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Topic – To charge or not to charge: fundraising, access licences and costing models

DISSEMINATION POLICIES IN THE ESS

An overview

Submitted by Eurostat¹

1. On the basis of a Eurostat survey on data dissemination conditions, conducted in September-November 2008, a global view of dissemination policies across the European Statistical System (ESS) could be drawn up.
2. All statistical institutes have well-established practices for disseminating statistical data, in most cases for free. Sometimes, however, these practices are not as well-documented as they might be, especially for an international audience, in English. Practical arrangements are usually communicated in a satisfactory way to potential users, but a policy document coherently spelling out dissemination principles is still absent in many countries.
3. The surprisingly high degree of convergence in dissemination principles and practices, especially with regard to free data dissemination, suggests a common 'Dissemination Policy Charter' for the ESS might be considered.

I. INTRODUCTION

4. In September 2008 a 10-item questionnaire on data dissemination conditions was sent out by Eurostat to the National statistical institutes (NSIs) of EU Member States, EFTA and accession countries; it was also filled out by Eurostat itself. All 35 NSIs completed and returned the questionnaire. Results were presented and discussed at the Dissemination Working Group meeting of 17-18 November 2008.

5. Questions were mainly about:

- Documentation of dissemination principles and practices (Question 1).
- Charging versus free dissemination (Questions 2-4).
- User-specific data extractions (Question 5).

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- Re-use and redistribution of data (Questions 6-8).
- Access to microdata (Question 9)
- Non-statistical products (Question 10).

6. In this document the results are analysed question by question. As a conclusion, a global overview of the situation in the ESS is presented. Some common features and trends are clearly apparent, offering scope for future harmonisation of policies across the ESS.

It should be stressed that this paper reflects the situation at the end of 2008. Additional information has made it clear, in the mean time, that the situation has changed (for the better); more NSIs now have, for instance, a policy document available.

1. Publicly available document in English on publication policy

7. Only nine countries (26%) have a dissemination policy document in English on their web site: *Czech Republic, Ireland, Cyprus, Malta, Norway, Slovakia, Finland, Switzerland and Turkey*.

8. Several other NSIs, however, have either a dissemination policy document in the national language on line, or they partially cover dissemination policy and practical aspects on their web site in English, or they have an internal or published policy document or elements available but not (yet) on the web site.

2. Statistical product types disseminated free of charge

9. Practically all countries provide all *statistical data* to all users for free via the web site. In the majority of cases these include *on line database extractions* and *downloads of publications*. On the other hand statistical output which involves a significant additional cost is charged, mostly at production cost: *paper publications, tailor-made data or special services*.

10. Some countries explicitly mention that all statistical information, and not just the content of the web site, may be obtained for free, but it is unclear whether *data extracted routinely at the demand of a user* are charged or not.

11. In a limited number of cases some categories of users obtain data for free (while others are paying): authorities and administrations, partner institutions, students, universities and research institutions, mass media, civil society, trade unions, international organisations.

3. Percentage estimate of the data free of charge, in volume and types of data

12. Both for volume and number of indicators most NSIs indicate that almost or a 100% of data and indicators are provided free of charge. The percentage for volume, however, tends to be slightly lower than that for indicators because in many cases all or almost all types of data are provided free of charge, but not everything for each indicator is (e.g., aggregates are free but very detailed or custom-made data frequently are not). For volume the average percentage amounts to **89 %** (calculated on 23 NSIs), for indicators it is **93%** (21 respondents).

Some countries are reluctant to provide an overall estimate because many different dissemination channels exist, often markedly varying in % of data provided free of charge; the percentages, it is felt, cannot readily be added up.

4. Charging schemes and price ranges for data and products not free of charge

13. Price setting is, in most cases, based upon the marginal cost of providing the information (as the case may be: printing and distribution of paper publications, time spent in handling requests, rarely also managing database access); this means that data themselves are usually free of charge. In a minority of cases, however, data volume is also a factor. Some respondents mention a discount to specific user groups such as students, researchers, schools. Exceptionally privileged access is granted to government or administrations.

14. Many countries have a price list on line, but quite often this is only in the national language(s), probably reflecting the fact that the international demand is only marginal. Somewhat more than half of all NSIs, 19 in all, have a price list in English on their web site: *Belgium (National Bank), Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Ireland, Greece, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Norway, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Finland, UK, Croatia, FYR of Macedonia and Turkey.*

5. User-specific extractions

15. Practically all countries have a dedicated central section dealing with specific extractions; sometimes there are several, depending on the type of data, user or channel through which requests arrive. Typically their task is evaluating feasibility or data availability, accessing data bases, connecting to statistical sections and setting a price. In some other cases statistical units directly receive and treat data requests. Some mixed systems exist too, with a central unit and statistical services both making user-specific extractions.

16. Finally, in some countries user-specific extractions can also be obtained from regional offices.

6. Re-use by users themselves

17. All statistical institutes allow re-use of data on condition of the data integrity being respected and the source being clearly indicated. In a limited number of cases there are restrictions or additional conditions:

- some limited number of data are excluded;
- an explicit permission is required;
- licence agreement for commercial use, reselling or re-distribution to commercial users required;
- copyright permission required for extensive reproduction

18. One respondent suggested that, considering systematic checking and enforcing of the correct mention of the data source is next to impossible, exchange of best practices should be considered.

19. An obvious exception to the 'use is allowed'-rule is microdata access: they can only be used insofar contractually promised confidentiality is respected.

7. Permission to redistribute to third parties and procedures

20. All countries but four allow redistribution in some way or other. In most cases there are restrictions and conditions:

- redistribution is not allowed for commercial purposes;
- redistribution for commercial purposes may be allowed if a contract or agreement is signed and an extra charge is paid.

21. A sizable minority of 10 out of 35 NSIs, however, does not at all limit or charge extra for commercial redistribution; even for data which are free in the first place.

8. Disclaimer and procedure to obtain permission for re-use

22. Over half of the countries do not have a formal disclaimer in English, but it is sometimes unclear whether they have none at all or one in the national language(s) only (because of the way this question was phrased). Some disclaimers are quite explicit and extensive (e.g. *Eurostat*, *Portugal*, *UK*), while others consist only of ©. However, even when no formal disclaimer seems to exist, usually a number of limitations on the use of statistical data are communicated to users.

23. At the minimum, this consists of the obligation to indicate the source.

24. Some other elements which may commonly be found in disclaimers:

- declining responsibility for losses or lack of accuracy and timeliness;
- privacy and personal data protection;
- warning that linking to other sites does not validate them.

9. Access to microdata

25. Except for three statistical institutions not (yet) providing microdata, all institutions offer standardized and/or custom-made data sets to researchers. Procedures are often very specific, as may be expected, but still some common elements may be outlined:

- privacy protection guarantees, sometimes by external advice or permission;
- validity check of request;
- drawing up detailed contract;
- pricing according to scheme or rules.

10. Sales of non-statistical products or data

26. More than half of NSIs, 19 out of 35, sell (or provide for free) nothing but statistical data. In all other cases the additional product being sold is information extracted from business or similar registers (lists of addresses or additional information). Only two countries also provide and charge services related to statistics: consultancy, courses and surveys (*Denmark*) or economic analyses (*Hungary*).

II. CONCLUSIONS

27. The results of the survey show that all countries have well-established practices for disseminating statistical data, which for the larger part are disseminated for free; the most common exceptions are tailor-made data sets, microdata and paper publications.

28. Sometimes, however, these practices are not as well-documented as they could be, especially for international users (in English). Practical arrangements, on the one hand, are usually communicated in a satisfactory way to potential users, especially the national ones.

29. However, a single policy document which coherently spells out dissemination principles is still absent in many countries. Specific dissemination conditions and procedures can, as a rule, be found on an ad hoc basis in many different places, but not bundled together in one place, on the web site or in a document.

30. The overview shows very markedly that policies, sometimes implicit ones, are quite similar across the ESS. The summary of current principles and practices of NSIs could constitute a first outline of a basic 'Dissemination Policy Charter' for the European Statistical System:

- Statistical data and metadata are disseminated free of charge for all users, with few or even no exceptions.
- All users can obtain custom-made data extractions at no more than production cost or even for free.
- Use, re-use and redistribution of statistical data and metadata are allowed on two conditions only: respect for the integrity of data and mention of the source.
- Microdata are available free of charge for all eligible users providing sufficient guarantees, especially on the respect of confidentiality.

31. Other aspects (such as sales of non-statistical products) are marginal and need not be included in an overall policy document.

III. ANNEX

Survey on Data Dissemination Conditions (Nov. 2008): Overview

Y = yes; N= No; BRD = Business Register Data.

Member State	1 Link to policy document EN?	2 Types disseminated for free?	3A % disseminated freely: data types?	3B % disseminated freely: indicators?	4a Charging schemes and price ranges?	4b Link to price list EN?	5 Customer-specific extractions service ?	6 Re-use allowed?	7 Transmission to others allowed?	8a Description usage disclaimer, procedures	8b Link to disclaimer EN?	9 Microdata access scope, procedure, pricing	10 Non-statistical products sold?
ESTAT	N	statistical data to all via internet; not: paper publications, microdata	100	100	only for microdata	not applic.	Y	Y	Y	on: legal validity of information, copyright, personal data protection, re-use, commercial redistribution, indication of source, translation in other languages, contact point	Y	contract, check of application, strict pricing	N
BE NSI	N	statistical data to all via internet, most paper publications; all free for public administrations; not: some paper publications, production and sending cost, tailor-made data, microdata		?	paper publications , in catalogue, tailor-made at cost per hour, specific data bases (maps, geographical data, microdata) charged according to difficulty and size	only nl and fr	Y	Y	Y	no disclaimer, except indication of source; users' responsibility laid down in contracts	no disclaimer	validation by privacy commission, drawing up of contract on statistical disclosure control, pricing	N
BE Nat. Bank	N	statistical data to all via internet; not paper publications, downloads for redistributors	100	100	tarification of publications , downloads at cost of maintenance	Y	Y	Y	Y	on: declining liability for loss, no guarantee for accuracy or recency, copyright	Y	no microdata	N
BG	N	statistical data to limited number: only to authority, administration, some partner institutions	different percentages	different percentages	principles, price list in catalogue	Y	Y	Y	Y	on: no permission for re-use	N	validation by Information Protection Council, pricing	Y: BRD

CZ	Y	statistical data to all via internet; not tailor-made services, work to process and deliver data	85	85	price list with principles and tariffs	Y	Y	Y	Y	no disclaimer	no disclaimer	by special committee	Y: BRD
DK	N	statistical data to all via internet; not e-mail service, paper publications, infra-municipal data	85	98	data are free, but hours worked, use of registers and printing costs charged	only dk	?	Y	Y	on: no responsibility for errors or delays through force majeure, indication of source	Y	by contract, see paper	Y: services, data from others
DE	N	statistical data to all via internet; not paper publications unless PR	100	100	printing and distribution costs of publications	N	Y	Y	Y	no disclaimer, no restrictions	Y	see link	N
EE	N	statistical data to all via internet; not processing and delivery of data	80	80	printing and extra work is charged	Y	Y	Y	Y	no disclaimer	no disclaimer	governed by Official Statistics Act and Personal Data Protection Act	N
IE	Y	statistical data to all, via internet; except paper publications	?	?	price list for paper publications ; extra work charged	Y	Y	Y	?	on: limitations on and conditions of re-use, copyright, indication of source	Y	formal contract for personal data, ad hoc arrangement for business data	N
EL	N	statistical data to all, via internet; except all else	75	75	pricing in function of extra work and data volume, discount for students	Y	Y	Y	Y	on: indication of source, permission for use, re-use and non-commercial redistribution	N	On approval by Statistical Confidentiality Committee, pricing, concluding agreement	Y: BRD
ES	N	statistical data to all, via internet; except publications on paper and electronic carrier and personalised requests	95	95	?	only es	Y	Y	Y	no disclaimer	no disclaimer	free of charge for standard, charge for customised	N
FR	N	statistical data to all via internet; not paper publications, customised products and	99	99	marginal costs for production and delivery	N	Y	Y	Y	on: data free of charge, re-use also for commercial purposes,	Y	anonymized standard sets via web site free of charge, global	Y: BRD

		extractions								respect for integrity of data, indication of the source		convention for others	
IT	N	statistical data to all via internet; not some paper publications	80	?	data free, only costs for production and delivery	N	Y	Y	Y	on: use and reproduction permitted, indication of the source	N	anonymized data sets offered, custom data sets with contract	Y: maps
CY	Y	statistical data to all via internet; not paper publications	90	95	Pricing partly flat rate, partly function of extra work and data volume	Y	Y	Y	Y	on: no legal liability for accuracy and recency, designated official version supersedes statistical web site, linking to other site does not validate it	Y	application detailing need for data, approval by Confidentiality Committee, pricing, delivery of anonymized data	Y: BRD
LV	N	statistical data to all via internet; not services with cost: preprint, print, special data requests	?	100	Pricing function of extra work and data volume, price list approved by Cabinet of Ministers	Y	Y	Y	Y		Y	decision by Confidentiality Board, pricing	Y: BRD
LT	N	statistical data to all via internet; not paper publications, tailor-made data, microdata	?	80	Pricing function of production and delivery cost for publications, time spent for requests	Y	Y	Y	Y	on: indication of source	N	decision by director general, agreement drawn up, pricing	N
LU	N	statistical data to all via internet; not paper publications, tailor-made data for individuals	90	90	In principle production cost and time spent should be covered, in practice this is hardly the case	only fr	Y	Y	Y		N	by specific contract, access free of charge in STATEC safe centre, respecting electronic data treatment and confidentiality rules	N

HU	N	statistical data to all via internet; paper publications to important users; not paper publications to others	85	100	cost of printing and editing paper publications , time spent for data extraction is charged, 30% discount for students	N	Y	Y	Y	on: indication of source, conditions for redistribution	N	free of charge in safe centre for prepared data sets, sets on request free of charge or against payment	Y: BRD, analyses
MT	Y	statistical data to all via internet; not paper publications, ad-hoc data requests	?	?	price for publications as low as possible, below cost, ad hoc reports at cost, 50% discount for students; price list in catalogue	Y	Y	Y	Y	not formally, some elements on: indication of source, date of extraction of data,	no disclaimer	no microdata (yet)	Y: BRD
NL	N	statistical data to all, via internet; except paper publications, at production cost	100	100	price for publications is twice the cost, but half are distributed free of charge; price list in catalogue	only nl	Y	Y	Y	only on microdata, on disclosure control	N	see links	N
NO	Y	statistical data to all; not some paper publications to some, special data extractions or analyses, micro data	95	95	some publications and special requests charged at cost	Y	Y	Y	Y	on: copyright, indication of source, recommendation of linking rather than copying	Limited to ©	see link	N
AT	N	statistical data to all via internet; not paper publications, on line database extractions	?	?	printed products have a price	only de	Y (?)	N	Y	on: copyright, liability	Y	standardised data sets downloadable free of charge; special data sets against payment, if confidentiality is respected	N

PL	N	statistical data to all, incl. paper publications; not special data extractions or analyses requiring additional statistical or IT input	"vast majority"	"vast majority"	processing cost of requests charged	N	N	Y	Y	on: redistribution of payed data	Y	anonymised data, for well specified goal, not to be redistributed, Director of Dissemination Division decides	Y: BRD
PT	N	statistical data to all via internet, some paper publications; not some paper publications, tailor-made information	?	?	production and dissemination costs charged; discounts for education, research, local government	only pt	Y	Y	Y	on: exclusion of liability, privacy, linking does not validate other sites, respect for software copyright	Y	access after signing responsibility term, on confidentiality, only research purposes, copyright respect etc	Y: BRD
RO	N	statistical data to limited number, information on web site and general information to public at large; except specific data requests by non-privileged clients, more detailed data for business world, microdata	?	?	pricing based on time spent and on amount of information, no rebates or additional cost except mail; paying access to on line data base	Y	Y	Y	N	on: copyright, indication of source	Limited to ©	access after signing contract on price, statistical disclosure control, no commercial use, no redistribution etc.	N
SI	N	statistical data to all via internet, some publications; not some paper publications, ad hoc tables, microdata preparation	99	100	time spent for requests and paper publications charged	Y	Y	Y	Y		N	see links on conditions and prices; special contract; decision by board of directors on recommendation by internal Committee on Confidentiality ; on cd for low-security data, otherwise safe room or remote facility	N

SK	Y	statistical data to all, via internet (including access to online data bases and publication downloads), paper publications for some client categories, support; except paper publications to non-privileged users, ad hoc tables, microdata preparation	75	?	fixed prices wherever possible, otherwise hourly rate; free for specified civil services	Y	Y	Y	N		N	for research purposes, to SK subjects, price by agreement	Y: BRD
FI	Y	statistical data to all via internet; not paper publications, printing and distribution, expert services, customer-made services, products and solutions, some databases	?	?	Cost-price of products and services is charged, resulting in price list approved by general director	Y	Y	Y	N	on: copyright, indication of source, conditions for redistribution	Y	?	Y: BRD
SE	N	statistical data to all, via internet; except paper publications and commissioned work (at cost)	?	?	Cost-price is charged: hours worked or other production costs	N	Y	Y	Y	not formally, only in contract terms	no disclaimer	anonymous individual data, for qualified researchers only, interactive on line extraction system	Y: BRD
CH	Y	statistical data to all, via internet (from 2009 on), including publication downloads; except some paper publications, individual requests >15' and on line database access	80	95	Fixed prices for online databases, paper publications, prices per hour for requests >15' (pricing basis not specified)	only fr	Y	Y	Y	on: conditions of commercial and non-commercial use, indication of source,		contract basis only, against payment; collaboration with specialized distribution centre for social science data	N
UK	N	statistical data to all, via internet; except paper publications	100	100	only for paper publications	Y	Y	Y	Y	on copyright, reproducing statistics, licenses,	Y	under review	under review

										confidentiality, hyperlinks, logo, enquiries			
HR	N	statistical data to all, via internet; except all else	80	70	Price based on time spent or volume (for external trade)	Y	Y	Y	?	not formally, only indication of source	no disclaimer	on signing contract, registered research institutes, against payment	N
MK	N	basic data, regardless of media (web site or publication); except more detailed publications (eg Yearbook) and specific requests	70	?	Pricing in function of production cost and time spent, except external trade (volume)	Y	?	Y	Y	not formally, only in contract terms	no disclaimer	no microdata	N
KM	N	Everything to all free of charge	100	100	none, everything as yet free of charge	N	N	Y	Y	none	N	not applicable yet	N
TR	Y	statistical data to all, via internet, as well as some publications; everything free for government organisations; except paper publications, tailor-made data and microdata	80	?	for customer-made data and paper publications, price list established each year	Y	Y	Y	N	indication of source	Y	approval of President TurkStat, anonymised data sets, on agreement signed, confidentiality to be respected; standard data sets or safe environment	N