Information management as tool for standardization in statistics

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Since 2000, many National Statistical Institutes (NSIs) have initiated redesign programs of their production processes for official statistics. There have been several external and internal causes and drivers for these modernization programs: budget cuts (in the last years even severe ones), demands from users for greater transparency, demands for reducing the burden on respondents, demands from users for greater flexibility and new and more timely statistics, the need to get more grip on the information systems and processes that underlie the statistical production processes, and, recently in developed countries, the challenges posed by the declining labor force in the next decade. From the experiences with those redesign programs, it has become evident that these programs must be structured and coordinated in various ways in order to be successful and not defeat their own purposes. In turn, this has led to various standardization initiatives, both within NSIs and in joint cooperation between NSIs, and which relate to business architecture, methods, tools, project management and information management.

We discuss briefly the backgrounds of the modernization trends in NSIs and the various standardization initiatives. We use Statistics Netherlands as an example, but also refer to international initiatives at the level of the European Union (EU) and the United Nations (UN). The main part of the paper deals with the role of information management and business architecture in redesign programs. We describe why it is needed, how it is at present being developed through international cooperation in the Generic Statistical Information Model (GSIM) project, and give some examples how it has been used in practice at Statistics Netherlands.

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