

## **Training statisticians: experience of the Russian Federation**

Alexander Surinov

Federal State Statistics Service of the Russian Federation (Rosstat)

107450, Moscow, Russia, 39, Myasnitskaya St.

e-mail: [stat@gks.ru](mailto:stat@gks.ru)

### **Abstract**

In the Federal State Statistics Service of the Russian Federation (Rosstat), as well as in other national statistical institutions the most important issues are the quality of staff training, opportunities for professional growth for employees, that have key skills in the field of international standards and statistical methodology, modern information technologies and general statistical knowledge.

The continuing professional education system of the Federal State Statistics Service employees is aimed at highly-qualified, devoted, and competent staff that meets current and future social, political and economic conditions and also capable of dealing with challenges that Rosstat faces.

The system of continuing professional education of Rosstat employees was developed on the base of a regulatory framework and best practices in training. Its objectives are as follows:

- to ensure a) the forward-looking nature of training from the perspectives of international statistics development, b) advanced functions and tasks of Rosstat's bodies and organizations, introduction of modern innovative technologies and scientific achievements;
- to ensure the training continuity and adherence to the principle of mandatory training for all employees along with promotion;
- to organize an educational process on the basis of the widespread introduction of research components and analysis of the statistical surveys current practice;
- to integrate the system of employees' training in the higher education system (training materials, practical exercises, training) and in the scientific research system;
- to use national and international experience extensively in Rosstat's employees training.

Supplementary (extended) education plays an important part in Rosstat human resource development. It is characterized by diversity of types, forms, conditions of career development, professional development and practical training of Rosstat's employees. A special focus is made on individual plans for employees' professional development as an effective tool for their motivation, as well as to technical, information, scientific and methodological support of the training process.

**Keywords:** human resource development, international statistical standards, aging workforce, "bachelor-master" education system, continuing professional education, additional (continuing education), its types, forms, individual professional development plans.

### **1. Introduction**

Federal State Statistics Service (Rosstat) is a federal executive body that reports directly to the Government of the Russian Federation. Rosstat is responsible for coordination and functional regulation of the state statistics system of the Russian Federation.

The implementation of the most important national strategic goals requires the comprehensive and reliable official statistics on social, economic, demographic, environmental and other processes in the Russian Federation.

In its everyday work Rosstat should take into account the huge territory of Russia, a variety of climatic, economic, geographical, socio-political, ethnical and cultural conditions of different regions.

The system of state statistics comprises central office and 82 regional offices, located in all constituent entities of the Russian Federation. Currently, the state statistics system employs more than 18 thousand federal civil servants, including the central office which staff enumerates to about 600 people.

The most important document that defines the strategy of development of the state statistics system is the Federal Statistical Work Plan, which is an inter-ministerial in nature and based on the strategic goals and objectives of Rosstat and other federal executive bodies. The Federal Statistical Work Plan has been updated several times in order to meet changes that take place in the socio-economic field, the governing system and in the federal budget, etc. This requires fundamentally new approaches to the activities of the state statistics system, the formation of a flexible, responsive to changes statistical information system.

With development of the Russian state statistics system the most critical problems are quality of statistical staff at all levels, possibilities for improvement and development of human resources with key skills in the field of international standards, statistical techniques, modern information technologies and general statistical culture.

Therefore, the central office is not only the authority that collects official statistics, but also has scientific, methodological and educational activities. Analysis, synthesis and dissemination of the latest scientific knowledge and methods of statistical monitoring – all these activities are to become the priorities of the Federal State Statistics Service, and apply to the following target groups:

- Students of economic universities (Bachelor and Master degree);
- Academicians, implementing programs of statistical training (internships, participation in scientific conferences, seminars, round tables, etc.)
- Employees of Rosstat (supplementary vocational training);
- The general population: pupils, students, employees, entrepreneurs and other users of statistical information (improving statistical literacy and general statistical culture of citizens).

## **2. The main activities of Rosstat on training of statistical staff**

With the development of information society statistician competence framework requires interdisciplinary, cross-domain approach and includes a wide range of tools for surveys, modeling and forecasting of social phenomena and processes, as well as knowledge of the specifics of their application in different (not only economic) subject areas. That involves in-depth study of such disciplines as: macroeconomic statistics,

demographic statistics, statistics of public opinion, medical statistics, education statistics, cultural statistics, environmental statistics, juristic statistics, technological statistics, statistics of science and innovation, etc.

In order to attract and retain promising young employees, we cooperate with universities in terms of:

- Publishing the available vacancies on the websites of educational institutions;
- Arranging meetings of Rosstat management (many of them are professors of Statistics at the departments of several leading universities) with students that studying economics;
- Participating of Rosstat employees in conferences on statistics, round tables, meetings on scientific methods and staffing of the state statistics system;
- Students internships in Rosstat and its regional offices (more than 60 people in central office in 2012);
- Professors internships in Rosstat and its regional offices (more than 20 people in the central office in 2012);
- Holding of national statistics competitions for students (in 2012 students of 40 universities from 27 regions took part in the competition);
- Holding Young Statisticians Competitions on the best analytical report, research paper and other publications, including the Young Statistician Prize of the International Association for Official Statistics (IAOS);
- Introducing of mentoring for young statisticians in central office Rosstat and its regional offices.

A professional contract training of employees is an important part of the system of continuous professional education of statisticians. The training is held at the educational institutions of the Russian Federation for a degree in Economics (specialty – “Statistics”). The target training by contract of specialists with higher professional education is limited to the number depending on federal budget resources and is based on agreements between Rosstat and institutions of higher professional education. 25 agreements of that kind were made in 2012.

Training contracts are also part of Rosstat staff training system. Nowadays, Rosstat has developed tendering procedures for making a training contract between the Federal State Statistics Service and a citizen of the Russian Federation, obliging students who study economics at the institutions of higher professional education and who have made a contract to work for Rosstat after graduating from university.

### **3. Supplementary professional education of Rosstat staff**

Supplementary professional education is as a priority in the system of continuing professional education. Supplementary professional education is based on higher or secondary vocational education, provided by the state institutions of higher education, or additional vocational training.

Professional training, professional development and internship of civil servants is carried out throughout the whole period of civil service. The type, form and duration of supplementary professional education are set by Rosstat. These characteristics depend on groups and categories of civil servant position.

Recently, interactive e-learning tools have become the most common type of supplementary vocational training of Rosstat employees in the framework of professional development. E-learning tools make educational process more efficient, intense and effective.

Individual professional development plans form the basis of education plan for experts in statistics. Each civil servant designs the individual professional development plan jointly with the supervisor and in accordance with official regulations. The plan is designed for three year period and it should be approved according to Rosstat internal regulations. The plan may be regarded as a "portfolio" of every civil servant. It allows career management and planning of every employee. The individual plan includes:

- a) purpose, type, form and duration of supplementary professional education, including information about the possibility of application of e-learning tools and self-education;
- b) subject of supplementary professional education;
- c) expected performance of continuing professional education of civil servant.

Professional training of Rosstat civil servants is carried out according to the state order and on a competitive basis among the state-accredited educational institutions. Professional training is funded from the state budget. Educational institutions that implement programs of supplementary vocational training for civil servants, determine the contents and technology of training. At the same time, there is a close cooperation of Rosstat departments and authors of training courses on the stage of discussion of contents of the programs, as well as in the process of education. A uniform educational and informational environment and departmental system of information and scientific support for education are developed in Rosstat. These innovations and modern information technologies and methodologies will contribute to transition to proactive training.

Now we have a strengthened and improved infrastructure of education. There are fully equipped federal and regional training classes (3 federal classrooms and 80 regional) vital for continuous training. They are used for various activities like statistical surveys, scientific conferences, seminars, meetings, presentations of new software products, etc. Much work has been done to create digital libraries that include educational and statistical databases.

For its training programs Rosstat widely uses following types and methods of work:

- Induction and training programs for entry-level employees;
- Combination of individual and group training approach;

- Combination of internal (in-house) and external training with foreign and national experts;
- Teamwork, business games, training and so on.;
- Development and updating of trainings content depending on training needs for various categories of civil servants;
- Competitive and non-competitive procedures for training;
- Increasing effectiveness and reduction of costs by E - learning implementation;
- survey on trainings quality and feedback from students

Over 4000 employees (300 people of them are from central office) were trained in 2012.

One of the key tasks of the Russian statistical system for the last two decades has been bringing the methodology and practice of statistical observation in line with the international standards. In this regard, training of statisticians and technical assistance have become the priorities for Rosstat in terms of cooperation with national statistical offices and international organizations.

Thus, over the years, Rosstat has established close cooperation with statistical offices in EU countries. This cooperation aims at the implementation of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the Russian Federation and the European Union in terms of official statistics. The TACIS program was regarded as one of the major tools of this cooperation that provided technical assistance of EU to Rosstat. Six statistical subprograms were implemented in the framework of TACIS. These programs contributed to establishment of dialogue and exploration of the experience of the EU in the relevant areas of statistics, a global assessment of the Russian statistical system in terms of compliance with EU standards.

Cooperation with our colleagues from the national statistical offices around the world resulted in development of Russian statistics. Study visits of Rosstat staff to national statistical offices, support of international experts, their knowledge and experience in the field of international standards have helped us to improve Russia's statistical system, to use the best practices in official statistics, prepare major surveys in Russia. In this regard, I would like to especially thank for their help of our colleagues - statisticians from Germany, Poland, Finland, France and Sweden.

Cooperation with UN, Eurostat and International Monetary Fund on staff professional development in terms of using international standards, best international practices helped us to bring the Russian statistics in accordance with international standards.

Implementation of the Russian State Statistical System Development Project funded from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development loan can be a good example of cooperation. International experts visited Rosstat to train staff on using of international standards in official statistics; Rosstat experts visited leading national statistical offices to study best practices.

As a result Rosstat experts have become active participants and members of the working groups developing the international methodological recommendations on key domains of statistics. Our experts are part of the international team, aimed at the development of statistical capacity building of regions or individual countries. Thus, due to the similarity of statistical problems and common statistical systems in the past, the experience gained by Rosstat is highly demanded by the CIS countries. Therefore Rosstat jointly with statistical divisions within UN system holds international workshops for the CIS countries. Russian statisticians, share their knowledge gained in international study visits with participants of the workshops. In addition, the Russian experts give lectures at international meetings and seminars on training of statisticians. For example, several lectures on economic statistics were given by our expert in SIAP.

Currently Rosstat plans to launch another program of statistics aimed exclusively at training. With the financial support of the World Bank we will train staff in order to strengthen the capacity of the Russian statistics to respond to contemporary challenges such as globalization, "big data", etc.