

The articulation between regional and national levels for an optimization of the implementation of the code of practice - Morocco case

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ABSTRACT

During the consultation exercise carried out at the end of MEDSTAT III in 2010 to explore the ways to reshape the UE-MED cooperation, the Quality in statistics has emerged as a strong priority for the ENP south countries. Since then, the process has evolved towards the setting up of the UE MED Quality working group chaired by EUROSTAT, the adoption of an adapted Code of practice in May 2015 and finally converges on the development of the approaches to implement it especially, in the challenging institutional contexts of these countries. At national levels, a particular dynamic has been created using different approaches in each county. This paper aims to emphasize the ongoing developments in the High Commission for Planning- Morocco regarding the remaining gaps in terms of the implementation of the CoP, especially those related to the review of the statistical law, setting up the mechanisms for a constructive inter institutional coordination and the development of the National Quality Assurance Framework (NQAF). This paper will describe the challenge for setting up a legal framework that would fit with the challenges that the National statistical system is facing in terms of multiplication of the statistical sources, modernization of tools and strengthening the statistical production in specific fields. The development of the NQAF is being developed using a pilot process. It aims to valorize the practices developed during several decades of statistical work which meet the international standards and many principles of the CoP but also to identify the remaining gaps in its implementation. The approach is focusing on an appropriation of the processes, developing the NQAF and on planning implementation in a very progressive way. The articulation between the works done or to be developed at regional and national levels is crucial for an optimization of the efforts.

KEY WORDS: Code of practice, National Quality Assurance Framework, Challenging context, Morocco.

1. Introduction

During the consultation exercise carried out at the end of MEDSTAT III in 2010 exploring the ways to build a permanent Euro-Mediterranean cooperation in the field of statistics, the quality in statistics has emerged as a strong priority for the ENP south countries (EU-MED Forum, 2013). The implementation of an adapted code of practice and the setting up a quality assurance framework would guarantee trust of the users on official statistics and strengthen its position within the public debate and the decision making on social and economic development. This paper aims to highlight the value added of regional activities and the use of common tools to initiate and/or to strengthen the process for building a quality culture/framework through the implementation of the code of practice and the sitting up of the QAF in the challenging contexts of the southern Mediterranean countries with a focus on the Moroccan experience.

2. Value added of the regional cooperation

At the end of MEDSTAT III, all partners agreed to work in the framework of the Forum of the Euro-Mediterranean statisticians to ensure a permanent technical cooperation through the activities of six priority sector working groups led by the partner countries and a quality working group (QWG) led by EUROSTAT. Dedicating a working group to quality issues was a determined decision to go on for a quality commitment inside the countries' national statistical systems. The activities of the QWG were built following a smooth process from outreaching on quality culture to exploring the emergent European country experiences and from trainings on quality in statistics to the adoption of an adapted version of the European CoP. The ongoing regional work is focusing the adaptation of the European quality assurance framework, the elaboration of a generic statistical law and the identification of the best practices to boost the implementation of these tools at national levels. The EU-MED Cooperation, especially with the engagement of EUROSTAT, provides also the opportunities to benefit from assessment rounds using the different assessment tools, developed by EUROSTAT (Self assessment, global assessment, peer reviews, sector reviews).

3. Processes initiated at national levels

Through the activities of the QWG and the debates involving the Directors general of the concerned national statistical offices (NSO) during the UE-MED forum meetings, a distinguished dynamism has been created at national level with different approaches from one country to another. The common attitudes were linked to the creation of a mechanism/structure charged of quality issues (national quality working group like in Morocco, formal entity like in Algeria), the organization of trainings on quality in statistics and outreach actions for the NSOs staff. Specific processes have been initiated in some countries with the conduction of a series of assessment from self assessment to peer review to sector assessment like in Tunisia and Jordan. The assessment exercise constitutes not only a tool to focus on the weaknesses and to highlight the strengths of the national statistical systems assessed but also serves as a strong advocacy tool to make change at national level especially, regarding the revision of the statistical law and to concrete the reorganization of the NSOs.

4. Moroccan experience

Morocco, as one of the partner countries of the EU-MED Forum, has been deeply involved in the process towards improvement of quality in statistics by using the European practices and tools.

Quality of data has always been a central concern of the HCP statistical work. Indeed, the regular conformity with international standards, the use of the technologies in the statistical processes, the regular revision of the survey's questionnaires and sampling, the reinforcement of the quality control during the data collection and processing, the assessment of its work through international cooperation are all a practices for improvement of data quality.

The fundamental principles of official statistics have been the main reference for its statistical work, especially in terms of independency, confidentiality, mandate for the data collection, harmonization with international standards and enlargement of the data coverage to fit the increasing user's demands.

However, the lack of a detailed framework, like the code of practice, allowing a regular assessment of the respect of the different principles with a continual process of improvement is strongly needed.

Also, a national quality assurance framework would guarantee the quality in the all steps of the statistical processes with a quality reports and regular assessment towards continual improvement.

It's worth highlighting the challenging context of Morocco, like the other partner countries, particularly in terms of institutional environment. The statistical law was first established in 1968 and several revisions have been made in the years 2000 but without any approval. The consequences are increasingly meaningful, especially in terms of insufficient coordination between the components of the national statistical system. Because of this gap, the system is suffering from several difficulties affecting:

- An adequate governance of the National Statistical System (NSS). Indeed, the lack of a national statistical council is considered as one of the major problems affecting the governance of the NSS.
- the development of common multiyear's action plans, deep and regular consultation on statistical priorities, the use of common standards and methods to avoid discrepancies in the same indicators and the common use of national expertise and tools.
- an adequate use of administrative data and registers for statistical purposes. The use of this data sources is not sufficient. The shortfall is meaningful in terms of costs, quality and regularity of statistics issued from these sources.
- Reducing burden on the surveys respondents
- Cost effectiveness with the optimization of the resources

Furthermore, the regular consultation with users is a real challenge to guarantee the relevance of the produced statistics and to adapt it towards their emerging needs. The accessibility, data visualization, the publications calendar, knowledge of the metadata, the user satisfaction surveys, the increase of the use of data for decision making and research and the promotion of data analysis are all linked to this challenge.

In this context, and beyond the creation of the quality working group, the organization of training courses on the management of quality in statistics and the outreaching of the HCP

staff on quality commitment, Morocco launched a cooperation project with European Union funds in the framework of the global project “succeed the advanced status of Morocco” for supporting the HCP to set up a national quality assurance framework.

The project is built on 2 pillars:

- The elaboration of a national quality assurance framework that would be conformed to European practices and adapted to the national context. For that, the following steps were adopted:
 - An assessment of the gap between the Moroccan legal and institutional framework governing the national statistical system and the according European requirements and best practices. The expected results would be to ensure recommendations for developing a revised framework that would fit with European framework and would be adapted to the national context.
 - An organizational and technical assessment of 2 surveys pilot, one on households and the second on business. The exercise would be crowned by recommendations to improve the processes.
 - A benchmark on the national quality assurance framework of 2 European national statistical offices
 - A conception of a national quality framework for statistics that would be adapted to the national context and providing recommendations for its implementation.

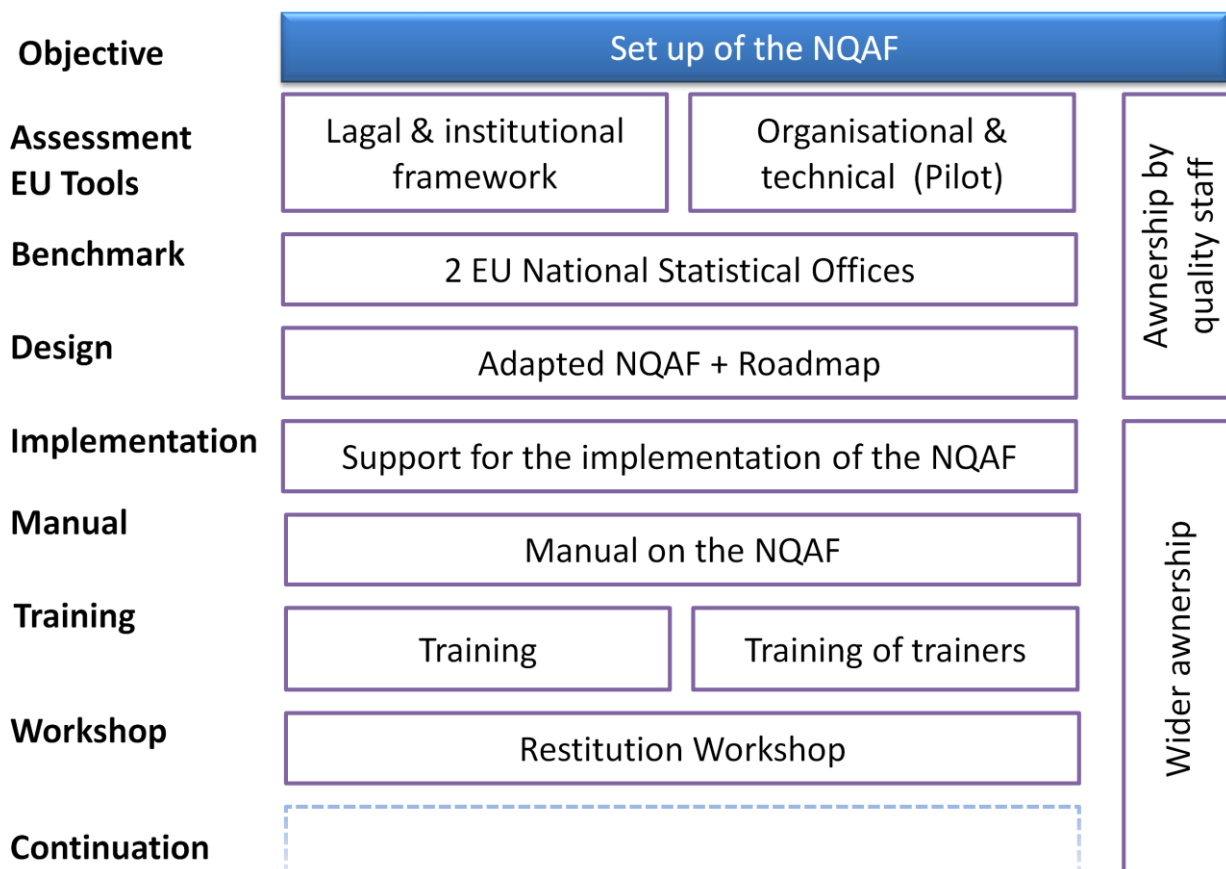
- Support for the implementation of the adopted CNAQ. In this regards, the following results are expected:
 - A manual on the implementation of the national quality assurance framework is elaborated ;
 - A training plan on the quality framework is developed ;
 - A training courses for HCP staff to ensure the transfer of the knowledge, the knowhow and also to outreach on the quality commitment ;
 - A training for trainers is conduct to guarantee the awareness of the practices and to develop the local competences for the follow up and for the development of the process.

The idea behind the design of this project is not only that the HCP features an adapted Quality assurance framework, but also to provide expertise to its dedicated staff on the

exercises and the tools deployed. Indeed the stake is bigger, as the assessment of the sectors and the other statistical activities is very demanding and the framework should covers all the national statistical system.

Among the strengths of the project, it's not very demanding in terms of budget, of procedures and allocation of the resources. It's also lighter than twinning project for example. Furthermore, the project is a kind of pilot exercise to be mastered by the staff in order to generalize its implementation following a regular improvement action plans.

The lessons to be learnt from the exercise are that the assessment both institutional - organizational and technical is a heavy task. It should be done in a progressive way and in independent phases.



5. Conclusion

The dynamism created at regional level for ensuring a commitment on quality in statistics, the adoption of the adapted CoP and the development of a regional Quality assurance

framework, referring to a generic statistical law and the debate on the definitions of official statistics and national statistical systems, how to deal with users, the availability of assessment tools and expertise, are all a kind of a stimulator for change at national level. The transformation of the national statistical systems to ones modern and governed according to common principles and with continual assessments, is needed more than ever to face the challenging contexts both at international and national level including the challenge to monitor and evaluate the achievement of the SDGs in the horizon of 2030.

References

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