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The growing demand for small area statistics. How to make demand and supply meet?

Topic 6 – Statistics closer to the ground

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Introduction

The paper will deal with new and evolving demands for small area statistics from users point of view. How could official statistics meet the demands will also be discussed. Experiences will be shared and examples demonstrated.

There is a growing demand for geospatially enabled statistics, for small area statistics ranging from national, sub-national, regional and urban level to district and neighbourhood level. The demand is coming from all sectors: government, commercial and business, research, media, non-profit and voluntary organisations, general public and citizens and local communities.

Integration of geospatial and statistical information would increase the amount of statistical information available for regional and small area analyses and thus promote better informed decisions at both the local and macro levels.

Methods / Problem statement

You need a lot of integrated statistical information linked to specific locations in order to properly monitor what's going on in a city, region or territory and their sub-divisions, e.g. residential areas, neighbourhoods and business districts.

These so called small area statistics should describe relevant phenomena comprehensively on a regular basis. There is also a demand for strategic small area statistics that relate e.g. to urban and regional policy and thus supports the city's or region's development strategies and investments. Within the EU regions are seen as the engines of growth and innovation. This means that comparative small area statistics are needed to develop plans and monitor actions. As regional authorities are moving forward to an outcome approach to policy their request for small area statistics is becoming increasingly important. Planning processes and practices are undergoing major reshaping in many EU Member States.

A new trend is about activating and involving the civic society. Citizens are invited to collaborate and give their contribution to creating a better future, to creating better living conditions and living areas. Citizens participation requests access to small area statistics.

Results / Proposed solution

Obviously, the statistics should be responsive to changes. Though changes, official statistics should secure that geographical units of various statistics are kept functional and meaningful. One way of responding is to provide geographic information services besides pure small area statistics.

There are many challenges connected to providing small area statistics. One key challenge for official statistics is better linking between statistical and geographical data in order to facilitate e.g. fine-scale analyses of annual changes in population or business structure, social or economic conditions at various spatial levels. Official statistics are meeting these demands in various ways depending on the infrastructure. Availability of advanced administrative registers and experiences of innovative use of administrative registers for official statistics are valuable assets.

Nevertheless, developing small area statistics call for collaboration across countries. Problems connected to confidentiality issues, survey approaches to obtaining small area statistics, quality and costs of producing small area statistics call for special attention and collaboration.