



COMPASS TOWARDS STABILITY,  
SECURITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

SOUTH-EAST EUROPEAN COOPERATION PROCESS  
SOFIA CHAIRMANSHIP-IN-OFFICE 2025-2026

## From numbers to trust: Communicating official statistics through the noise

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High-level Conference "EU Enlargement:  
The role of Comparable and Reliable Official Statistics"

11-12 September 2025, Hotel "Bulgaria", Burgas, Bulgaria

# Age of speed, polarization and distrust

## The informational environment is changing

- Information overload: competing data from private platforms, media, and social networks
- Disinformation and polarization: figures are misused, eroding credibility
- Low data literacy: revisions and methodological differences are often misunderstood

## Institutional pressure is building up

- Politicisation and pressure on independence: revisions or negative results are weaponized
- Declining deference to authority: overall distrust in authority, trust is no longer automatic

## Production challenges are intensifying

- Faster numbers vs. accuracy: speed clashes with validation - revisions misread as errors
- Declining survey response rates and budget constraints weaken input quality, while demand rises
- Resource pressures: limited staff and budgets, greater demand for real-time, granular data

## Data landscape is moving faster than us

- Fragmented data sources: admin records, private platforms, alternative providers move faster than NSIs
- Technology and AI: new opportunities, but also risks of bias and validation challenges



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# Trust and communication

Trust is our **strategic asset**

Long-term trust is built through **cumulative reliability**

Trust is inseparable from **clear communication**

Communication is a **risk management tool**  
(preventing misinterpretation)

and

a **trust-building engine**

(inviting users to understand, be involved, examine)



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# Trust then and now

## Trust today

- Trust is **earned** - not deserved
- Authority alone no longer suffices
- **Information abundance** (social media, private platforms, think tanks, experts, political parties) - users can contest official numbers
- **Speed and emotion** dominate the news cycle: journalists want fast data and clickable titles, political parties want stories they can use
- Requires **engagement and transparency**, not just compliance with rules
- Transparency is not enough if people aren't **interested** in what we have to say

## Trust in the past

- Trust in official statistics was based on **institutional authority**
- People assumed official statistics were correct “by default”
- **Code of Practice** and legal frameworks were the guarantees
- **Less competition** - few alternative sources, slower media cycle



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# (Re) - Building trust through communication

- **Transparency, openness and clear methodological descriptions**

We need **proactive communication**: explain revisions, methods, and anomalies before they are exploited  
It's easier to shape your own narrative than try to fight against someone else's

- **Adapting messages to different audiences**

You wouldn't speak **in the same way** to your child and to the Headmaster, would you?

- **Co-creating products and involving users in the phases of statistical publications**

User councils and consultations, **user** satisfaction surveys, using people-generated data

- **Integrating visual and interactive tools to increase engagement**

Once upon a time there were lots of numbers, but **why should I care** about them?

- **Monitoring the perception and use of statistical information**

We measure data quality, why not **measure** how statistics are received and reused?



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# Transparency, openness and clear methodological descriptions

## Proactive communication

### Monthly unemployment estimates

postponement as a **trust-preserving decision** - better to delay than risk confusion

#### Data anomaly detected

Unusual fluctuations in monthly unemployment figures

#### Decision to act

Publication postponed for validation

#### Transparent communication

Public announcement explaining the reason of postponement

#### Expected outcome

Avoid confusion, show accountability, preserve credibility



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# Adapting messages to different audiences

## Media

- Need speed and simplicity: short, headline-ready messages + links to depth
- Offer context to prevent misinterpretation
- FAQs, and press briefings help avoid sensationalism

## Policy makers

- Need clarity for decisions: concise indicators tied to policy
- Stress comparability with EU and international definitions and indicators

## Researchers

- Need depth and access: detailed metadata, microdata, and methodological notes
- Transparency in data sets' characteristics and revisions builds confidence

## Business users

- Focus on operational relevance: inflation, wages, trade, productivity
- Machine-readable formats for integration
- Stress Independence: business values neutrality in information

## General public

- Need understanding and trust: storytelling, analogies, visuals, short explainer videos
- Focus on why the statistic matters for everyday life
- Create interest and curiosity



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# Adapting messages to different audiences

## Sampling errors

The monthly results of Labour Force Survey are estimations that are based on a relatively small sample size and have large sampling errors. An indication of the magnitude of the survey's sampling errors is that estimations of characteristics that refer to 10,000 persons at the total country are accompanied by a coefficient of variation of at least 15%. More accurate estimates and detailed analysis of the changes in employment can be based on the quarterly results of the survey.

## Methodology

Labour Force Survey's monthly estimates are produced by a suitable unbiased estimator which takes into account a) the probability of selection of every sampled household, b) the response rate in every primary sampling unit, c) the estimated population, for the corresponding month, allocated by NUTS II areas, gender and age group.

### 15.2 Sampling error

#### Standard error estimation

The variance of the estimation of a characteristic is calculated on the basis of the variance of the estimations of the particular characteristic from every final stratum, by using the following formula:

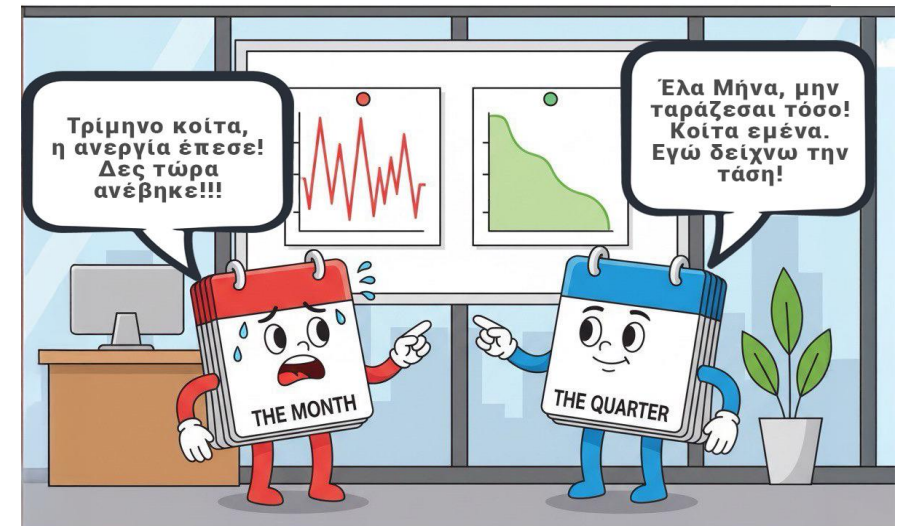
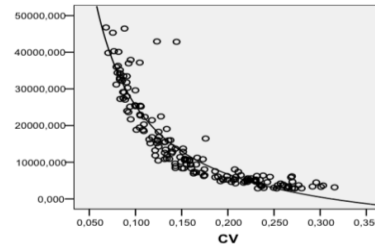
$$\hat{V}(\hat{Y}) = \lambda^2 \left( \frac{n_{hi}}{n_{hi} - 1} \right) \cdot \left[ \sum_j y_{hij}^2 - \frac{1}{n_{hi}} \left( \sum_j y_{hij} \right)^2 \right]$$

where  $\lambda$  are the weights,  $n_{hi}$  is the number of primary sampling units in a final stratum, and  $\sum_j y_{hij}$  the total of the characteristic in a primary sampling unit.

In general, there is a strong correlation between the magnitude of an estimate and the standard error of the estimate. The next graph presents the results of regressing the coefficient of variation of an estimate and the estimate. For the regression, a sample of 160 estimates was used. The fit of the model is satisfactory (R square = 0, 849).

From the fitted model we see that for estimations no less than 10.000 (for the total of country) we can expect a CV less than 15%.

Estimation





# Co-creating products and involving users in the design, testing and evaluation



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- **Product design:** involve users early to shape content and usability
  - disability statistics
  - census
- **User conferences, user councils, user satisfaction surveys:** get feedback from users for their needs and the level of satisfaction from our products
  - ELSS Advisory Committee - Hellenic Statistical Authority
  - User Conference - ELSTAT
- **People-generated data:** explore pilots, watch for quality and bias
  - people using smartphones and apps to log health data, air quality, mobility patterns
- **Satisfaction surveys for public services**
  - ⇒ EU silc and health services survey

# Integrating visual and interactive tools to increase engagement



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# Integrating visual and interactive tools to increase engagement

Social media: use carefully, always with context

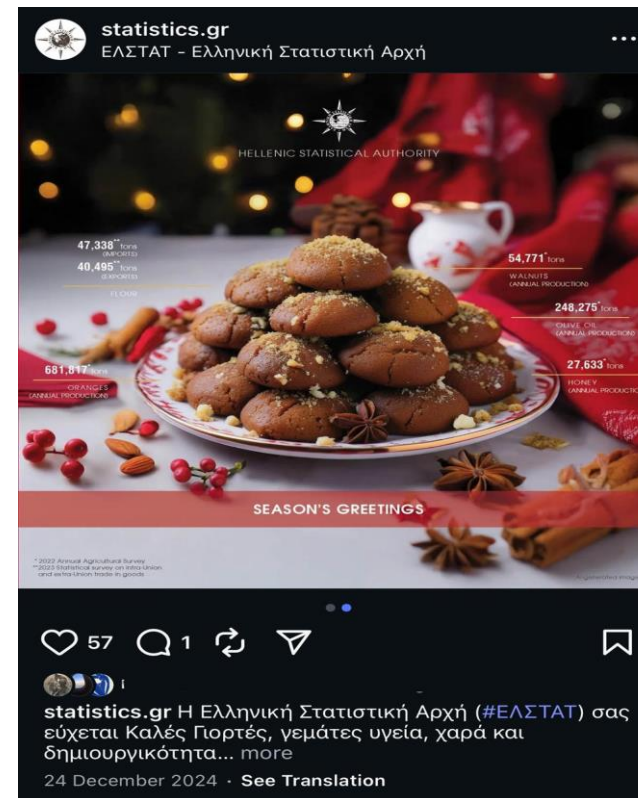
Dashboards and interactive maps

[eurostat-visuals](#)

[eurostat-atlas](#)

Infographics and short videos

[names](#)





# Monitoring the perception and use of statistical information



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## Metrics of perception

User surveys asking if data are clear, relevant etc

Focus groups with journalists, researchers, or businesses

Feedback from stakeholder workshops/dialogues

Feedback from advisory/user councils

Analysis of social media sentiment

Measuring institutional reputation through peer reviews

Third-party surveys on public perception of institutions

## Metrics of use

Number of dataset download or re-use through tokenization

Frequency of dashboard interactions or map clicks

Time spent on statistical webpages

Number of use of standardized press releases

Citations of official figures in media or parliamentary debates



# What it comes down to

## Relevance and curiosity

People finding official statistics relevant to their lives. Up to us to create the curiosity through communication with users for users.



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*Thank You*

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