

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

**ECE Work Session on Statistical Output  
for Dissemination to Information Media**  
(Geneva, Switzerland, 28-30 October 2002)

Topic (a): Review of the draft of the “Statistics in the media – handbook on best practices for statistical offices in dealing with the media”.

**Suggestion for revised structure of chapter III<sup>1</sup>:**

**ORGANISATIONAL ISSUES**

General remarks:

- only criterion for inclusion of examples and case studies in manual should be potential utility and inspirational value for others; historical overviews, anecdotes, hagiography, propaganda or blowing one’s trumpet should be critically assessed and if possible excluded.
- In my view each section should consist of three parts:
  - o a short outline of the issue discussed
  - o a list of recommendations
  - o case studies/examples illustrating the recommendations and showing how things can be done in practice.
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## **Chapter III - Organisational issues**

How to organize the statistical office and statistical output for optimal communication with the media

### **Introduction**

- outline of what this chapter is about, of the approach taken here: organisational aspects
- brief overview, in order of appearance, of the different topics treated

### **3.1 Data types, formats and dissemination strategies**

How different data types can be distinguished, each requiring different optimal formats and different dissemination strategies

*Used to be 3.1 + some new topics*

Comments:

- *shifting from print to electronic support (former 3.1) addresses just one of the possible strategic choices to be made; there are many more and they depend on the data type and the chosen format and dissemination strategy*

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<sup>1</sup> Prepared by Marc Debusschere

- *what needs to be done for this section:*
  - o *defining different possible data types provided to media (I see four: 1 alerters & notifications; 2 press releases, pre-digested ready-to-print 'stories'; 3 data bases (mainly background material); 4 meta-data, aid in interpreting data);*
  - o *listing different possible data formats and dissemination strategies;*
  - o *choosing the optimal ones for each data type.*

### Outlining issue and context

### Set of recommendations

### Case studies / Examples

*Items for discussion:*

- *do you agree with 4 types of data transmitted to press? Do you see more? Less?*
- *do you agree with the proposed optimal formats and dissemination strategies? Do you see any more, other, new ones?*
- *Do you think case studies/examples are fitting? Can you suggest more, others?*

## **3.2 The back-office**

How to organize the dissemination data-bases, the different channels and the units and persons responsible in view of a fast and accurate response to demands and an active release of data

*Wholly new topic*

*The issues here are:*

- *what kind of questions can be expected from the media? What are the 'statistical needs of the media'? Possibilities:*
  - o *to get in touch, find a contact, find a spokesperson, commentator*
  - o *to be alerted of news*
  - o *obtaining print-ready copy*
  - o *finding background material for article*
  - o *obtaining meta-data, information about status of data, how to be interpreted*
- *what are the organisational implications of responding quickly and cost-efficiently to each of these needs?*

### Outlining issue and context

### Set of recommendations

### Case studies / Examples

## **3.3 Release calendars**

How to establish release dates for indicators and how to respect them

*Used to be 3.3*

### Outlining the issue within its context

### Set of recommendations

### Case studies / Examples

#### *Items for discussion:*

- *Release calendar for which indicator (type, frequency)?*
- *What are basic conditions to be met for releasing according to calendar? (need for more carefully-considered, accident-proof procedures)*
- *What are the organisational consequences?*
- *Impact on mentality? (higher expectations from outside, less easy-going attitude, more planning, commitment)*

## **3.4 Dealing with authorities**

Different ways of dealing with demands, justified or not, of political authorities and administrative hierarchies concerning press contacts (issues of censorship, tampering with or even suppression of data).

*Wholly new topic (controversial!)*

### Set of recommendations

### Case studies / Examples

## **3.5 Dealing with bad news**

How to deal with bad publicity, hostile comments and negative press attitudes; how to manage a media crisis

*Used to be 8.2, 8.3*

### Outlining the issue within its context

### Set of recommendations

### Case studies / Examples

#### *Items for discussion:*

- *Pro-active or re-active attitude?*
- *Should one always tell the truth?*

## **3.6 Impact measurement**

How to measure success or lack of success; how to learn from mistakes

*Used to be 8.1*

### Outlining the issue within its context

Set of recommendations

Case studies / Examples

### **3.7 Outsourcing**

How to decide whether or not to outsource and, when doing so, how to go about it

*Used to be 3.2*

Set of recommendations

Case studies / Examples

#### **Other possible subjects:**

- providing data under embargo: pro and contra, how to handle this, how to cope with non-respect of embargo
- trying to be correctly quoted as data source, given credit; how to react when this is not respected (implications for reputation building, positioning of statistical institute, PR)