



A Challenging Future: National Statistical Offices in Latin America

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National Statistical Offices (NSOs) face today ever-increasing demands to provide society with more quality, timely and internationally comparable statistical information, whose production –due to the highly sensitive subjects it may cover– is also expected to be transparent and free of political interference. To respond to these demands is, however, not an easy task, as the nature of much of the phenomena which NSOs seek to address and the environment in which they perform their job poses significant –methodological, technical, budgetary and even political– challenges. This paper analyses some of the main challenges that Latin-American NSOs currently face. While some of them are common to statistical agencies worldwide (e.g. development of new statistical tools, improvement of sampling techniques, use of big data), others while not necessarily exclusive tend to be distinctive to the region and, in a sense, reflect the status of this field in Latin America (e.g. overall enhancement of the independence and credibility of NSOs, capacity building, coordination with stakeholders, budgetary constraints, etc.). In particular, the paper highlights the need for Latin-American NSOs to become relevant for decision-makers, and especially for the people involved in public-policy-making processes. In practical terms, this means that NSOs have to be able to provide statistics with value for their users, as this will translate in credibility for the NSOs and support for the development of their activities. The paper draws from the experience of the Mexican National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) in its endeavour to respond to the pressures imposed by the demanding and changing environment of official statistics. Its experience allows to reflect on the challenges faced by other Latin American countries also striving to enhance the role of their NSOs and their production of statistical information.

Keywords: Statistics; challenges; statistical agencies; Mexico.