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Forty-seventh plenary session
(Neuchâtel, 14-16 June 1999)

**REPORT OF THE WORK SESSION ON STATISTICAL OUTPUT FOR DISSEMINATION TO
INFORMATION MEDIA, Cork, Ireland, 22 - 25 June 1998**

Note by the secretariat

1. The UN/ECE Work session on Statistical Output for Dissemination to Information Media , was held in Cork, Ireland from 22 - 25 June 1998 on the invitation of the Central Statistics Office of Ireland. It was attended by Belgium, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom and United States of America. Representatives of Eurostat also attended. The United Nations Statistical Division (UNSD) was also represented at the meeting.
2. Mr. Bill Keating (Ireland) chaired the meeting.
3. The provisional agenda was adopted.
4. The meeting was opened by the Director General of the Irish Central Statistics Office, Donal Murphy, who welcomed the participants and wished them success in their work and an enjoyable stay in Ireland.

ORGANIZATION OF THE SESSION

5. The following substantive topics were discussed at the Work Session:

- a) New developments in the use of Internet dissemination of statistical information
- b) Dealing with negative press coverage
- c) Making an effective WWW site for information media, including metadata adapted to the needs of media and public
- d) Measurement of the usage of Internet sites, including user surveys
- e) Best practices in training in media relation
- f) Shifting from print to electronic products - how and when?

6. The topics were discussed on the basis of 26 papers prepared by the Central Bureau of Statistics of the Netherlands, Central Statistics Office of Ireland, Centre for Educational Sociology - University of Edinburgh Scotland, the Czech Statistical Office, Eurostat, Federal Statistical Office of Germany, GOSKOMSTAT of the Russian Federation, Hungarian Statistical Office, INE of Portugal, ISTAT of Italy, Office for National Statistics of the UK, Statistics Canada, Statistics Finland, Statistics Denmark, Statistics Norway, Statistics Sweden, U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, U.S. Department of Justice, U.S. Department of Transportation, U.S. Energy Information Administration.

7. The participants appreciated the hospitality and excellent organization that the Irish Central Statistics Office had provided for the meeting and expressed their warm thanks to the organizers.

8. A summary of the main conclusions reached by the participants during discussion of the substantive agenda items has been prepared (in English only) as a separate report and distributed to participants. Upon request this can also be forwarded to other interested persons.

FUTURE WORK

9. The participants discussed when it would be opportune to have another meeting. They recommended that the Conference continue to convene meetings in this work area at annual intervals as long as the rapid development of the Internet as a tool for disseminating statistical information continued. The

format and duration of the next meeting were also discussed and it was proposed to reduce the number of topics and to complete these in three days on a trial basis for next year's meeting. Regarding the format it was not thought necessary to change anything. On the contrary, the participants expressed their satisfaction with the current format of having invited guest speakers from outside statistical offices and of having countries preparing discussion papers both jointly and individually.

10. The participants recommended that a further UN/ECE Work session on Statistical Output for Dissemination to Information Media was to be held in 1999/2000 and should consider the following issues:

(i) How do national statistical offices use the news media to promote and facilitate collection of their national censuses and other surveys? How do they solicit media support?

(ii) What impact has the increasing use of the Internet for dissemination had on the structure, functioning and resource requirements, notably in the public affairs and public relations offices of national statistical agencies? How have changing skill requirements affected human resources?

(iii) Is the relationship between national statistical offices and the news media and other clients (including the media) changing? Are clients increasingly seeking services "just-in-time" instead of acquiring products for reference "just-in-case"? Do clients now expect our information to be delivered to their desktop ("push") rather than seeking out and obtaining information themselves ("pull")? If so, how are the NSOs adapting to this changing environment.

(iv) How are NSOs promoting statistical literacy among the news media and the public? How can we collaborate more effectively with the news media and educational systems in our countries to accomplish this?

(vi) What principles are national statistical offices applying in deciding when to charge the news media and other clients for their products and services and when to provide them free? Has the Internet affected these principles or their application?

11. For each of the above topics joint papers would be prepared by interested agencies. The United States Census Bureau volunteered to lead the preparation of a joint paper under agenda item (i); Statistics Canada for a joint paper under item (ii); Statistics Netherlands for a joint paper under item (iii); Statistics Finland for a joint paper under item (iv); and the

Federal Statistical Office of Germany for a joint paper under item (v). Persons interested in participating in this work should contact the lead agencies or the ECE secretariat.

12. The meeting also asked the secretariat to assist the group in surveying statistical agencies' pricing practices towards news media and if possible other services provided to them.

13. ISTAT offered to host the next meeting in the coming year, and agreed to discuss an appropriate date with the ECE secretariat.

14. The participants adopted the report of the meeting at its closing session.