PASII - ECOBUSAF and SOCSTAF

newsletter

n°3 – February 2025

Editorial

Welcome to the third edition of the ECOBUSAF and SOCSTAF newsletter!

ECOBUSAF and SOCSTAF, as key components of the EU-funded Pan-African Statistics Programme II (PAS II), continue to support African integration by strengthening national, regional and continental statistical systems. By focusing on the development of economic and business statistics (ECOBUSAF) and social statistics (SOCSTAF) within African National Statistical Offices (NSOs), these initiatives contribute to improving the availability and quality of data across the continent.

Building on the momentum gained over the last two years, the second half of 2024 marked a significant expansion of activities. The projects not only accelerated in their implementation but also deepened collaboration with African NSOs. This reflects a shared commitment to advancing statistical capacity in Africa and ensuring that high-quality, reliable data underpins decision-making processes.

This edition of the newsletter provides an overview of key achievements and activities carried out in recent months. These include a study visit on communication and dissemination and another one on statistical business registers; workshops on censuses, tourism satellite accounts, business registers and new data sources, arrangements of a side event on hackathons; and training sessions aimed at strengthening skills in SDG indicators and management of National Business Registers and use of Business Demography Statistics.

Looking ahead, the ECOBUSAF and SOCSTAF projects will continue to roll out initiatives in the final year of the project, including specialized training programs, workshops and technical assistance missions disseminating innovative approaches to data collection and analysis and dissemination of statistics. A calendar of upcoming activities is included at the end of this newsletter, ensuring that stakeholders remain informed and engaged in the process.

We thank all participating NSOs and partners for their dedication and contributions to these projects. Your involvement is essential to ensure the success of ECOBUSAF and SOCSTAF and to foster a stronger and more integrated African statistical system.
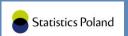
Enjoy your reading!

PAS II ECOBUSAF and SOCSTAF participated in the Statistical Commission for Africa – October 28 to November 1 2024

In the frame of the Forum on statistical development in Africa (FASdev), European-funded programs PAS II-ECOBUSAF and SOCSTAF were invited to contribute to a session dedicated to the contributions and partnerships for statistical development in Africa. A presentation of the activities and expected benefits of the PASII-ECOBUSAF and SOCSTAF programs was given.

The organization and funding of National Statistical Institutes (NSIs) were also subjects of experience-sharing between the countries represented. One of the major themes discussed during these meetings was the use of administrative data for statistical purposes, one of the key subjects

covered by both ECOBUSAF and SOCSTAF programs. A strategy and roadmap were proposed to assist countries in modernizing their administrative data systems for statistical purposes.

🌟 Empowering Innovation through Statistical Hackathons! 🌟

Hackathons are a driving force for innovation in statistics, initially targeting statisticians and data scientists to tackle problems using big data, data science tools and statistical techniques.

Over time, we've realized that hackathons are powerful tools that go far beyond learning new techniques. As collaborative events, they foster team spirit and facilitate exchanges between experts from diverse fields. They also strengthen the ties between National Statistical Offices (NSOs) and the academic world, while raising awareness about the importance of statistics among various audiences.

On Tuesday, October 29th, Insee (France) held a side event on "Boosting statistical capacity and awareness through hackathons in Africa!", alongside the Xth meeting of the Statistical Commission for Africa. The benefits of organizing or participating in a hackathon were presented from different

perspectives: The Director General of Nigeria's National Bureau of Statistics, whose team was one of the two winners of the April 2024 hackathon, outlined the benefits for an institute of taking part in this type of event. A representative of ISSEA, statistics school of Central African region based in Yaoundé, Cameroon, raised the benefits for a school in organizing hackathons for their students. A representative of NISR-Rwanda presented their experience in holding hackathons targeted to academia and students and the benefits for both students and NISR. Lastly, Statistics Norway shared their enthusiastic experience in organizing internal hackathons.

As a conclusion of the event, it was recommended to draft guidelines to assist NSOs in hosting similar initiatives. Establishing a network of African data scientists would greatly enhance the exchange of experiences in organizing events that deliver benefits far beyond simply learning about data science.

Next step: a first version of the guidelines for organizing a hackathon will be drafted during the study visit for the winners of the hackathon, which will take place at Insee in February 2025. Stay tuned!

Tourism Satellite Accounts: The Journey Continues

Following the two virtual workshops held in February 2024, Insee (France) organized an in-person workshop from October 8 to 10 in Tunis, in close collaboration with STATAFRIC the statistical institute of the African Union.

This workshop targeted the eight countries that had previously gained experience in Tourism Satellite Accounts and had presented their work during the virtual workshops. Ultimately, seven countries participated in the Tunis workshop: Botswana, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Morocco, Mauritius, Tunisia, and Uganda.

The primary objectives of this workshop were to delve deeper into the work presented during the virtual sessions and to address the challenging issues encountered in the construction of Tourism Satellite Accounts. The workshop featured presentations by InseeNSEEthe construction of the TSA: concepts, implementation, and assessment, as well as methods for estimating tourism-related employment, a topic of particular importance for the African participants. This hands-on approach allowed participants to share their experiences and practices, discuss common obstacles, and explore potential solutions in a collaborative environment.

A working paper has been developed to support countries interested in embarking on the construction of a TSA.

Networking and knowledge sharing on Statistical Business Registers:
Joint sessions with Statistics Mauritius, The National Agency of Statistics and Demography in Senegal and Namibia Statistics Agency.

During the fall of 2024, joint sessions continued to facilitate experience sharing and knowledge transfer on Statistical Business Register (SBR) among the National Statistical Offices (NSO's) of Mauritius, Senegal and Namibia. These sessions included one online meeting and one in-person study visit, with topics selected based on input and requests from the NSO's. The long-term goal of these sessions is to establish organisational and personal connections that will remain useful even after the end of the PAS II Program.

The online meeting took place in **September 2024,** focusing on **data integration and data linking,** key aspects for utilizing various sources of administrative data within the SBR system. The session covered general theories on data integration and data linking. However, a key challenge for many NSO's, is that administrative data from different sources cannot always be matched using unique identifiers. To address this, experts from the NSO's of Finland and Uruguay gave practical examples of how **probabilistic data linking** can be applied.

In **November,** a study visit to Statistics Mauritius was organised for ANSD (Senegal) and NSA (Namibia). One representative from each of the three Nordic partner countries - Statistics Finland, DST (Denmark) and SSB (Norway) – also also participated. The main objective of the study visit was to facilitate experience sharing and capacity building on SBR related topics among the African NSO's. As a follow up to the study visit to SSB (Norway) in May, each of the NSO's from Mauritius, Senegal and Namibia shared **updates and progress on their respective SBR systems**. In addition, the following topics were discussed during the study visit:

- Demonstration of the SBR system at Statistics Mauritius
- SBR quality indicators
- Collaboration with data owners
- Outputs and publications from the SBR
- Addressing the informal sector and using web scraping to identify businesses that should be included in the SBR.

For the latter topic, an online presentation was given from the National Institute of Statistics (INE) in Uruguay, providing practical examples from the NSO's of Uruguay and Colombia. The study visit ended with a workshop session, where the participants further discussed the agenda topics they wanted to explore in more detail.

The study visit was extraordinary well organised by Statistics Mauritius, providing participants with valuable experience and the opportunity to build future relationships.

Enhancing Statistical Communication and Dissemination in Rwanda and Nigeria

In November 2025, a delegation from the National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda (NISR) and the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), Nigeria visited Statistics Denmark in Copenhagen to strengthen their expertise in statistical communication and dissemination. The visit focused on best practices for effectively sharing official statistics with the public, policymakers, and researchers.

Throughout the visit, participants engaged in discussions and presentations on key aspects of communication and dissemination including strategic considerations. They explored the design, structure, and user experience of www.dst.dk, gaining insights into best practices for website organization and accessibility.

Other key topics included statistical publications, conducting user and reputational surveys, and the latest advancements on Statistics Denmark's statistical databank, suc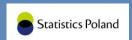h as new facilities, future plans, and API integration. Participants also examined how Statistics Denmark collaborates with the press, including media policies, press engagement strategies, and educational initiatives.

A special focus was given to engaging new target groups, particularly young people, through educational portals, courses, and visitor programs. The delegation also explored user-oriented services, including the Danish Data Portal (DDV) and customer journey strategies.

The visit also included discussions on the role of social media in statistical dissemination and the needs of information service users. By applying these insights, NISR and NBS will aim to enhance their communication strategies, making official statistics more accessible, engaging, and impactful for society.

On-site workshop on censuses - October 2024 - Tunis

The third workshop on censuses was held on-site at the STATAFRIC's premises in Tunisia from 15-17 October 2024 and was led by representatives of Statistics Poland, with organisational support from Insee (France). The event focused on sharing knowledge and experience in conducting censuses and was targeted to representatives of African NSOs who had followed the two previous online workshops..

It was attended by representatives from the national statistical offices of Eswatini, Lesotho, Morocco and Namibia.

During the first day of the workshop, representatives of Statistics Poland presented the most important objectives of the activities carried out under the PAS II grant and summarised the two previous online workshops. They also recalled the key aspects of

preparatory work for the census and issues from the implementation of the 2021 census in Poland, including:

- aspects of the Census Act, trial censuses and also the organisation of training for members of the census apparatus;

- the organisational structure of the census apparatus, census implementation methods, popularisation activities, the census of persons with special needs, as well as aspects concerning the operation of a census helpline and contacts with helpline.

The main topic of the second day was the implementation of the census in African countries. The workshop participants shared their knowledge and presented their own experiences and conclusions from the conduct and preparation of censuses in their countries.

The third day of the workshop focused on post-census work, including: dissemination of census results. The representative of Statistics Poland showed the possibilities of presenting census data on maps in the Geostatistics Portal. Moreover conclusions and recommendations for the next round of the 2030 census on the basis of the experience of Polish statistics were presented.

On this last day, a summary of the three-day workshop was also made, paying particular attention to aspects common to all countries, including:

- the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused the postponement of the census or forced significant changes in the organisation of the census;

- a budget dedicated to census work, the acquisition of which is often problematic;

- promotional activities, especially important to motivate and properly educate respondents to participate in the census;

- digitisation of the census - it is at a different level in each country; nevertheless, each country sees its benefits and is moving in the same direction.

Participants gave a positive assessment of the workshop, the entire organisation of the workshop and the prepared materials. Some countries also expressed interest in support from Statistics Poland ('technical assistance''') in the preparation of conducting population and housing censuses in their countries.

Trainings

Within the period covered by this newsletter, INE Spain, as part of its commitment to high quality and in order to facilitate learning, has continued improving its activities thanks to student's feedback. During the second semester of 2024, INE Spain has successfully developed two online activities in the context of ECOBUSAF and SOCSTAF grants of the PAS II.

New improvements have been introduced during this period, such as the translation of course materials into an additional language, thus allowing the students to choose the didactic material in four different languages: Portuguese, French, English and Spanish.

As part of the **ECOBUSAF** component, on 12-13 November 2024, the first edition of the online training on **National Business Register and Business Demography Statistics** took place with positive results. This course was organized as a two-day online training by means of live webinars, divided in four sessions. The key objective of this training was to offer a detailed explanation of timelines and availability of administrative sources to build the National Business Register.
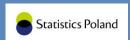
A total of 25 statisticians working at the service of a public administration of 13 African Union countries participated in this course. Most of them are directly responsible for the management of national business registers or users of them in their respective countries.

This specific training has been a wonderful opportunity for African statisticians to learn how INE Spain combines the different sources and obtains the diverse statistical units required. The final aim was to share the experience of the INE in their production process and use of the Spanish Business Register.

Definitely, the live webinars modality has proven to be a good way to share experiences and knowledge. It allows the lecturers to have a more direct contact with the students. Indeed, the participants feedback was very positive; 94% participants strongly agreed or agreed that the course had adjusted to their expectations and was useful for their work. The other 6% were neutral.

As part of the **SOCSTAF** component, the second edition of the online course on **SDG Indicators for the 2030 Agenda** was implemented in November 2024 (11th November -1st December).

The overall objective was to strengthen the capacity of the national statistical system of the African countries in the production and dissemination of SDG Indicators in order that official statistics are used for monitoring the advances towards 2030 Agenda.

A total of 22 experts of 12 African countries participated in this training, reaching very different profiles within the statistical services of the public administration of the African Union countries. It has been very striking the high interest and motivation reflected in this second edition of the course on SDGs. In fact, a lot of interest was manifested in achieving deeper knowledge and understanding of SDG´s and the 2030 Agenda and learn how to incorporate them in their different strategies.

"I am interested in all aspects of the course, as each element plays a crucial role in understanding and implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)"

"In general, I found the course to be most interesting to say the least and entirely relevant to my job. I really appreciated the different aspects highlighted in relation to the SDG indicators"

"The training was well organized and appreciated. Looking forward to future trainings"

"We need these type of meetings more often"

Spanish experts provided a detailed description of the global indicator framework, with the key objective of showing the development and improvement of National Reporting Platforms, the elaboration of the statistical annex that accompanies the National Voluntary Reviews and the use of new data sources.

This course has been another step forward to sharing European practices in statistics with African Union Countries. The satisfaction surveys showed very good results, as 100% of the participants strongly agreed or agreed that this activity met its expectations and was helpful for their jobs.

Since the beginning of the project in 2022, INE Spain has been working closely with their counterparts in the consortium countries to carry out the project and to transfer know-how and practices through targeted cooperation activities. Specifically, INE Spain is focused in organizing online training and online courses. INE Spain has already implemented 12 online activities and is planning 4 more for 2025.

Training courses implemented since the beginning of the projects ECOBUSAF and SOCSTAF

SDG indicators for 2030 Agenda (1st ed.)
Demographic indicators (1st ed.)
National Accounts (1st edition)

Demographic indicators (3rd ed.)
Health statistics (2nd ed.)
Education statistics (2nd ed.)
SDG indicators for 2030 Agenda (2nd ed.)
Business Register (1st ed.)

Demographic indicators (2nd ed.)
Health statistics (1st ed.)
Education statistics (1st ed.)
National Accounts (2nd ed.)

National Accounts (3rd ed.)
Demographic indicators (4th ed.)
Health statistics (3rd ed.)
Education statistics (3rd ed.)

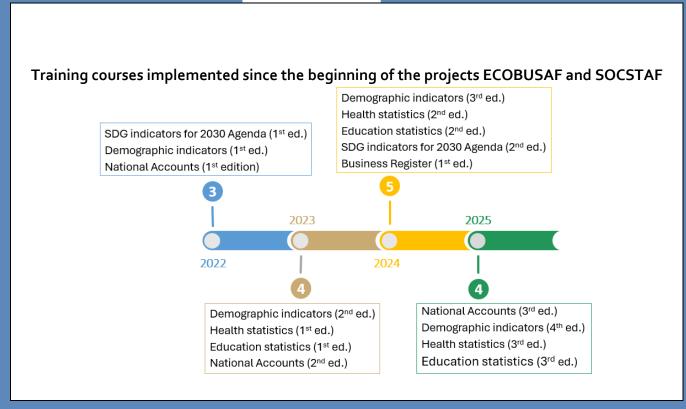2022 — 3 | 2023 — 4 | 2024 — 5 | 2025 — 4

Workshop on new data sources and statistical business register held at NBS Nigeria from 28 to 31 October 2024

The activity successfully combined training provided by Statistics Finland experts, informative presentations, and workshop discussions to share good practices and solve problems. Key areas of focus included:

- Developing and maintaining the Statistical Business Register
- Training on innovative methodologies, such as machine learning (ML), for processing large datasets and integrating multiple data sources to produce statistics.

Key takeaways were a robust SBR regarded as crucial for factoring both formal and informal activities and improving the timeliness of business data. A generic open-source application could expedite SBR development.

It was concluded that machine learning and modern estimation methodologies can facilitate merging difficult data sources and treating missing data. The training sessions demonstrated the cross-cutting applicability of machine learning techniques in both business and social statistics. Examples included:

- Using ML to automate occupation coding based on textual descriptions, utilizing natural language processing techniques
- Statistical matching to link taxes paid on property purchases, determining property prices and values
- Nowcasting missing indicators to improve timeliness
- Linking business websites to the Statistical Business Register (SBR)

Insee — Measuring, understanding

STATISTICS DENMARK

Statistisk sentralbyrå
Statistics Norway

statistics Finland

INE — Instituto Nacional de Estadística

Statistics Poland

Discussions highlighted the importance of collaborative networks and partnerships with data provider to leverage machine learning to address the challenges faced by national statistical offices.

The exchange of experiences and best practices between the two countries has proved invaluable in identifying areas for improvement. Gaining insight into the operations of an EU national statistical institution was also highly beneficial. A crucial takeaway was the importance of translating the ideas and lessons learned into concrete actions tailored to the Nigerian context, paving the way for future development.
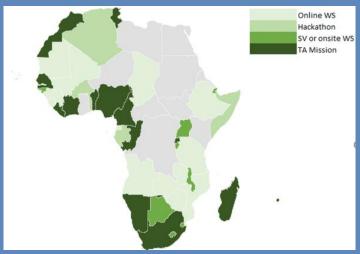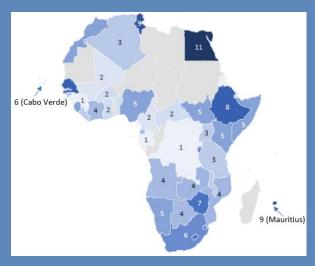
Countries that have participated to our activities in 2024

Activities followed

Number of online training attended

List of activities performed by component second half of 2024:

Implementing member	Grant	Compo-nent	Countries	Type of activity	Content	Date (month)
Insee – Measuring, understanding	ECOBUSAF	I-A-1A	Congo	TA mission	SNA2008 implementation	September
Insee – Measuring, understanding	ECOBUSAF	I-A-2C	Cameroon	TA mission	Balance sheets and financial accounts	September
Statistisk sentralbyrå Statistics Norway	ECOBUSAF	II-A	Senegal, Mauritius, Namibia	Online joint session	Statistical Business Register (Datalinking and data integration)	September
Statistics Poland / Insee – Measuring, understanding	SOCSTAF	F	Eswatini, Lesotho, Morocco, Namibia	Onsite WS	Population and housing censuses	October
Statistics Finland	ECOBUSAF SOCSTAF		Nigeria	Onsite WS	New data sources and statistiscal business register	October
Insee – Measuring, understanding	ECOBUSAF	I-A-2C	Botswana, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Morocco, Mauritius, Tunisia, Uganda	Onsite workshop	Tourism satellite accounts	October

Insee	ECOBUSAF	I-A-1A	Liberia	TA mission	SNA2008 implementation	October
Insee	ECOBUSAF	I-A-2B	Senegal	TA mission	Backcasting	October
Insee	ECOBUSAF -SOCSTAF	D2	StatCom Africa	Side event	Boosting statistical capacity and awareness through hackathons in Africa	October
Statistisk sentralbyrå Statistics Norway	ECOBUSAF	II-A	Senegal, Mauritius, Namibia	Study visit to Stat. Mauritius	Statistical Business Register	November
STATISTICS DENMARK	SOCSTAF	E	Rwanda, Nigeria	Study visit	Communication and dissemination strategies	November
Insee	SOCSTAF	H1	Benin	TA mission	Labour statistics and informal employment	December

INE-Spain: Online trainings carried out in 2024-S2:

PASII component	Subject
SOCSTAF	SDG indicators for 2030 Agenda – 2nd edition
ECOBUSAF	Business Register- 1st edition

Prochaines activités en 2025

Date	Component	Organizing EU partners	Activity
10-13 February	ECOBUSAF	Insee	Presentation of the new ERETES version (online)
17-20 February	ECOBUSAF-SOCSTAF	Insee	Study visit at Insee for the winners of the 2024 hackathon (Paris)
May	ECOBUSAF	Statistics Norway	Joint online session on SBR (Stat. Mauritius, ANSD, NSA)
May	ECOBUSAF	Insee	ERETES training for trainers (Tunis)
June-July	ECOBUSAF	Insee	Onsite workshop on national accounts (Tunis)
October	ECOBUSAF-SOCSTAF	Insee/Statistics Denmark/Statistics Norway/Statistics Finland/Statistics Poland/INE Spain	PASII-ECOBUSAF and SOCSTAF closing event (online)

Next online trainings

Date	Component	subject
10Th February- 9th March 2025	ECOBUSAF	National Accounts – 3rd edition
10th-30th March 2025	SOCSTAF	Demographic indicators – 4th edition
21st -22nd May 2025	SOCSTAF	Health statistics – 3rd edition
11th -12th June 2025	SOCSTAF	Education statistics – 3rd edition

The SOCSTAF and ECOBUSAF European team during the Helsinki coordination meeting (September 2024)
From left to right: Dominique Francoz (Insee-France), Marika Pohjola (Statistics Finland), Dorota Paraluk (Statistics Poland), Anna Slawinska (Statistics Poland), Amalie Skovengaard (Statistics Denmark), Mari Rantanen (Statistics Finland), Ana Canovas Zapata (INS-Spain), Kari-Dorte Krogsrud (Statistics Norway)