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STATISTICAL COMMISSION and ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

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

**REPORT OF THE WORK SESSION ON STATISTICAL OUTPUT FOR  
DISSEMINATION TO INFORMATION MEDIA**

**INTRODUCTION**

1. The UN/ECE Work session on Statistical Output for Dissemination to Information Media was held in Perugia, Italy from 25 - 27 May 1999 at the invitation of the Italian National Statistical Institute (ISTAT). It was attended by Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom and United States of America.
2. A representative of Eurostat attended the meeting.
3. A representative of the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) also attended.
4. Mr. Vincenzo Lo Moro (Italy) chaired the session, assisted by Mr. Donato Speroni (Italy).
5. The provisional agenda was adopted.

**ORGANIZATION OF THE MEETING**

6. The following substantive topics were discussed at the Work session.
  - a) Use and support of the news media in promotion of national censuses and other surveys
  - b) The changing nature of the relationship between NSOs and the news media and other clients

- c) How are NSOs promoting statistical literacy among the news media and the public?
- d) What principles are NSOs applying in charging the news media and the public for their products and services?
- e) Impact of Internet dissemination on the structure, functioning and resource requirements of public relations offices in NSOs

7. The topics were discussed on the basis of 18 papers 3 of which had been jointly prepared by several statistical agencies to convey their accumulated experiences.

8. Participants from Canada, Eurostat and UNSD demonstrated recent developments on the Internet sites that assisted in dissemination to the media and other specific audiences.

9. Participants considered the information obtained from the questionnaire on "Pricing of statistics to the media" as very useful and asked the secretariat to circulate again in two years time an updated version of the questionnaire to all statistical offices.

10. The participants greatly appreciated the hospitality and excellent organization that the National Statistical Institute of Italy had provided for the meeting and expressed their warm thanks to the organizers.

11. Recommendations for future work are given below. A summary of the main conclusions reached by the participants during discussion of the substantive agenda items will be prepared as a separate report (English only) after the meeting and distributed to participants. Upon request this can also be forwarded to other interested persons.

#### **FUTURE WORK**

12. The participants recommended that a further UN/ECE Work session on Statistical Output for Dissemination to Information Media be held in 2000/2001 to consider the following issues:

##### **1. Media crises management:**

- dealing with controversial issues at data collection stage, (e.g. data confidentiality, intrusive questions, etc);
- how can statistical agencies most effectively respond to media crises (misinterpretations and misuse of data), what press offices should and should not do, and when and how to respond);
- how to handle a situation where erroneous data are released without creating a loss of confidence in the statistical office.

The United Kingdom expressed interest in preparing the Invited paper under this agenda item. Canada, Hungary, Germany, Sweden and the U.S. Census Bureau, also expressed their interest in either contributing to the Invited paper or preparing supporting papers under this agenda item;

##### **2. Making use of new technological developments to better meet the needs of the media and get their feedback:**

- how to take advantage of new technologies to increase the visibility and presence of statistical agencies on the Internet (search engines, web scanning agencies, etc.);
- how can statistical agencies benefit from new technological developments (real-time exchange facilities, satellite transmissions, etc.) in order to increase their role of principal statistical providers in a situation of increasing competition with other /non-official providers of information.

- how do statistical offices treat national and international news agencies, what charging formulas are used and how are copyright problems solved;

The Netherlands will prepare an Invited paper for this agenda item. Belgium, Canada, Germany, Luxembourg, U.S. Census Bureau, and the U.S. Bureau of Justice offered to either contribute to the Invited paper or prepare supporting papers;

**3. How to build a corporate design as a modern information provider?**

- what methods can statistical agencies use to achieve a high profile and visibility in media and general public relationship?

Italy and Germany will co-author an Invited paper under this agenda item. Belgium, Finland, Switzerland, U.S. Census Bureau and U.S. National Center for Health Statistics offered to either contribute to the Invited paper or prepare supporting papers.

**4. Costs and benefits to consider when planning to outsource public and media relations work:**

- Experiences with having media relations work prepared outside the office versus within the office

The United States Census Bureau will prepare an Invited paper under this agenda item. Canada and the United Kingdom expressed interest in either contributing to the Invited paper or preparing supporting papers.

**5 Improving data sets and information released through the Internet to the media:**

- showing meta-data in news releases: how much or how little?
- handling data revisions to data sets on the Internet
- certification of data sets on the Internet

Canada will prepare an Invited paper under this agenda item. Denmark, Portugal, U.S. Bureau of Justice and U.S. Energy Information Agency, offered to either contribute to the Invited paper or prepare supporting papers.

13. In order to provide more effective assistance to statistical offices which may need support in developing their media relations, participants proposed that the UN/ECE become a central depository location for all media relation guides, style/education manuals, guidelines for best practices and other material related to media policies prepared for national statistical agencies. Participants agreed to send relevant materials in electronic format to the UN/ECE secretariat which will investigate possibilities for making space available on its Internet web site for a reference library. If these materials are already available at other statistical agencies' Internet web sites, the UN/ECE will provide a hyper-link connection to these.

14. Participants recommended that another work session be held in the 2000/2001, the hosting country would discuss an appropriate date with the ECE secretariat.

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