



STEP

Statistics
Through
Eastern
Partnership

NEWS

STATISTICS THROUGH EASTERN PARTNERSHIP NEWSLETTER

STATISTICS THROUGH EASTERN PARTNERSHIP (STEP) CONSOLIDATES ITS ACTIVITIES IN THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP

STEP 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), and managed by Eurostat, the statistical office of the EU, as part of the EU's Eastern Partnership policy.

The winter period was very busy in STEP. Several large activities were started. Among them two regional publications: one on gender statistics and another on energy statistics. The regional publications will give a good overview of the recent developments in the partner countries in these areas. In addition, it will help the partner countries in creating their own thematic publications highlighting specific areas of statistics. Article 3 of this newsletter provides some extracts from the upcoming gender statistics publication.

The regular training activities have also continued online. At the time of writing, more than 1000 participants from the partner countries have participated in the regional activities since the start of the STEP programme.

The possibility for more participants to take part in online activities compared to onsite activities, including younger staff from National Statistical Institutes (NSIs), was highlighted by the National Coordinators (NCs) at the recent NC meeting in February as a particular advantage of the online activities. Participants to this meeting also discussed how to improve the response rate to STEP activity evaluation questionnaires and the impact of STEP on NSIs' work, notably through increased ownership of the programme in partner countries and effective knowledge transfer from participants to their institutions. During this meeting, the

calendar of activities for the first half of 2021 was also presented and endorsed by NCs. Implementation was successfully kicked off in January with the first activity of the year, which was a workshop on Sustainable Development Goals data production and reporting.

STEP'S IMPACT IN PARTNER COUNTRIES: NATIONAL COORDINATORS SHARE THEIR THOUGHTS ON STEP

The STEP NCs, one from each of the six partner countries, are crucial for the implementation of STEP. They are the main link between the STEP programme team and the six ENP national statistical institutes. Their role includes efficient communication with the contractor and centralised communication with other producers of statistics, supporting the implementation of activities as well as monitoring and reporting on the programme at managerial and national levels.

For this edition of the newsletter, we spoke to Mr Kostiantyn Babak, NC from the State Statistics Service of Ukraine (SSSU), and Ms Maia Gogiberidze, NC from Statistics Georgia (Geostat), to hear their thoughts on how STEP has been contributing to their national statistical systems and the statistics their NSIs produce. Both of them agreed that the EU-funded programme has helped to improve the statistical processes in their countries, in particular thanks to the high quality of the experts contributing to the programme.

Both NCs highlighted that STEP's regional approach has been beneficial to their NSIs as it has provided them with an opportunity to meet peers from neighbouring countries and learn from their experiences. Ukraine is currently benefitting from a technical assistance project with Statistics Norway, while Georgia is taking part in the EU-funded twinning project "Strengthening



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Mr Kostiantyn Babak, NC of Ukraine

the capacity of the Georgian National Statistical System". While bilateral projects like these enable partner countries to get support that is customised to their country specific needs, a regional programme like STEP offers a complementary and wider perspective on common issues, including peer-to-peer exchanges of best practices. Additionally, as most experts engaged in STEP activities work on the subject-matter within the statistical institutes of EU member states, this enables them to have an overview of all international discussions on the subject and know best practices from around the world. Many STEP activities also involve experts from more than one EU member state, which further broadens the perspectives shared with participants. As summed up by Mr Babak: "The STEP programme enables the statistical offices of the Eastern Partnership countries to establish good contacts, share rewarding experiences and jointly adopt the best practices of the European Union in the production and dissemination of statistical information".

Mr Babak also mentioned that STEP covers many parts of the statistical production process in Ukraine from data collection over data processing to dissemination. He indicated in particular that the SSSU employees familiarise themselves with the recommendations from the International

Labour Organization (ILO) on special aspects concerning the organisation of the labour force survey (LFS) in the context of workplaces being shut down due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Following the pandemic, the SSSU has moved to employing the telephone survey method in order to undertake sample population surveys. The draft reporting and statistical documentation for the next LFS module regarding labour migration of the population (2022) also includes a question about the impact of quarantine restrictions upon respondents' decisions to return to Ukraine or their wish to work or seek employment abroad. The knowledge gained about the new ILO standards adopted at the 19th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) was also considered when developing the reporting and statistical documentation for the LFS module regarding the labour activity of volunteers in 2020. Additionally, information obtained through the training on the statistical software STATA might be used to prepare sample survey-based micro-data files for research purposes, access to micro-data being another cross-sectional issue covered by STEP.

Regarding the impact of the STEP programme in Georgia, Ms Gogiberidze highlighted that: "STEP has contributed to increasing the knowledge and professionalism of Geostat staff, notably thanks to the support provided to Georgia's participation in the International Comparison Programme (ICP) 2021, which is also contributing to raising the status of Georgia internationally". Overall, she indicated that STEP activities have been important in sharing experiences and enhancing knowledge and compliance with international and European standards.



"STEP has contributed to increasing the knowledge and professionalism of Geostat staff, notably thanks to the support provided to Georgia's participation in the International Comparison Programme (ICP) 2021, which is also contributing to raising the status of Georgia internationally", Ms Maia Gogiberidze, NC of Georgia

In that sense, Ms Gogiberidze put emphasis on Geostat staff's satisfaction with the activities organised within the framework of STEP, that they have qualified as important and useful. In particular, activities on LFS have helped Georgia overcome challenges raised by the pandemic such as data collection for the LFS.

The STEP programme would like to thank Mr Babak and Ms Gogiberidze for their valuable contributions to the successful implementation of STEP. In the next edition of the newsletter, STEP will share the experiences and thoughts of two other NCs about the impact of the STEP programme.

PROGRESS TOWARDS GENDER EQUALITY: WHAT DO THE STATISTICS TELL US? STEP'S FIRST REGIONAL PUBLICATION ON GENDER STATISTICS

Gender statistics is one of 16 projects being implemented through the STEP programme. STEP's work focuses on improving the availability and accessibility of gender-related and sex-disaggregated data. A regional publication on gender statistics – the first of four publications that STEP will produce⁽¹⁾ – will bring together national gender data from STEP partner countries and provide analysis and findings that put the spotlight on the vital issue of gender equality.

It is widely recognised that gender equality is central to sustainable development. All six partner countries have made strong commitments to achieving equality through their own national plans as well as the Sustainable Development Goals (which have around 50 indicators related to gender equality) and the human rights Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

Each country also has a strong history of work on gender statistics. Responding to a questionnaire for the publication, all indicated that they plan to expand their work in this area in the future. Despite their progress to date, their responses revealed opportunities to further strengthen national gender data systems. All six countries lack a dedicated national coordination mechanism

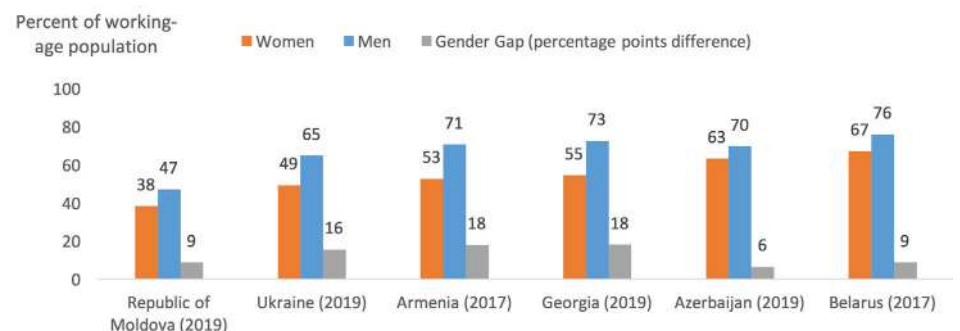
for gender statistics, and none currently has a dedicated annual budget for gender data.

The regional publication will focus on the priority areas of economic empowerment and equal representation in decision-making. Increasing women's involvement in the labour force, building their representation in management roles, and narrowing the gender pay gap are among the main indicators used to track national, regional and global targets for gender equality. The gender gap in labour force participation remains high in Armenia, Georgia and Ukraine but is relatively low in the other countries.

A major contributor to the gender gap in labour force participation is the unfair distribution of work in the home. Where available, data on time use tells a compelling story of the heavy burden unpaid domestic and care work puts on women. Data from the Republic of Moldova, one of three partner countries to conduct a time use survey, reveals that women work more than five hours a day doing domestic and care work and men work less than three. The biggest gaps are in food preparation, dishwashing, doing the laundry and ironing.

The STEP programme is currently finalising the gender publication, which will be available in the second half of 2021.

FIGURE 1. LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE, BY SEX, AND GENDER GAP, STEP COUNTRIES, LATEST DATA AVAILABLE



(1) Regional publications are also being produced on 'Trade in Services', 'Energy Consumption and Energy Efficiency', and the 'Sustainable development Goals'.

QUALITY MANAGEMENT TRAINING FOR PARTNER COUNTRIES

In the autumn of 2020, three short-term experts (STEs) Ms Laura Lukšaitė-Balakauskienė (Statistics Lithuania), Ms Nadežda Fursova (Statistics Lithuania) and Mr Gérard Vittek (INSEE, France) gave a training course on the methods, tools and good practices for quality management. The objectives of the activity were to train the staff involved in quality procedures in the NSIs and other producers of official statistics in various aspects linked to quality management including Generic Statistical Business Process Model (GSBPM), standardisation standards (ISO), and recommendations on quality in the European Statistics Code of Practice (ESCoP)

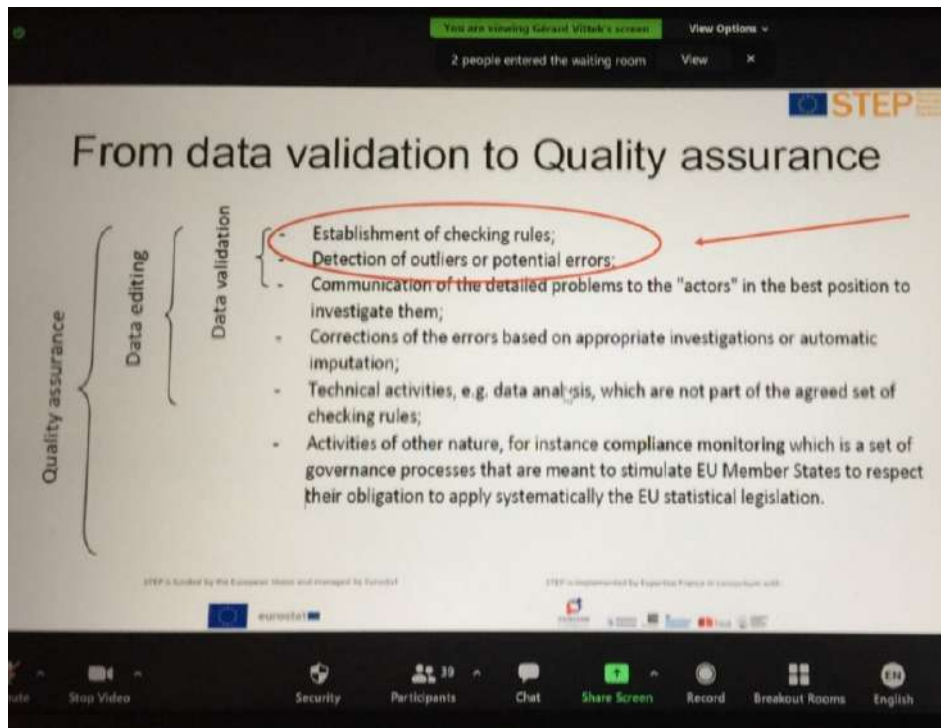
There were 81 participants from various divisions of the NSIs of partner countries who received training on quality management and quality tools, first on theoretical aspects, and then on how they are implemented in practice in Lithuania and France, including the differences in approach between these two countries.

All partner countries expressed high interest in the experiences of France and Lithuania, and raised plenty of questions during the training about GSBPM and data checking, communication on the revision of statistical tools, satisfaction surveys and quality management. The STEs explained the sub-processes of GSBPM dedicated to data checking and the European methodology available on this topic, the importance of communication on revision tools, its links with ESCoP, and how and why they manage satisfaction surveys.

The countries were encouraged to further enhance their quality management, as well as the mapping of their NSIs, improve practice, implement new quality tools and methods or improve existing ones, and expand the use of the standards and models, which were introduced during the training. As staff's active participation is essential for the successful implementation and development of any quality management system, partner countries were recommended to involve as many employees of all levels as possible into the quality work, and to spread quality culture widely across institutions.

Participants gave good feedback on the activity through the mandatory online evaluation following the training. In particular, they highlighted their satisfaction with the organisation of the activity and the experts who facilitated the course. Participants also expressed their desire for additional training and support from STEP on this topic in the future.

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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