**Promoting Official Statistics through Statistical Literacy Products**

María J. Vinuesa, INE-Spain, [mjvinuesa@ine.es](mailto:mjvinuesa@ine.es)

**ABSTRACT**  *In this post-truth era we live in, the misuse of statistics and data is a fact. Its noxious effects are boosted if by chance they become viral in the social media. This is why now it is more important than ever to reinforce the efforts to increase the statistical literacy of our society. This imply effectively promote it as much as possible. This is exactly one of the aims of the DIGICOM project where INE-Spain and some members of the EU system are collaboratively putting together their best practises and successful promotional activities. An example of this is the European Statistical Competition.*

***Keywords****: statistical literacy, promotion official statistics, DIGICOM, European Statistical Competition, ESC*

**1.- Context (VISION 2020)**

As the vision 2020 says: we are not alone. In these times of data revolution, a digital transformation is taking place across the globe. The world of data has undergone radical change in recent years: Big Data and other new data sources are now available. At the same time, there are other data providers, so there will be more competitive pressure. Furthermore, society is becoming increasingly digitised, leading to an explosive increase in the amount of data available. The NSIs, as followers of the Code of Practice, have the advantage of being able to ensure that our data are representative, impartial, comparable, reliable and follow other high quality criteria from the code.

Apart from that, we have to face with the fake-news, which can damage our image and reputation. For this reason, investing in Statistical Literacy is vital.

NSIs need to be more proactive in their communication with the general public, that’s mean, modernising communication and dissemination of European statistics and improving promotion of official statistics. To this end arises the DIGICOM project ( Digital communication, User analytics and Innovative products), as one of the 8 projects of the Vision 2020.

**2.- DIGICOM**

The DIGICOM aims to modernise communication and dissemination of European statistics. This will be achieved by exploring and developing innovative dissemination products and services based on experiences within the ESS and concrete needs of European statistics users. Eurostat plus voluntary 18 NSIs are working together in this project. In total more than 50 experts from different NSIS are collaborating .The DIGICOM consists of four work packages and the INE Spain is, along with other eleven ESS NSIs, actively involved in the Work Package 4 "Communication and promotion". This work package deals with statistical literacy, addressing the Vision objective of activities targeting the public at large to enhance statistical literacy.

In this paper we are going to focus on one of its objectives: Improving Statistical Literacy.

On beginning our working relationship, the group of experts made an Inventory on Statistical Literacy ([grid](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cros/content/statistical-literacy-grid-detailed_en)) in which they pointed out the actions and activities the NSIs do in relation to statistical literacy such as: School visits, Educational websites, Fairs, Seminars to teachers, Games, and Statistical competition among others.

Spain, Poland and Italy are running a statistical competition for years. Based on the Spanish statistical competition, the DIGICOM group decided to launch one European Statistics Competition (ESC) the 2017-2018 school year.

**3.- European Statistics Competition (ESC)**

The ESC tries to promote curiosity and interest in statistics , encourage teachers in the use of new materials (by promoting the use of real data) and show the role of statistics in various aspects of society.

The Kick off for the competition, which has taken place during the school year, was on the last European Statistics Day (20 October 2017). The award ceremony takes place in the Q2018 conference, where the 2 [winning teams](https://www.eso2018.eu/eso_winner.htm) (Team [Pakila9D](https://www.facebook.com/EuropeanStatistics/videos/2002326076750616/) and team [Toivasnik, both from](https://www.facebook.com/EuropeanStatistics/videos/2002314423418448/) Finland) will receive their award from Mariana Kotzeva, Director-General of Eurostat.

The competition is structured in two parts, first the national competition, followed by a European final. The finalists of the national competition take part in the European competition. The language of the national competition is the local language while the European competition is in English.

Over 11 200 students aged 14-18 took part. They had to solve statistical problems, search for data on our websites and produce statistical analyses. The top 180 students qualified to represent their countries in the final European round. This required them to produce two-minute videos on why official statistics matter in our societies today. The students were coordinated by 1200 teachers.

**How the ESC was promoted:**

The promotion of the ESC required a careful planning and a systematic approach as it was the first time to organize such a competition. It was essential to develop a clear promotional strategy, identifying the target group, messages and communication channels in order to achieve a broad participation.

NSIs achieved great results using various methods, such as:

* Set up specific websites
* Press releases on the websites of NSIs and partners
* Build partnerships with relevant institutions in this field
* Printed posters and flyers
* emails to all schools and teacher associations in the country (in some cases sent by the Ministry of Education)
* introducing the competition at school visits
* courses and seminars for teachers
* making promotional videos (Portugal, Finland, Slovenia, Croatia)
* extensive use of social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube)
* Engaging public figures who use statistics in their daily work - project ambassadors in Croatia
* Fairs, like book fair in Spain, Feel the Future Fair in Slovenia, Thessaloniki International Fair in Greece and teacher’s fairs in Finland.
* Emails to the staff
* Articles in magazines

**4.- Benefits ESC**

1. **Partnerships with associations and ministries**: as they are strong and well-known institutions, the general public know us through them and trust us. This is what has happened in Greece for example, where following their partnership with the ministry of education, the number of registered team increased dramatically.
2. **Use of our data** As some of the tasks of the competition involved searching for information online, both students and teachers got to know our websites, our products (such as Men and women in Europe publication).
3. **Internal promotion**: staff have involved themselves and their families talking about the ESC to relatives Example: Slovenia, Poland, Spain (bookmark at Christmas time).
4. **Contact with teachers** (1200). It is impossible to overemphasize the importance of teachers: they are our initial point of contact in schools and act as very good ambassadors, spreading information and encouraging participation.
5. **63 new Videos explaining “Why are official statistics important in our society?“.** The videos are incredibly creative and entertaining. This is a great way to promote official statistics in the NSIs websites and social Media (Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and YouTube), and of course the visibility of official statistics increases. But not only that; the fact that the students have had to think about the topic and the best way of communicating their ideas related to it, gives them a very deep understanding of what statistics mean and represent.
6. **Target group:** the 11200 students aged 14-18 and 1200 teachers from across Europe who have participated, are unlikely to have been familiar with our websites prior to the competition. In the past, they were “potential users”: now, they know us, and in the future they could be users or even respondents, so the more they know about official statistics and the ESS, the better .
7. **High-level judges.** To help choose the winning teams, Eurostat has had the honour of working alongside a European select committee from relevant international private and public institutions (Alan Smith, Financial Times, expert in data visualisation; Alexios Mantzarlis, director of the International Fact-Checking Network at the Poynter Institute ; Ineke Stoop, Netherlands Institute for Social Research and chair of the European Statistical Advisory Committee ,Kerstin Hänsel, Head of the division on communication strategy, marketing and corporate design at Destatis, Germany; Olga Kusnierska, Head of Communications at the Schwarzkopf Stiftung ,Rob O'Donnell, Board Member of Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions (OBESSU); Sonia Livingstone, Professor of Social Psychology at the Department of Media and Communications of the London School of Economics and Tim Allen, Acting Head of the Communication Unit at Eurostat). The high visibility of these figures has meant that, though their collaboration they are themselves promoting official statistics.
8. **Eleven NSIs working together**. The fact that a group of statistical offices are working together under the umbrella of Eurostat, increases the visibility of the whole ESS and at the same time the trust that users have in the NSIs themselves.

**4.- Conclusion**

As stated on the Eurostat website “The initiative (ESC) aims to stimulate the awareness of sound statistics in an age of fake news, by promoting statistical literacy and curiosity among students, while encouraging teachers to use new educational materials based on official statistics”. These are the goals of the competition and they have been achieved. It has been a resounding success.

Needless to say after the successful experience of this first edition of the ESC which promotes statistical literacy, that official statistics are being promoted.

Therefore, to return to my initial theme: in these times of data revolution, with many other data providers and sources of information, making people aware of the importance of official statistics and its quality becomes a crucial task of all providers of official statistics. Therefore, any investment in statistical literacy will increase the awareness of the value of official statistics and will empower people to use it in decision making.