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World Statistics Day outlines the importance of good data for a better life

On 20 October 2015, statisticians and data enthusiasts celebrate World Statistics Day. For this occasion opinion leaders representing different fields of economy share their vision of the role of data in their lives and in society as a whole.

Dana Reizniece-Ozola, Minister for Economy, says that to make plans without the help of statistics is like trying to find the way with lights turned off. Statistics also serves as a point of reference for evaluating the work completed, and it is used for making decisions in the field of tax policy, energy, transport, agriculture or any other sector. As some time has passed, upon analysing the dynamics of statistics, one can see whether the decision made has been right or wrong. The Minister pointed out that statistics is not just about numbers and figures, it is like a signpost showing the right direction.

Mihails Hazans, Professor of the University of Latvia, says that working with data is like doing the work of an archaeologist - in the massive data array you need to remove the redundant, layer by layer, in order to reveal the real picture and find answers to important questions. In response to the question whether better data contribute to a better life, Mihails Hazans noted that there are no perfect data in the world. However, an honest researcher will always use the best data available, thus enabling policy makers to make the right decisions.

Jānis Palkavnieks, Spokesman of portal "Draugiem.lv", invites entrepreneurs to look at the real life through data. He emphasised that, when starting your own business, it is important to check whether your perceptions of different fields or companies comply with the picture the data show. Data don't lie, whereas feelings can sometimes be misleading.

The theme of this year's World Statistics Day "better data for a better life" emphasises the role of official statistics in shaping our societies. Official statistics helps decision makers make an informed and evidence-based policies that affect millions of people. World Statistics Day is celebrated every five years, and for the first time it was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in 2010.

In response to the question of how to recognise good statistics, Mārtiņš Liberts, expert of the Central Statistical Bureau, explains that good statistics is:

- clear and understandable. Statistical data must be supplemented with metadata: information that describes how statistical data have been obtained and calculated, and characterises its quality, including accuracy, for the user to be able to make the necessary analysis or study;
- comparable in time and between different countries or other geographical areas. If in any aspect statistics cannot be compared, data users must be informed thereof immediately;
- made available to data users in a timely manner;
- presented in a convenient form. Data files and electronic publications can be easily read by means of a computer programme and further used for calculations and analysis.

World Statistics Day videos of opinion leaders are available at **Statistics Latvia** [youtube.com channel](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCvKjKjKjKjKjKjKjKjKjKjKj).

Follow World Statistics Day on Twitter, using hashtag #StatsDay15.

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