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Statistics Explained: 5 years after opening, where are we?

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. Statistics Explained (see http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/Main_Page) is the fully electronic publication system of Eurostat. This wiki-based system uses the open-source software Mediawiki and its structure is similar to Wikipedia. It contains three main parts. First, an *encyclopaedia* of European statistics is made up of statistical articles, each article presenting statistical data on a specific topic in an easily understandable way. The purpose of this biggest part of Statistics Explained is to present and explain main statistical findings, and thus increase understanding of users about statistical results. Second, a *glossary* explains all terms used, giving precise and short definition of terms and concepts. The glossary aims at helping users unfamiliar with exact definition of terms. It also contains links to more detailed information, such as legal texts or methodological documents. Third, a *portal to further information* provides numerous links internal but also external. At the end of each article, a set of links is always presented and organised along the same structure, referring to the most recent publications, data, metadata and dedicated sections on the Eurostat website, as well as to trustworthy 'official' sites (other Commission DGs, ECB, WHO, UN, etc.).

2. The system was opened to the public in September 2009 and targets the general public. To reach this goal, most articles are written in simple non-specialist language and link directly from the text to glossary items explaining simply any term which may be unknown or unfamiliar. Statistics Explained also targets the specialists, giving a user-friendly entry point to deeper and more technical information (as latest related data, metadata and regulations) through context-specific and deep links.

II. USERS' VISITS

3. The number of users' visits on Statistics Explained is continuously rising since September 2009, when the system was opened to the public. The Eurostat Monthly Monitoring Report (<https://myintracomm.ec.europa.eu/dg/ESTAT/3-comm/monitoring/Pages/monitoring.aspx>) offers the overview of the Eurostat electronic dissemination activities for the chosen month, including

availability, performance and number of visits. The latest monitoring report available when writing this document shows that in March 2014 Statistics Explained had about 2.6 million page views. The vast majority of these views comes from external users (2 521 175 views by external users and 62 022 by internal users). As show in table 1, this corresponds to access to Statistics Explained from more than 383 thousands distinct IP addresses and nearly 1.6 million user sessions in the month. Table 1: Information about Statistics Explained page views, user sessions and IP addresses in March 2014

	Page views	User sessions	Distinct IP addresses
March 2014	2 583 197	1 572 262	383 084

Source: Eurostat Monthly Monitoring Report

Table 2: Ten most accessed URLs from Statistics Explained, in the first trimester of 2014

URL	Accesses
Unemployment_statistics	118 429
Main_Page	73 436
Europe_in_figures_-_Eurostat_yearbook	40 106
Migration_and_migrant_population_statistics	37 504
Electricity_and_natural_gas_price_statistics	32 940
Statistical_themes	30 913
Wages_and_labour_costs	25 888
Energy_price_statistics	24 156
Marriage_and_divorce_statistics	23 704
Energy_production_and_imports	22 791

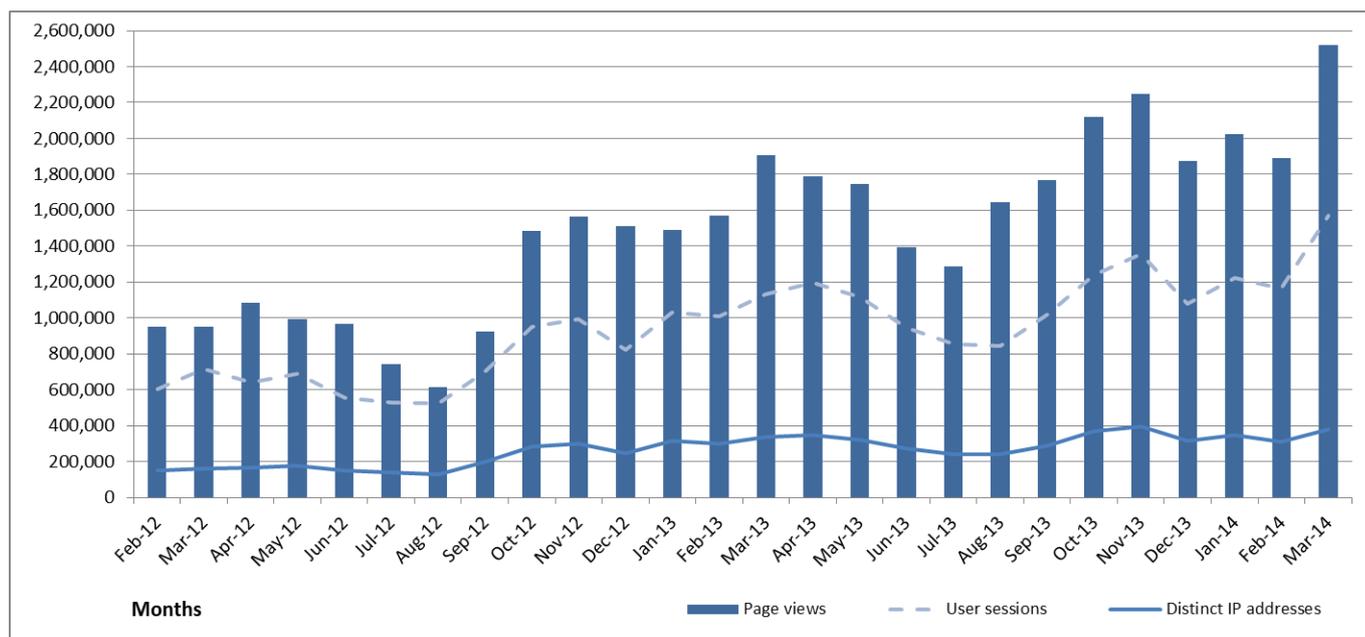
Source: Eurostat Monthly Monitoring Report

Table 3: Increase in terms of page views and user sessions over the last two years

	Page views (external users)		User sessions		Distinct IP addresses	
	Year	Month	Year	Month	Year	Month
2012	12 472 140	1 039 345	7 734 996	694 867	2 105 849	188 206
2013	20 833 493	1 736 124	12 839 006	1 069 917	3 750 175	312 515
March 2013		1 905 720		1 135 314		335 903
March 2014		2 521 175		1 572 262		383 084

Source: Eurostat Monthly Monitoring Report

Figure 1: Evolution of page views, user sessions and distinct IP addresses over the last two years



Source: Eurostat Monthly Monitoring Report

4. The consultation level varies from one page to the other. The main page has been viewed by 25 937 users (15 362 by external users and 10 575 by internal users) in March 2014 and it has been accessed 73 436 times during the first trimester 2014 (see table 2). This corresponds to the second most viewed page during this trimester. The most consulted page is the article on unemployment statistics with more than 118 thousands views in the first three months of 2014. The third most consulted Statistics Explained page relates to the online Yearbook which is continuously updated in Statistics Explained. The page views of the ten most accessed URLs from Statistics Explained, in the first trimester of 2014, are presented in table 2.

5. In terms of evolution over the last two years, the number of pages viewed by external users which amounted to 12.47 million for the whole year 2012, corresponding to a monthly average of 1.04 million page views, increased to 20.83 million for the whole year 2013, giving a monthly average of 1.74 million page views. The increase from 2012 to 2013 in terms of page views consequently corresponds to 67%. Since then, the number of page views continued to rise, with for example a growth from 1.91 million in March 2013 to 2.52 million in March 2014 (see table 3 and figure 1). The number of user sessions and IP addresses also grew from begin 2012 to March 2014, going from a monthly average of 695 thousands user sessions and 188 thousands distinct IP addresses in 2012 to a monthly average of 1.07 million user sessions and 313 thousands IP addresses in 2013, and then to 1.57 million user sessions and 383 thousands IP addresses in March 2014.

III. GROWING STRUCTURE

6. The number of Statistics Explained visitors and page views is continuously growing as is the content of this dissemination tool. Eurostat dissemination policy has been evolving for several years towards electronic publications and Statistics Explained has been put at the heart of the production process of Eurostat publications. The shift away from traditional publications towards electronic publishing materialized by stopping some printed publications, reducing the number of paper and PDF publications and inserting publication content into Statistics Explained.

7. Integration of content in Statistics Explained started with the chapters of the Yearbook, which is the most comprehensive selection of Eurostat data at national level, and its glossary. From 2012

onwards, Statistics Explained is also used as the tool for producing the content of the Eurostat regional yearbook, which represents another important Eurostat publication. Other main publications were also integrated, like for example in the second half of 2013 the Sustainable Development monitoring report, the statistical book ' Smarter, greener, more inclusive? — Indicators to support the Europe 2020 strategy ', the pocketbook on social statistics, etc.

8. The number of articles and glossary items in Statistics Explained has been continuously growing. While in May 2009 Statistics Explained contained some 160 statistical articles and 900 glossary items, it contained more than 800 articles (664 statistical articles, 138 background articles and 23 theme introduction) and 1800 glossary items 5 years later, in May 2014. Additionally, more than 130 articles are for the time-being under construction.

9. With this increasing content, new aspects should be taken into account. First, coherence should be ensured and duplication should be avoided. When bringing together within one platform articles from different sources and with different characteristics, content should be integrated and harmonised. Also, articles should be structured and grouped. In Statistics Explained, they are grouped by themes through the creation of category pages where are listed all articles related to a specific topic. This allows users to find more easily what they are looking for. Creating online publications is another functionality that enhances the structure of the tool and that Eurostat want to foster the use. An online publication is essentially a clickable table of contents consisting of chapters, preceded by a very short introduction, and with a link to the PDF version if it exists. Each chapter normally corresponds to a statistical or background article. In some cases, however, the chapters are further subdivided in sections linking directly to article sections. Finally, naming rules are also important. Within a statistical theme, the content of an article should be recognised and distinguished by its name. Consequently, names need to be descriptive and distinctive, label-like and as short as possible.

IV. MULTILINGUAL

10. In the beginning, Statistics Explained content was only in English, but the subsequent installing of a multilingual Mediawiki plugin made it technically possible to support more languages – in separate but page-by-page connected versions, like in Wikipedia.

11. In May 2010, Eurostat's board of directors decided that Statistics Explained would be extended to other languages with first, the French and German language versions of the Eurostat yearbook and regional yearbook and second, with a set of 20 representative high-interest articles to be made available in all EU official languages, to be updated yearly. Apart from these two sets, any available translations of articles are also being inserted. These are usually articles co-produced with for instance the Chilean and Mexican NSIs (also available in Spanish) or with CISSTAT (also available in Russian).

12. Guaranteeing quality is a potential problem when inserting and managing content in 20 different languages. As the translation is done by DGT, the European Commission's translation service, the quality of content is guaranteed by translation by professionals also familiar with specific statistical terminology and by a set of model pages for every language with standard headings, captions, etc. At technical level, integration is ensured by a carefully-considered architecture and rules for url and page name coding, and by the features of Mediawiki specifically designed for multilingual content, as exemplified by Wikipedia. So, no technical problems were encountered for the integration of the different language versions. The constraint is that an English page should always exist. It is impossible to create a page in another language if the English one does not yet exist (because the url of the other-language page is the English url with the addition of /xx with xx= language code).

13. The German and French versions of the two publications the Eurostat yearbook and regional yearbook are only available in Statistics Explained, and not anymore in printed format, since 2011. Data freshness as the increased possibilities for user-friendliness and searchability offered by Statistics Explained were considered better service to users.

14. At the time being, Statistics Explained contains about 100 articles translated in French and German and 20 articles translated in all the other European Union official languages. It also contains a quite extensive and integrated trilingual glossary with a bit less than 700 glossary items in French and 600 in German. The glossary is expanding in several other languages in collaboration with EU Member States. The final goal is to obtain a fully integrated multilingual glossary for the EU languages. Another possible collaboration with the EU NSIs (National Statistical Institutes) would be the integration of articles written by NSI staff on national results from EU surveys or EU data collections. This would ideally complement the current offer of Statistics Explained. In this way, users would benefit from the full offer of European statistics, at EU, national and regional levels, in English and in their own language.

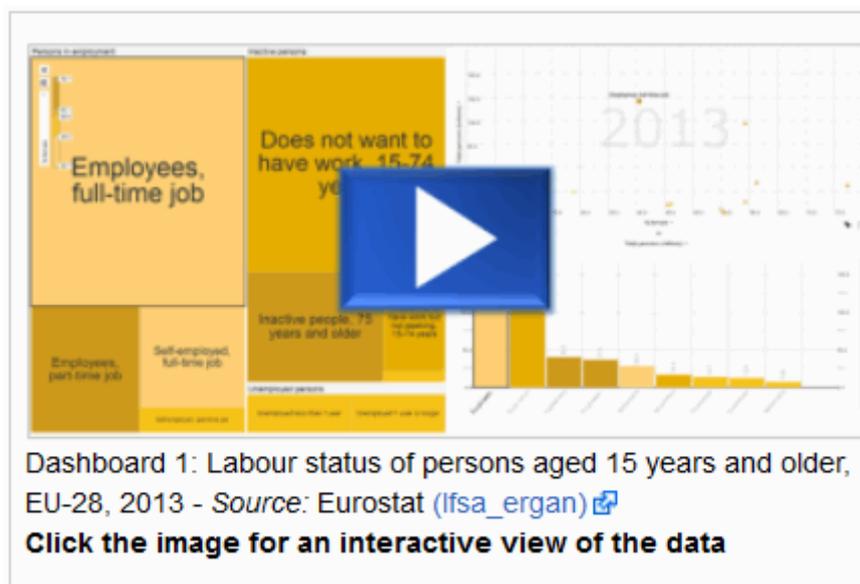
V. INTEGRATION OF VISUALISATION TOOLS

15. Since recently, articles in Statistics Explained can include visualisation tools, and in particular flexible dashboards. Additional to 'fixed' tables, graphs and maps, authors have the possibility to insert dashboards, interactive graphs and maps illustrating the content of their article. Authors can this way generate a meaningful and unique insight of data totally adapted to their specific needs.

16. Flexible dashboards are interactive tools allowing end users to visualise data using intuitive display objects - such as maps, graphs, dynamic tables and timelines - increasing the user-friendliness of data exploration. Dashboards inserted in Statistics Explained articles are displayed in a pop-up window, which can be customised by users. An example can be found with the article [Labour market and Labour force survey \(LFS\) statistics](#) (see figure 2).

17. Considering the added-value of flexible dashboard to illustrate main statistical findings, the inclusion of this visualisation tool in Statistics Explained articles is strongly encouraged by Eurostat dissemination unit.

Figure 2: Flexible dashboard included in the Statistics Explained article on labour market statistics



VI. CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD

18. After 5 years of opening, Statistics Explained is becoming the centre of publication activities of Eurostat. Main publications have been integrated and are regularly updated in this dissemination tool, so that most recent results are provided to users through Statistics Explained and also most publishing content is produced on the basis of Statistics Explained articles. Its combination of encyclopaedia, glossary and portal seems to attract a continuously wider audience, as demonstrated by the users' statistics.

19. The fact that this dissemination tool is continuously increasing in content size however brings some new challenges to face. Putting in place some structural elements, like grouping by themes, creation of category pages, content integration, establishing online publications, naming rules, etc. are of crucial importance.

20. The multilingual aspects and the integration of visualisation tools in the articles are considerable added-values for Statistics Explained. These could be even further developed to increase users' satisfaction. In addition, the main page, which actually includes a 'Welcome' section and highlights some new and freshly updated articles, could be improved in terms of user-friendliness. This could for example materialize through the inclusion of icons representing the main statistical themes.