided by the statistics must be trustworthy and reliable. When errors are detected in the statistics published, the corrections are published as quickly as possible.

The standard procedure for identifying and correcting errors helps users to access the corrected information and minimises the damages caused by using incorrect data.

Two types of errors can be distinguished: substantial and minor errors.

Substantial errors are errors that affect the correct understanding of statistics and information, which may lead to misinterpretation of statistical information, wrong conclusions or decisions by data users (misinformation published in tables, figures, maps, texts).

Minor errors are errors that do not affect the correct understanding of published statistical data and information. Minor errors include:

- linguistic and stylistic variations (in both the Macedonian and the English version - grammatical and typographical errors, use of synonyms for specific concepts, etc.);
- graphical errors (lines and pages difficult to read, non-distinguishable colouring in the legend, non-fitting publication page, printing error on a brochure cover, false colouring in a map or diagram).

When a minor error is detected in a publication, it shall be corrected immediately and the information shall be published again. Given that it does not affect the meaning of the information, notification of the correction is not necessary. When correcting substantial errors that might affect the interpretation of the information, a notice that the information has been corrected shall accompany the affected information and, if it is possible to identify the users who have accessed this information, they shall be notified regarding the correction. In the case of errors that affect general users, it will be possible to issue a notification on the website.

Data revised due to a regular revision do not belong to this category (unless an error occurs in the revised data). Errors in data can result in non-scheduled revisions, as stated in the SSO Revision Policy. Also in accordance with the Revision Policy, the correction of already published data is implemented as part of a non-scheduled revision.

3. Data revision

In line with the principles of the European Statistics Code of Practice and recommended methods and tools, the SSO has adopted a Revision Policy. The main objective of the Revision Policy is to achieve broader transparency of the overall procedure of data revision, which should increase the confidence in official statistics and usability of statistical data. A calendar of regular revisions as well as information about the major revisions of statistical data is publicly available for the users. In addition, users are informed about the reason for revision. Revised data are published with complementary information which will help users to understand and evaluate revised data.

4. Release policy

Statistical information is published according to a publicly available Advance Release Calendar and any divergence is announced in advance. In addition to Macedonian, the products of the SSO are also disseminated in English language in order to meet the needs of international users. The official language of the documents is Macedonian. In case of any doubt or misunderstanding, the Macedonian version should therefore be considered final.

Statistical releases are made clearly recognisable as coming from the SSO with the office logo and do not include any political statements. The SSO has internal procedures for drafting and publishing releases. The SSO releases different kinds of publications (e.g. news releases, specific statistical reports, general publications) and there are corresponding release procedures. The Guideline for preparation of publications distinguishes the processes of preparation of news releases and publications. Additionally, there is an internal Procedure for updating the MakStat database.

With the aim of ensuring equal access to all users at the same time, the SSO makes efforts to publish news releases at 12:00 noon on the exact date, defined in the Advance Release Calendar. News releases are released in .pdf format and corresponding tables are available in .xls format.

The release date of regularly issued publications and infographics is provided with monthly accuracy. Related datasets are published in the web database with different periodicity for news releases and publications after the first release. The periodicity is defined in the internal Procedure for updating the MakStat database.

4.1 Dissemination products

The choice of dissemination product and the level of detail depend on the purpose and related user groups. Data should be disseminated in an effective, understandable and clear manner. Basic elements in the dissemination products are: tables, graphs and maps.

Three types of products are distinguished in the SSO: news releases, publications, MakStat database.

4.1.1 News releases

Users are informed about the results of the statistical surveys by issuing a news release after the survey is completed. The news release should be with short and clear content emphasising the most important results from the survey. Basic elements of the release are: title, explanatory part, tables, graphs and additional information.

4.1.2 Publications

Publications as one of the types of dissemination products are issued with different periodicity. Publications contain more tables and other forms of data presentation in comparison with news releases. They could refer to a particular reference period or could cover longer time series. They are categorised in three main groups: statistical reviews, multi-domain publications and thematic publications.

Statistical reviews

Statistical reviews contain data from only one statistical area. In most cases, the release periodicity is annual and it depends on the periodicity of the corresponding survey(s). They contain the basic publication elements, preface or introduction, methodological explanations, list of abbreviations and symbols used. The statistical review includes an analytical part where the results and particularities of the survey are presented in the form of a short text, tables and graphs.

Multi-domain publications

Multi-domain publications are editions with annual release periodicity. They contain the basic publication elements, preface or introduction, methodological explanations, list of abbreviations and symbols used. Data could be presented at different levels: national, regional, municipal level. Multi-domain publications include multi-annual data series, where more detailed data tables from the last reference period are presented as well. The following publications are classified in the group of multi-domain publications:

- Statistical Yearbook;
- Macedonia in Figures;
- Sustainable Development;
- Regions of the Republic of Macedonia;
- Environmental Statistics.

Thematic publications

Thematic publications contain data from a certain subject area. They cover annual data presented in time series from successive years or predefined intervals.

4.2 Databases

Output tables from conducted statistical surveys are available on the SSO website in the MakStat database. The MakStat database is defined by using the PC-Axis files. They are generated from statistical data stored in different formats (.xls, .txt, .csv) by using the PX-Edit tool. The PX-Web tool enables users to access statistical data from all statistical areas available in the MakStat database. It is recommended that the design of the MakStat tables should differ from the existing structure of the tables in publications and releases in order to use the advantages of this dissemination tool.

4.3 Dissemination services

The services of the SSO include preparation of data according to user needs, assistance in using library materials, assistance to users in performing their own researches, and enabling access to the microdata. The dissemination of microdata for research purposes is dealt within a separate document, Policy on Access to Anonymised Microdata for Scientific-Research Purposes.

The possibility of self-service, i.e. creation of dynamic tables on the Internet is developed with the establishment of the dissemination database MakStat.

5. Dissemination channels

One of SSO's main goals is to make dissemination effective enough in a way that most of the users are able to find what they are looking for. Users that need help are given advice on how to find the most relevant statistical information.

SSO's dissemination strategy is to promote the following types of channels for product dissemination:

- SSO website
- SSO mobile application
- Printed or downloadable publications

SSO website

The main channel for dissemination of statistical information is the SSO website. SSO users can access all products and services as well as statistical data, methodological explanations, quality reports, catalogues, release calendars and other relevant information. The website has proven to be the most efficient way of publishing the large volumes of statistical information. On the SSO website users have access to: dissemination database, ready-made tables, publications, infographics, interactive charts, thematic maps, methodological explanations, etc. In order to be competitive, competent, efficient, accurate and innovative, the SSO strives to adhere to certain principles regarding the website such as: easy to read, user-friendly, simple to use, up-to-date and relevant, visibility of archived and new content, in accordance with World Wide Web Consortium Standards.

Statistical data that are not included on the SSO website are provided to interested users upon relevant request, if they are not subject to statistical confidentiality.

SSO mobile application

The SSO mobile application is one of the newest channels that have been added to the dissemination portfolio. It is a simple to use, informative and most importantly up-to-date source of information and data. It has some of the most requested and significant indicators and data that will assist users of all levels of society. The mobile application also adheres to all international standards for both iOS and Android platforms with many up-to-date and innovative segments that will bring the user experience to a new level.

Printed or downloadable publications

As the digital era progresses every day, the need for our printed publications is slowly diminishing; however, the SSO still has a range of regular as well as new publications that are produced in a printed version. Users can also access a high-quality file of all publications for their own printing through the archive of publications on the website.

6. Prices of publication and services

A very large volume of data and publications are made available continuously via the website free of charge. Core information is free for all users. This includes news releases, electronic versions of publications, the Statistical Database and all web products.

Payments need to be made only for data which are not available as a result of standardised work processes, so they need to be compiled upon individual requests, which generates costs associated with engaging additional resources. There is a price list that specifies the prices for different services as well as for printed publications.

7. Relations with users

The SSO endeavours to develop products and services that will satisfy the needs of different user groups: government and state bodies, local self-government, authorised bodies in the statistical system of the country, business entities, educational and research institutions, NGOs, the public (citizens, pupils and students), media, International statistical organisations and institutions. Each category has different needs according to which the forms of presentation and access to statistical data are provided.

The SSO uses several tools to get feedback on user needs and satisfaction:

- E-mail addresses (info@stat.gov.mk, publikum@stat.gov.mk, biblioteka@stat.gov.mk, dissemination@stat.gov.mk, press@stat.gov.mk) established for communication with users, news notifications as well as for submission of user comments, at the same time available on the SSO website;
- User Satisfaction Survey;
- Electronic form for the opinion of library visitors about the publications used and the service provided in the library.

All enquiries are answered in a friendly manner, and as quickly as possible. Answering requests and clarifications of statistical results are organised in a separate unit at the SSO. The main task of the responsible unit is dealing with user requests and visitors in the Library, and answering the phone and written requests for statistics from domestic and international users in co-operation with statisticians.

The SSO has a team of dedicated professionals who are responsible for processing day-to-day requests from users making sure that they adhere to internal process and procedures that determine the timeliness and efficiency of processing all requests. Contact details for the person responsible for public relations are available on the SSO website. In statistical releases, contact details for responsible persons are available.

In case of unfounded or tendentious criticism, misuse and misinterpretation of data, the SSO shall respond following the principles of impartiality and objectivity in order to avoid damage to the credibility of official statistics.

The SSO follows articles in the media related to the institution. In case of data misinterpretation or misuse in the media, the person in charge of public relations will coordinate with the editor whether a notification of the error, an explanatory article written by the SSO will be published by the media channel to explain the misinterpretation or misuse. If necessary, the SSO may publish the explanation in the form of a written denial, published on the SSO website as well. In case of criticism of official statistics, the SSO will act in the same way as in case of misinterpretation and misuse of statistics.