

**CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS**

Second meeting of the 2004/2005 Bureau  
Geneva, 10-11 February 2005

Item 6: Progress report of the  
Task Force on Confidentiality  
and Microdata

**PROGRESS REPORT OF THE TASK FORCE ON STATISTICAL CONFIDENTIALITY AND  
MICRODATA**

**Note prepared by Dennis Trewin, ABS, Australia**

**INTRODUCTION**

1. At the time of the October 2004 CES Bureau meeting, the agreement was that a draft of the Guidelines be presented to the February 2005 CES Bureau meeting for comment. It was then planned that a final document will be submitted to the 2005 CES.

**PROGRESS**

2. Progress has been slower than anticipated. This has mainly been because of other pressures on my time, not least being the organisation of the next ISI Session in April 2005. The structure of the guidelines have been agreed (see Attachment 1) with some suggestions on Case Studies. Arrangements have been made to incorporate some case studies (see Attachment 2).

3. The intention is that the Case Studies will be fully described in the Annexes but the Guidelines will include cross-reference to the Case Studies to help illustrate particular points.

4. 2005 is a Centenary Year for the ABS with a number of significant events planned especially in the early part of the year. Looking at my timetable over the next few months, I would not like to promise a draft of the Guidelines before May (although I will still be aiming to improve this timetable). Therefore, I suggest the following timetable.

- Early May 2005 - Simultaneous circulation of draft Guidelines to Task Force and CES Bureau members with two weeks for comment.
- End May 2005 - Submission of (revised) draft Guidelines for consideration at CES.
- June 2005 - Presentation at CES on key issues for debate on the draft Guidelines.
- June-August 2005 - comments from CES Bureau members
- October 2005 - Approval by CES Bureau for distribution as Interim Guidelines, welcoming further comment.

5. I am not familiar with the appropriate processes for finalising the Guidelines. Will it need to be done at 2006 CES or can it be done out of session?

6. The Secretariat has suggested the Guidelines be published both on the web site and as a small printed publication that can be distributed more widely on a needs basis.

7. They have also suggested:

"The core principles of confidentiality that are included in the paper can be considered as an extension of the fundamental principles of official statistics in the area of confidentiality. Therefore, we plan to put them on our website next to the fundamental principles. For this purpose, it would be good

to have a short presentation of the principles as a self-sustainable document. For example, fitting into one A4 sheet that includes the formulation of the principles and a short para with further explanation for each. There could be a 1-2 word title to each principle to make it immediately clear what is the main point (e.g. 1. enabling access, 2. legal basis, 3. statistical purpose, 4. transparency) and a very clear formulation focusing on the main point. We could put the short presentation of the principles also on the back cover of the publication for visibility."

I agree that we should work towards this. The real test will be whether the document is sufficiently self-explanatory.

#### **ISSUES FOR BUREAU CONSIDERATION**

8. I suggest the Bureau consider the following issues.
  - (i) Is the timetable outlined in paragraph 4 appropriate?
  - (ii) Does the Bureau agree with the Guidelines in Attachment 1?
  - (iii) Does the Bureau have any suggestions on further Case Studies? It would be good to have a broader geographic spread.
  - (iv) Are there any comments on the publication strategy (paragraphs 6 and 7)?

**ATTACHMENT 1****MANAGING CONFIDENTIALITY AND MICRODATA - GUIDELINES OF GOOD PRACTICE**

1. Introduction/Background
2. Why we should support the research community?
3. Core Principles
4. Methods of Supporting the Research Community:
  - (a) Data Cubes (Case Study - Netherlands);
  - (b) Anonymised Microdata Files - public use files (Case Studies - USA, UK);
  - (c) Anonymised Microdata Files - licensed files (Case Studies - Australia, Sweden)
  - (d) Remote Access Facilities (Case Studies - Denmark, Australia, Canada (for Census tables));
  - (e) Arrangements for allowing researchers to work on the premises of National Statistical Offices (Case Studies - Canada, USA, Netherlands, New Zealand).
- Note: Case Studies should cover collections from households and businesses
5. Supporting legislation (Case Study - Australia)
6. Managing the tension between national statistical offices and the research community - some operating arrangements
7. Managing breaches by the researcher
8. Some special issues:
  - (a) International access (Case Studies - Luxemburg Income Study)
  - (b) Data linking (Case Studies - Canada, Sweden)

**Annexes**

1. Case Studies
2. Standard Terminology
3. Acknowledgments

## ATTACHMENT 2

### CASE STUDIES

#### I. NSO has agreed to prepare case study

- Australia - Anonymised Microdata Files (licensed files)
  - Remote Access Facility (for microdata access)
  - Supporting legislation
- Canada - Remote Access Facilities (Census tables)
  - Researchers working on premises (Arrangements with participating Universities)
- Denmark - Remote Access Facility
- Sweden - Anonymised Microdata Files (licensed files)
  - Data Linking

#### II. Case study recommended but NSO has not yet been approached

- Luxemburg Income Study - International Access
- Netherlands - Data Cubes
  - Researchers working on premises (business data)
- New Zealand - Researchers working on premises (Data Laboratory)
- UK - Anonymised Microdata Files (Public Use Files)
- USA - Anonymised Microdata Files (Public Use Files)
  - Researchers working on premises (Research Data Centres)

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