



STEP

Statistics
Through
Eastern
Partnership

NEWS

STATISTICS THROUGH EASTERN PARTNERSHIP NEWSLETTER

THE STATISTICS THROUGH EASTERN PARTNERSHIP (STEP) PROGRAMME

STEP, launched on 1st January 2019, is a three-year statistical cooperation programme for the six Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. STEP is funded by the European Union (EU), managed by Eurostat, the statistical office of the EU, as part of the EU's Eastern Partnership policy.⁽¹⁾ The objectives of STEP are to:

- Improve production and dissemination of high quality statistics in line with international and European standards;
- Harmonise statistical methodologies with international and European standards;
- Strengthen the institutional capacity of the national statistical institutes and other producers of official statistics in line with the principles of the European Statistics Code of Practice;
- Enhance evidence-based policy-making through increasing the amount of reliable statistics.

STEP is implemented by Expertise France, the French public international cooperation agency, together with the national statistical institutes of France (INSEE), Hungary (HSCO), Italy (ISTAT), Denmark (SD) and Lithuania (SL). The six EaP countries are closely involved in the implementation of STEP through their STEP national coordinators.

STEP has an expert team which is composed of three key experts that cover the main thematic areas of the programme.

STEP provides support in macro-economic statistics, social statistics and cross-cutting issues. Improved macro-economic statistics will make it easier to follow trends in the overall economy and specific sectors such as SME development, use of ICT in enterprises and road freight. Improved social statistics include better data on the labour



The First Steering Committee meeting, 26 September 2019, Chisinau, Moldova.

market through modern data collection methods as well as more comprehensive gender-aggregated data among others. The cross-cutting efforts include training in coordination of the national statistical system and training of statisticians and journalists in better understanding each other and in better dissemination of data.

The regional aspect of STEP is important. The six partner countries share a common past and their administrative systems have similarities, although they have evolved independently in recent years. The regional aspect is nurtured in STEP by building networks, at both personal and professional level, and encouraging participants to learn from each other.

You can read more about STEP on the website: www.eu-step.eu The website contains background information on STEP and its activities in English and in Russian. There are also a short description and photos from past activities.

FIRST STEP ACTIVITIES

REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE PARTNER COUNTRIES STEER STEP

The first Steering Committee meeting took place in Chisinau on 26 September 2019. The Steering Committee is composed of the representatives of the European Commission (Eurostat and Directorate-General Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations - DG NEAR), the six partner countries and the consortium implementing STEP. The Steering Committee meeting was an occasion for the project team to

present the main results of the inception phase to the Directors General of partner national statistical institutes. The Steering Committee endorsed the work programme that had been produced by the key experts during the inception phase. Eurostat emphasised the importance of STEP as the first regional programme of this kind, made possible with co-delegated funds from DG NEAR. The EU is very active in the region through the Eastern Partnership which marked its 10-year anniversary in 2019.

NATIONAL COORDINATORS DISCUSS THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTIVITIES

The National coordinators (NC) designated by each partner country facilitate the coordination and communication within their institution and the programme. The NCs are the key coordinators of the programme's activities at the national level. The NCs met in July 2019 and again in January 2020 in Luxembourg. In January 2020, the final version of the work programme and measures to implement activities were discussed among the NCs and representatives from Eurostat and Expertise France.



Eurostat team leader of ENP section and project manager together with national coordinators from Belarus, Georgia and Azerbaijan, 22-23 January 2020, Luxembourg.

(1) <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/european-neighbourhood-policy/enp-east/step>

COVID-19 AND STEP

The unprecedented spread of the corona virus is affecting activities worldwide. At the time of writing, most EU countries and partner countries are in lock-down and only essential activities are permitted. All STEP workshops, trainings and study visits have been postponed. However, STEP continues to operate and we are working on ways to continue STEP activities. Some planned technical assistance activities will be carried out online through exchange of emails and video conference facilities. We are also planning online training in different forms. The training course Communication4Statisticians (C4S) will be launched soon with a large online training part. Another form of activity is the virtual groups. Virtual groups convene members from both the STEP partner countries and from the EU member states over discussions and presentations. The Virtual Groups will meet online using conference call software with the possibility of simultaneous interpretation between English and Russian. The first virtual group, on the coordination of the national statistical system, is under preparation. We are also looking into digitalising traditional classroom trainings by recording the training sessions and making them available online together with exercises and tests. Eurostat has issued a number of guidelines and methodological notes in the context of how to collect, process and present data in the COVID-19 crisis.⁽²⁾

THE EUROPEAN UNION HELPS ARMENIA CARRY OUT A TIME USE SURVEY

On 6-7 February 2020 STEP key experts met representatives from Armenia's statistical institute, Armstat, and UN Women to discuss the first steps towards a time use survey in Armenia. A time use survey gives important information on the division of labour between men and women. Who is doing most work at home? Who spends most time with the children? A time use survey is also important for quantifying the amount of unpaid labour in an economy.

(2) <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/metadata/covid-19-support-for-statisticians>



Representatives from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine together with their colleagues from INSEE and the STEP team, 12 December 2019, Paris, France.



Representatives from STEP and UNWomen meet the director general of Armstat Mr Mnatsakanyan, 6-7 February 2020, Yerevan, Armenia.

It was agreed that the European Union, through STEP, and UN Women will support Armstat in carrying out a time use survey over the next 12-18 months. The survey will start with a pilot survey and the full survey will last 12 months to pick up seasonal variations such as agricultural work and vacation over the year. The results from the survey will provide valuable inputs into gender-balanced policy making as well as the data on unpaid labour in the national accounts.

STUDY VISIT TO INSEE IN PARIS

In December 2019, a group of labour force statisticians and IT professionals from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine visited INSEE, the French National Statistical Institute, to study modern tools used to collect data for statistical purposes. The programme included 13 sessions involving 17 different

experts coming both from INSEE and other representatives of the French national statistical system. Thanks to the INSEE colleagues who made presentations, the participants learned how data can be collected through the internet and how it can be used. One insight gained was that collecting data through the internet is cheaper once the software has been developed and staff trained in its use. INSEE colleagues also gave useful advice on how to increase response rates by giving incentives to the people interviewed.

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