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MAKING DATA MEANINGFUL

A new guide for bringing statistics to life

The UNECE has published a practical tool for helping managers, statisticians, media relations officers and others, bring statistics to life through the use of effective writing techniques.

Making Data Meaningful: A guide to writing stories about numbers is packed with valuable tips for preparing texts, tables, graphics and maps, whilst respecting the principles of impartiality.

It was prepared by a team of experts in statistical dissemination and communications from national statistical offices around the world, in cooperation with the UNECE secretariat.

Team members pooled their expertise to help anyone who writes about numbers make their data more meaningful to the public. The guide is directed particularly at individuals from statistical agencies who write texts that are targeted at the media.

Making Data Meaningful points out that numbers don't "talk", but they should communicate a message, effectively and clearly. The guide addresses key

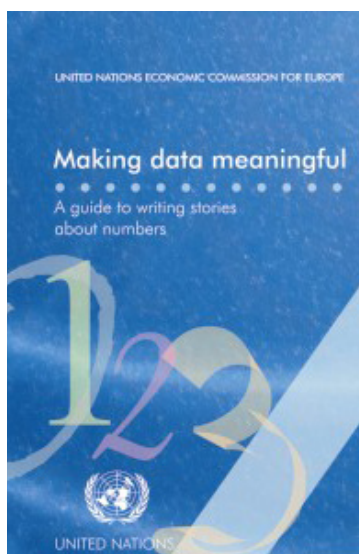
aspects of writing about data, including the importance of finding a storyline, what constitutes a statistical story, how to write a statistical story in journalistic style and how to make the data "stick". It makes clear the necessity for independent and unbiased releases that avoid policy prescriptive comments.

The electronic version contains a number of examples of well-written statistical stories provided by various national statistical agencies.

Making Data Meaningful is a practical set of advice for anyone involved in communicating official statistics to the public. It is available online or

in print. Copies can be obtained free of charge by visiting:

<http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/writing/>



Everything you always wanted to know about statistics

What is a statistical story?

On their own, statistics are just numbers. They are everywhere in our life. Numbers appear in sports stories, reports on the economy, stock market updates, to name only a handful. To mean anything, their value to the person in the street must be brought to life. A statistical story is one that doesn't just recite data in words. It tells a story about the data. A statistical story shows readers the significance, importance and relevance of the most current information.

Why tell a story?

The mandate of most statistical agencies is to inform the general public about the population, society, economy and culture of the nation. This information will guide citizens in doing their jobs, raising their families, making purchases and in making many other decisions. An agency should also want to demonstrate the relevance of its data to government and the public.

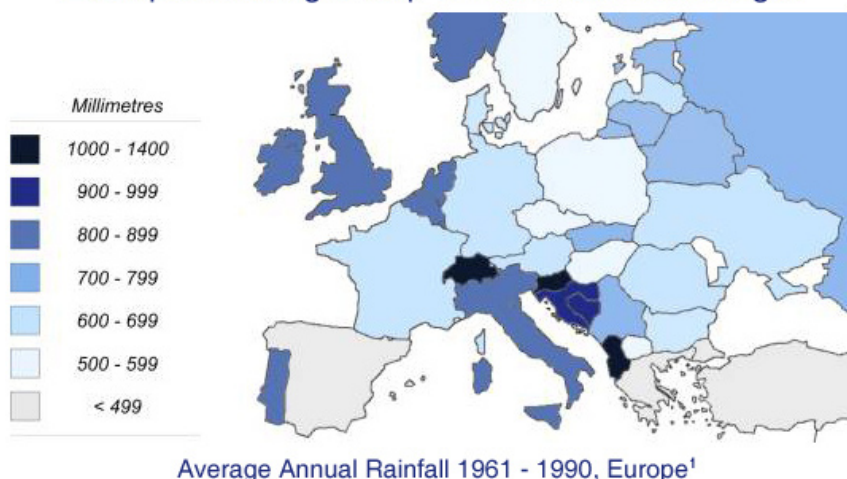
How to write a story?

An effective way for a statistical office to communicate through both means is to tell a statistical story that is written as clearly, concisely and simply as possible. Everyone may have their own ideas about quality writing, but here are some general suggestions. The best way to learn about them is to read "**Making Data Meaningful**".

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Example of using a map to make data meaningful



Graph from United Nations Economic Commission for Europe.
Available online at <http://www.unece.org/stats/trends2005/environment.htm>
[accessed 30 September 2005].

Coming up ...

January

- 23-25 Joint Meeting of Experts on the Regulations annexed to the European Agreement concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Inland Waterways (ADN)
- 26-27 Working Party on the Transport of Dangerous Goods
- 23 Executive Board of the Gas Centre
- 24-25 Working Party on Gas
- 26 Ad Hoc Group of Experts on the Use and Supply of Gas
- 26-27 TIR Executive Board
- 25-27 UNECE/UNODC Meeting on Crime Statistics (Vienna, Austria)

Did you know that ...

The letter "E" and a number in a small circle in the corner of car windows indicate that the glass has reached a certain standard of security. The label also guarantees the safety measures of the headlights, the tyres, the rear-view mirror, the speedometer, the seat belts, to name but a few.



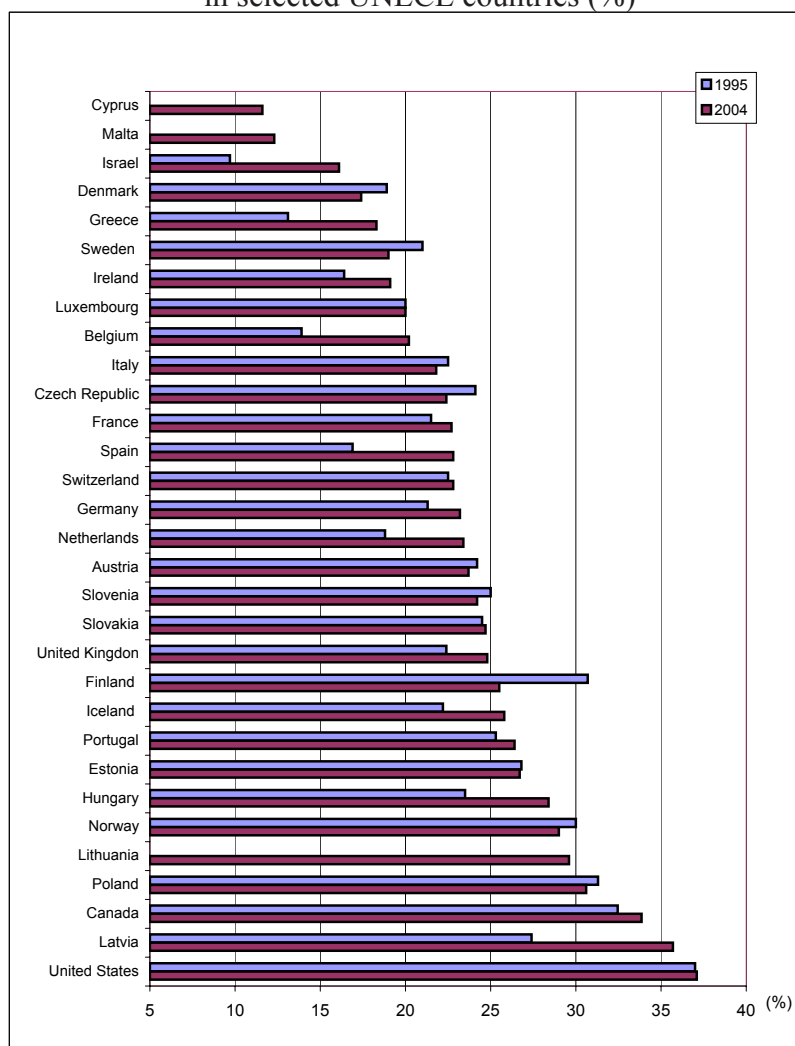
The "E" and numbers are the result of the Agreement on Regulations for Motor Vehicle Equipment and Parts, which was reached at UNECE in Geneva in 1958, and updated in 1995. So far, a total of 123 vehicle regulations have been established, setting standards for almost all vehicle parts. These car parts are certified with a circle surrounding an "E" followed by the distinguishing number of country that has granted approval. For example, "E1" is used for car parts certified in Germany, "E2" for France, "E3" for Italy, etc.

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Female employers as percentage of total number of employers in selected UNECE countries (%)



Definition: Percentage of female employers over the total number of male and female employers. Employers are those workers who hold a self-employment job and have continuously engaged one or more persons to work for them as employees.