

## Comments to ODIN.Russia 2016 results

June 8, 2016 All-Russian public organization "Russian Association of Statisticians" (RASt) concluded an agreement on cooperation with the US-based public organization Open Data Watch (ODW). Within the framework of the agreement, the preparation and implementation of the project "ODIN.Russia - an inventory of the coverage and openness of official statistics" has been launched.

At the first stage of the project a training seminar for future participants was held on June 22-24, 2016 on the basis of the International Institute of Statistical Education of the Higher School of Economics. During the seminar, the representatives of the RASt and ODW explained the principles and methodology of the evaluation to future volunteers, conducted practical exercises to assess the completeness and openness of the data. The seminar was attended by students and young teachers from Moscow, St. Petersburg, Novosibirsk, Rostov, Saransk and Orenburg, as well as representatives of Armenia and Belarus.

The second stage of the project was a direct assessment of the openness and completeness of statistical data in Russia. The work was conducted by RASt and ODW undependably in parallel.

The volunteers of the RASt carried out the assessment free of charge, in their free time. As a result of the work, completely original data were obtained.

Official statistics in Russia is represented by two parts: The Federal State Statistics Service, which collects data on the economy and social sphere according to the Federal plan of statistical work and the data of statistical departments of other official agencies of Russian Federation, including the Central Bank, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Education and Science, etc.

The specific of the project for the inventory of statistical data by the RASt team in Russia is that the evaluation takes into account the statistics of all Russian agencies, which was not done by ODW colleagues within the global ODIN in most of the countries studied.

The final evaluation based on the results of the inventory of the coverage and openness of official statistics for 2016 is as follows:

Data category	Coverage	Openness	Total
Social statistics	43	39	41
Economic and financial statistics	70	60	65
Environmental statistics	62	52	57
Total	57	50	54

Currently, the results of the 2016 round are posted on the ODW website.

Among the countries of Eastern Europe, Russia ranks sixth by the general indicator (6th in terms of coverage and 6th in terms of openness) out of 10 possible, and among all the countries surveyed it ranks 38th (23rd in terms of coverage and 45th in terms of openness) from 173.

In line with ODIN.Russia'16 results, the following shortcomings of the websites of Rosstat and other agencies involved in the preparation and publication of official statistics that has to be eliminated.

1. Insufficient disaggregation of statistical data. A number of published indicators, especially in health and education statistics, have no the necessary level of disaggregation.
2. Insufficient duration of time series. For some indicators of social statistics not only the ten-year, but even the five-year time series are not presented.
3. The problem of data representation at the regional and municipal levels. Some data, for example, data on the number of teachers, are not available in the regional context. There is lack of most statistics at the municipal level.
4. Some statistical databases are not technically perfect. Unfortunately, the Central Statistical Database (CSDB) and the Database of Municipal Formations (DBMS) of Rosstat do not meet modern requirements. Due to technical reasons, documents from the CSDB and DBMS cannot be taken into account for rating by the ODW method due to the absence of a permanent reference to documents or files. With regard to the Unified Inter-Agency Information and Statistical System (EMISS), it was taken into account for the evaluation, but it does not have an adequate data listing, and it has an ill-conceived search system.
5. Absence of cross-references to other statistical data sets of government agencies on Rosstat's website. ODW experts in their estimates took into account only those statistical data of other agencies that were directly referred to on the Rosstat website.

The results of the inventory of Russian statistics very well demonstrate its "birthmarks" left over from Soviet statistics. Firstly, Russian statistics traditionally pay more attention to economic indicators rather than social or environmental indicators, because in the planned economy were planned mainly the economic parameters and official statistics should monitor them. In contrast, as the special survey shows, external users are mostly looking for social statistics data in the Rosstat website. Secondly, when statistics work primarily for government, the format of data presentation is not a priority, because the reporting forms are determined by the government itself and statistical agencies do not care about improving them. The task is to provide all data in established format to the government on time. The remaining parameters are insignificant. Inventory results show that the situation does not change quickly. It means that for all categories the ranking of the availability (coverage) of data is much higher than the ranking of their openness. In other words, the data are available on the agency's website, but their format may not be convenient enough, the usage rules are not clearly defined, so the data are not comfortable to use. For example, Russian rank in coverage for category of economic indicators is 70 and it means that by this indicator Russian statistics is very close to be among the leaders. In contrast, openness for the social indicators is valued only as 39 and this is a level of not very advanced African countries.

We call this effect "statistics-in-itself".