

Statistics Flanders as a new regional statistical authority: a first SWOT-analysis

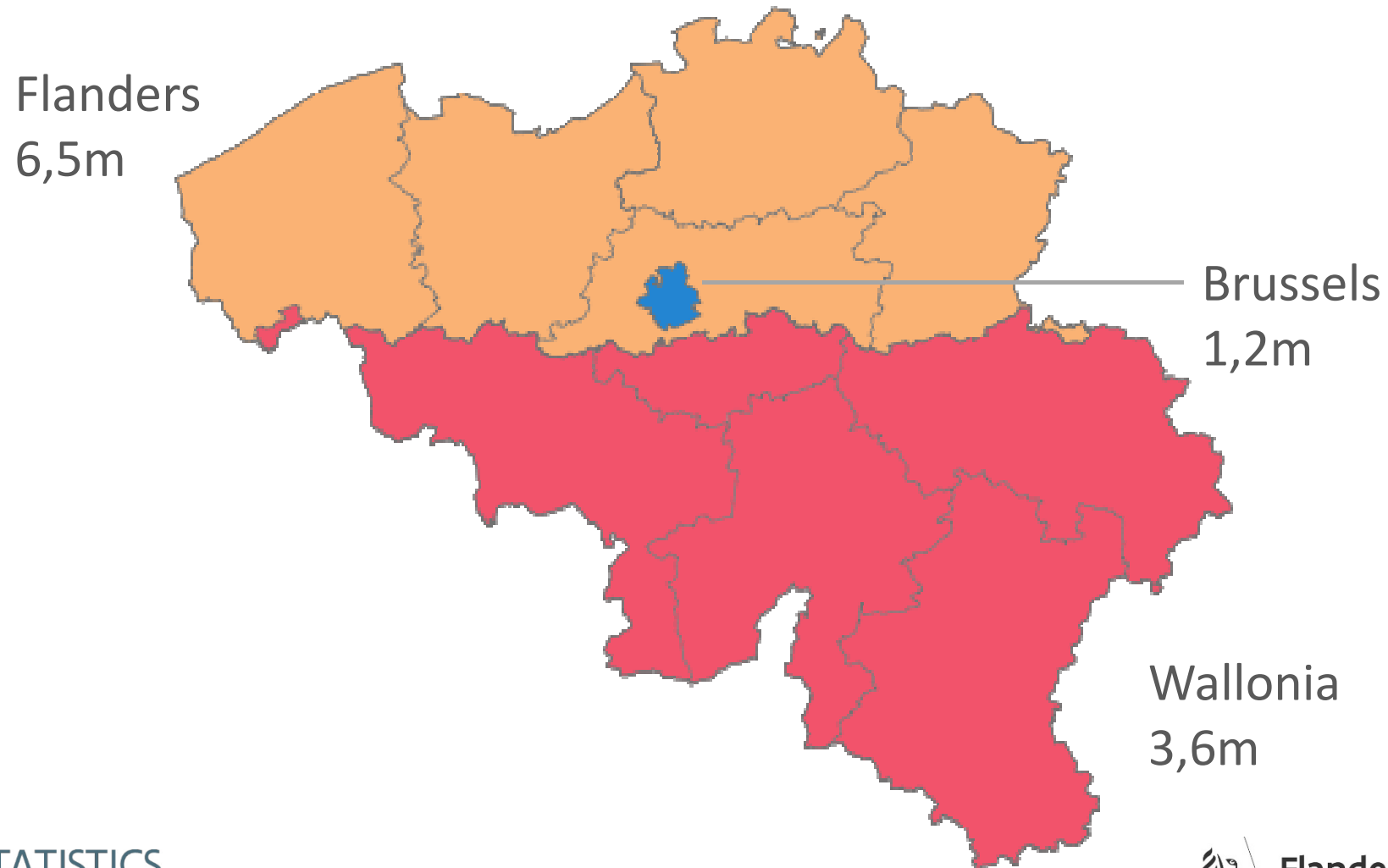
Roeland Beerten
Chief Statistician, Statistics Flanders

Dries Verlet
Advisor, Statistics Flanders

Overview

- Introduction: the Flemish Statistics Authority within the network Statists Flanders
- Architecture of Statistics Flanders
- An internal SWOT-analysis
- Next steps for the organisation

Flanders: a region in Belgium as a federal state



Official statistics in Belgium

- 6th reform of the State 2011: devolution of official statistics competence to the regions
- Creation of 3 regional statistical authorities: Flanders, Wallonia, Brussels
- Federal level agency (Statistics Belgium) continues to exist, but regional authorities on an equal footing
- Coördination: Interfederal Institute for Statistics (IIS)
- Board-level representation at the Institute for National Accounts (INR)

Legal framework Statistics Flanders

- Cooperation agreement between federal and regional governments, 15 July 2014
- Decree (law) - Flemish official statistics, 19 February 2016
- Secondary legislation - Flemish official statistics, 22 April 2016
- International legislation & frameworks
 - Eurostat, UN, OECD

Decree on Flemish Statistics

- Decentralised setup
- Applies to most Flemish public bodies, also municipalities and provinces
- Quality aspects on statistics, also response burden as low as possible
- Quality monitoring of Flemish official statistics
- Statistics Flanders coordinates the development, production and dissemination of Flemish official statistics

Architecture: setup of Statistics Flanders

- Creation of a fully operational Flemish official statistical system
- Decentralised, both internally and externally:
 - Internally: departments/agencies have responsibility for production, central coordination prescribed by Flemish law
 - Externally : coordination at the geographical level, coordination by Interfederal Institute for Statistics (ISS)
- Flemish Statistics Authority – coordination for the internal network & federal / international links

Flemish Statistics Authority

- Services of the Chief Statistician
- 35 FTE
- Responsible for facilitating the coordination, production and dissimulation of statistics (of/from) Flanders
- Practical organisation of a coordination committee, a user council & the thematic user groups
- Position based on the Decree of Flemish Statistics

Flemish Statistics Authority

- Formal powers:
 - Enforce cooperation of Flemish government bodies at statistical programme
 - Enforce collaboration of firms /citizens at statistical enquiries
 - Access to statistical data & documents of Flemish government bodies
- Coordination of yearly statistical programme
- Preparation of Flemish positions in IIS

Strategic framework



Operational aims

- Coördination and setup of a system for statistics development, production, dissemination
- Statistics development, production, dissemination
- Development and implementation of a coherent data strategy and -infrastructure

Coordination Committee

- Producers (network)
- In cooperation with statistics authority
 - Composition annual work programme
 - Quality management
 - Positioning national / international bodies
- Chaired by Chief Statistician
- Decision-making body for the network

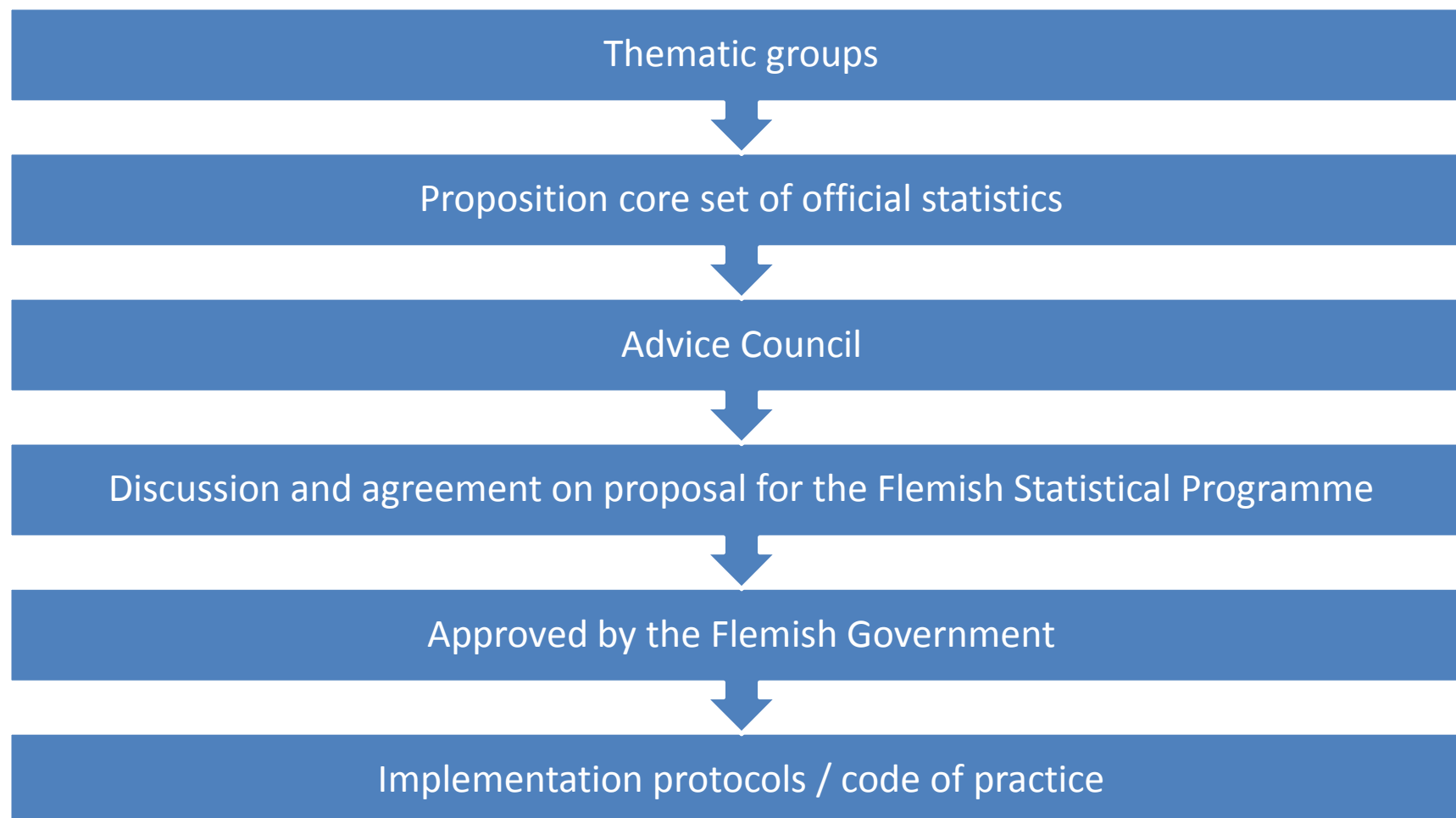
Council

- Broad concept of statistics users
- Composition
 - Producers
 - Academic users
 - Socio-economic organisations
 - Local and provincial users
 - Socio-economic organisations
 - Brussels
- Own or government initiative: advice on work programme & quality management

Thematic groups

- Aim to bring producers and users of statistics together to stimulate advice on prioritisation in development, production and dissemination of statistics, including development of new statistics and stopping existing statistics
- 12 different groups e.g. economics and finances; demography, living conditions; mobility, ...
- Producers: departments and agencies; local governments
- Users: members of the bodies represented in the Council of users of official statistics

Proces flow list of official statistics



SWOT-analysis

- SWOT-analysis in order to reflect on the strategic environment for the Flemish Statistics Authority as the core of the network Statistics Flanders
- Reflection, based on an internal survey on the main strenghts, weaknesses, opportunities and threats
- An internal excercise, cf. focus on setup of the internal organisation during the first year
- Does not assess the external focus of Statistics Flanders
- Open answers of 11 staf members of the Flemish Statistics Authority

Why a SWOT-analysis?

- Easy to use
- Encourages collaboration
- Input for the strategic planning of the organisation
- Possibilities to combine quantitative and qualitative analysis, although we only used the method to collect some qualitative data in order to position our organisation

SWOT-framework

		EXTERNAL	
		Opportunities	Threats
INTERNAL	Strengths	1	2
	Weaknesses	3	4

Strengths

- Expertise
- Flexibility
- Limited size of the core organization / agility
- New organisation, possibilities to explore and experiment
- Stakeholder involvement
- Appropriate legal framework
- Quality framework

Weaknesses

- Fragile organisation
- Stronger focus on coordination, less own production
- Dependency on the willingness of other actors to provide access to data
- Visibility
- Shift in the mindset of staff members: more coordination and statistics as such, less in-depth research

Opportunities

- Technological developments
- Partnerships based on expertise and longstanding cooperation
- Mutual learning opportunities within the network of Statistics Flanders
- Formal political support for the vision/mission of Statistics Flanders
- Support of the top management within the organisation
- Awareness of the need for reliable official statistics
- International relationships of the chief statistician and his team

Threats

- Decentralized expertise
- Silos
- The need for instant information in troubled post-truth times
- Reluctance to share data/statistics
- Political pressure/allergy towards official statistics
- Budget constraints
- Dependency on the benevolence of other political and administrative actors

		EXTERNAL	
		Opportunities	Threats
INTERNAL	Strengths		
	Weaknesses		

Next steps: linking the elements of the SWOT

	Strengths	Weaknesses
Opportunities	Strength- Opportunity strategies	Weakness- Opportunity strategies
Threats	Strength-Threat strategies	Weakness- Threat strategies

Four strategy types from the SWOT matrix

S-O strategies pursue opportunities that match strengths

- Embracing the expertise within and around the network to develop capacity within the network
- Turning formal support into strong engagements for the future

W-O strategies overcome weaknesses to pursue opportunities

- Providing facts where opinions are formed (cf. title of the OECD conference in 2017)
- Creating support for the basics of the network by working on small projects in a consequent way using the coordination tools

Four strategy types from the SWOT matrix

S-T strategies identify use its strengths to reduce vulnerability to external threats

- Using the instruments provided by the decree to build up a consequent handling official statistics
- Taking up actual opportunities in line of our mission as statistical organisation

W-T defensive strategy to prevent weaknesses from making it susceptible to external threats

- Consequently following our basic approach of generating official statistics, notwithstanding political pressure
- Detection/recognition of silos and working on linkages between them

Conclusion: next steps for Statistics Flanders

- Documentation of the core set of official statistics
- Communication of the story of Flanders based on the set of official statistics
- Broadening the involvement of other users
- Working on data architecture
- Exploring new methodological and statistical techniques
- Building and bridging within and around the network Statistics Flanders
- After the internal reflection and orientation, need for SWOT analysis by users of statistics and audiences

Contact

Roeland Beerten, Chief Statistician

Flemish government
Statistics Flanders

T +32 02 553 51 41

roeland.beerten@vlaanderen.be

@roelandb

Havenlaan 88 bus 20, 1000 Brussels, Belgium

<http://www.statistiekvlaanderen.be/in-english>