

Support against IT outsourcing in National statistical offices

Statistical production is not possible if you outsource fundamental part of statistical data architecture and production- IT. To be data scientists you must combine various knowledge – mathematics, economics, databases, algebra, algorithms, programming etc. Data scientists, in official statistics, utilize their analytical, statistical, and programming skills to collect, analyze, and interpret large data sets.

If you pull out IT from this equation what remains?

IT is not just computer hardware, endless number of servers, network equipment. IT is databases, data maintenance, tailor made software, data security and algorithms. Technology is key part of innovation, even more, technology leads innovation.

Fast and agile statistical IT, capable of directing the necessary resources to where they are most needed in National statistical offices, especially in time of economic and Covid 19 crises is crucial. Statistical office of Serbia has always been aware that IT is not IT that simply maintains a system and give various services. National statistical offices must change the ratio between the so-called “maintenance” and investment in new technologies and knowledge and in this way launch innovations that contribute to being better, faster, and more reliable. Only way to do this is having own IT and “in source” as strategic direction. Decision to developed and to invest in own resources produces simplification of processes and platforms and that leads to highly automated IT and further data science development.

It is very important to emphasize that IT in official statistics is not typical IT.

In the medical field, an IT team for a hospital may provide services that keep hospital databases operational and easy to use for staff members. Let’s emphasize medical – outcome is health care and medical field is primary job. In official statistics, outcome is information, data, analyses and dealing with data is primary job. Is it possible to deal with data without your own IT specialists – employees who are engaged in data maintenance, data security, data processing, machine learning algorithms, tailor made software etc.

National statistical offices are project-oriented organizations and teams behind projects are multidisciplinary teams. Outsourcing any part of team means unanticipated costs and complications. Outsourcing means that you have another business involved in your business. Are their priorities same as yours or you are just one of many partners? Maybe important one, but not important enough to put your business outcomes priority over theirs. Outsourcing implies frequent changing of team members, the best will always be drawn to do what is most important and urgent for the outsource company, which is not always exactly your project, but certainly is always what brings the biggest profit for them.

What is most dangerous about outsourcing is its ability to affect company culture even if outsourced part is not fundamental part of company business. In case of National statistical offices there is big chance that IT outsourcing will result in more harm than good.

Statistical IT is not auxiliary, but fundamental part of National statistical offices. IT is one of core competencies of any National statistical offices.

IT leads innovation in statistical production, from introducing machine learning algorithms in everyday production to overcoming stovepipe organization. And the end, that is the reason why, highest bodies in international statistical level like, High level group for modernization of statistics by UNECE and CES has statistical IT as fundamental part of group.

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