Ethics and proactive communication: the Istat case
Outlook

- Introduction – the context
- What are the main ethical principles that govern communication?
- How does Istat respect such principles?
- Charter of Services for Users of statistical information and guaranteed quality standards
- Next steps
About us

Michela Troïa

After graduation and a Master's degree in economics with a subsequent Master's degree in communication, she has been working at Istat since 1998. Web Content Specialist, usability and accessibility expert since 2003. Since 2001 to 2019 she dealt with social media and with users’ satisfaction. Since 2016 to 2019 she was responsible for the relationships with users. Member of WP1 - User analysis of project for Digital communication, User analytics and Innovative products (DIGICOM) of the European statistical system. She also is a member of the working group on the usability of the Public Administration. In 2019 she became member of the UNECE Strategic Communication Framework and actually she is member of the UNECE Capabilities and Communication Group. She is currently responsible for the Istat website.

Giulia Peci

She has been working in the field of Communication for over 30 years. Graduated in Languages, she worked for about 15 years at 3M Italy S.p.A. as Public Affairs Specialist in the Legal Affairs and Public Relations Department. She moved to the Public Administration in 2001 (Istat, Central Communication Directorate). Since then, she has worked as Internal communication and Web communication expert for about 10 years. In the last years she has been mainly dealing with social media and relations with external users. Actually, member of the UNECE Capabilities and Communication Group and former member for two years of the UNECE Strategic Communication Framework project. For one academic year, she also taught Corporate Communication at the European Institute of Design, based in Rome.
Introduction

Statistical information:
NSIs can’t avoid conveying it, but they can communicate it well or poorly

Today, Communication often fails to respect rules and principles

Result

- Low respect for the target groups
- Failure to address specific audience needs
- True media abuse

Building trust and preserving a positive reputation requires ethical communication
The main ethical principles that govern communication

- **Transparency** – being transparent about motives, intentions and conflicts of interest
- **Fairness and balance** – to present information avoiding bias and offering a balanced view of different point of view
- **Privacy** – respecting people’s privacy to avoid unauthorized disclosure of sensitive or confidential information
- **Cultural sensitivity** – awareness and respect for cultural differences
- **Empathy** – considering the feelings and perspectives of others
- **Responsibility** – being aware of the potential impact of one’s words and actions on individual and society
- **Accountability** - correcting any misinformation or harm caused when errors occur
How does Istat respect such principles?

Transparency

- Dedicated website area
- Transparent communication as content is replaced

Impartiality

- Istat never expresses value judgements when disseminating statistical information
- All content is disseminated simultaneously to everyone.
- The calendar of the economic data is announced every December for the following year to avoid the risk of thinking that the release is instrumental for the public debate (e.g. in view of the elections)
How does Istat respect such principles?

Privacy
- Dedicated website area
- Istat has adopted a cookie management policy on its websites in compliance with the current GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation)

Cultural sensitivity
- Istat never uses language, images or colors that invoke cultural stereotypes
- Attention is also paid to religious differences, in line with the focus on avoiding any form of discrimination
How does Istat respect such principles?

Empathy

- We listen and interact with our users in an empathetic way. This allows us to adapt our tone to the person we’re talking to and thus improve our services.

Responsability and Accountability

- Two sides of the same coin involving awareness of the potential impact on achieving our goals of the words and images we choose to communicate.
- Attention is always high. However, this does not always prevent us from making mistakes. Taking responsibility for such failures and acting to adjust our focus, learning from the lessons, is crucial.
Charter of services for Users of statistical information and guaranteed quality standards

For more than 15 years, the Communication Directorate has developed a service charter for users. It is regularly updated and defines the quality standards of communication and dissemination services.

These standards are based on ethical communication with users and are embodied in the following principles:

- Equality
- Impartiality
- Continuity
- Clarity and Transparency
- Efficiency and Effectiveness
- Accessibility
- Participation
Next steps

- 2024: A new section of the website dedicated to ethics

- Two newly formed task teams:
  - To develop guidelines for an inclusive internal training program
  - To develop a gender policy for employees

- To continue the work of the Unique Committee for Equal Opportunities within the Institute

- **New challenge:** respecting ethical principles when using AI in communication
Thanks!

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