

Bom dia, good morning,

Dear fellow statisticians and friends of Statistics.

I am Ineke Stoop, the chair of ESAC, The European Statistical Advisory Committee.

Let me first tell you how honoured we are to have been invited by the Portuguese statistical office and the Portuguese statistical society to celebrate European statistics day with you in this wonderful city and magnificent building.

We, ESAC, assists the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission in ensuring that user requirements and the costs borne by information providers and producers are taken into account in coordinating the strategic objectives and priorities of the Union's statistical information policy.

Half of the 24 members represent institutions, such as

- European Parliament
- Council
- European Economic and Social Committee
- Committee of the Regions
- European Central Bank
- Confederation of European Business (BUSINESSEUROPE)
- European Trade Union Confederation
- European Association of Craft, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
- European Data Protection Supervisor
- Commission DGs

The other members represent the users in general, researchers, citizens.

This group is deeply aware of the value of official statistics as a public good, of course, and I don' have to convince you of this. One of the chairs of the predecessor of our committee called official statistics one of the key elements of democracy and emphasised the importance of citizens.

We are also aware of a lot of challenges and dilemmas though. I will give you a few examples.

- 1) Good statistics can tell you what's happening with your country and its citizens. Not everybody is interested in the truth, however. Some just want numbers to support their arguments and are willing to make up numbers if necessary. So how can we bring forward the value of statistics when people are not interested?
- 2) To make good statistics requires a lot of effort and money. How can we convince policy makers and the general public that in many cases the costs of good statistics outweigh the cost of no data or bad data to build your decisions on?

- 3) Good statistics require sound methodology and time to collect and compile. How can we find a good balance between accuracy and timeliness? And can we speed up some processes?
- 4) Big technical and methodological statistical reports have lost their attraction whereas sexy sound bites on Twitter draw the attention of the media and policy makers. How can we find a balance between the statistical literati and the social media glitterati? And should we try to compete with the senders of trivial facts and alt facts?
- 5) Statistical literacy differs between big institutional users, simple researchers and average citizens. Non-users might not be aware of the statistical treasure troves and the ways to use statistics. How can we educate different types of users and non-users and how can we cater to their needs?
- 6) There is an increasing trend towards open data and free access to information. There is also an increasing trend towards data protection and confidentiality protection. How can we reconcile openness and protection?
- 7) And then finally about European, in European statistics day. For a citizen and often for policy makers national data, information on cities and neighbourhoods are important. So how can we provide regional data? In some cases these may be more relevant than European data. Who cares about poverty in the Netherlands when you live in Portugal and the other way around? Still, yesterday we learned from a report by the committee of the regions that rural areas in Portugal were poorer than urban areas, whereas in the Netherlands this is the other way around. Trying to understand this relationship might teach you something about your country, about urbanicity and about poverty. This is only one reason why looking across the borders is so important. How can we explain the importance of European statistics even to those only interested in national statistics?

For me these are exciting questions that reflect the value of statistics as a public good. This is why I am so happy to be here in Lisbon to celebrate European Statistics Day, being here among so many statisticians and colleagues and being part of the statistical sisterhood.

Welcome, thank you and happy statistics day.