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**UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION
FOR EUROPE (UNECE)
CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS**

**Work Session on the Communication of Statistics
(Berlin, Germany, 27-29 May 2013)**

Draft report of the work session on the communication of statistics

Prepared by the UNECE Secretariat

1. The Work Session on the Communication of Statistics was held in Berlin, Germany, from 27 to 29 May 2013. Participants from the following countries attended the meeting: Armenia, Australia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, Canada, China, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Luxembourg, Mexico, Moldova, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Turkey, Uganda, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America, Uzbekistan. The European Commission was represented by Eurostat. The European Central Bank, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Institute for Statistics of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), International Monetary Fund (IMF), Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and United Nations Statistical Division (UNSD) were also present.
2. Mr. Steven Vale of the UNECE Secretariat opened the meeting and outlined the role of the UNECE in implementing the work programme of the Conference of European Statisticians, of which this work session is a part. Mr. Michael Levi (United States of America) was elected as a Chairperson.
3. Ms. Sibylle von Oppeln-Bronikowski of DESTATIS, in her welcoming speech to participants, stressed the importance of successful communication of statistics. She also talked about the details of statistical production and noted the need for additional efforts in communication with users. Ms. von Oppeln-Bronikowski also shared DESTATIS' experience in communicating with users during the latest census campaign.
4. Prof. Dr. Christopher Strock, managing director at Hearing Schuppener, gave a key-note speech about the importance of purpose in communication. He defined a reputation as a stability of mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and its stakeholders and he also outlined the process of setting goals to achieve the results and determine the support potentials that an organization needs to realize.
5. Claudia Brunner of DESTATIS welcomed participants and gave useful information about Berlin and logistical arrangements during the meeting.
6. United Nations Statistical Division made a presentation on using SDMX to exchange MDG data between national statistical offices and international agencies. The aim of the project

was to start small and simple while working with some basic tools and a small set of indicators to build confidence and understanding within the country, with the vision that at the end of implementation a country will have the knowledge and the means to expand.

Session 1: Moving from printed to electronic publications

7. UNFPA presented Population Situation Analysis (PSA), a tool to create evidence for country programming – originally a traditional publication that has been released as a website in 2013. The original manual published was used as a content basis for the interactive website. To reach a large audience, the website has been translated into Arabic, English, French, Russian and Spanish. UNFPA also presented POPClimate is a web platform designed to bring together a global community of data practitioners, climate scientists, policy makers and climate change adaptation practitioners to create a better understanding of climate vulnerability and adaptation built on spatial analysis of census data.
8. Slovenia talked about the use of videos for communication with external users of statistics. The video channel has been already actively used – and with positive results - by Slovenia press conferences. Encouraged by this experience, Slovenia introduced short video statements (1,5 – 3 minutes) by statisticians, published in news releases. An author of the statement is a statistician responsible for a specific survey or a topic. In simple sentences he or she explains the highlights of the statistics using as few figures as possible, but still remains sufficiently informative. To perform a kind of natural conversation, the PR Officer asks one to three simple questions which the statistician answers briefly. Although it is too early to talk about the results, Slovenia increased the diversity in communication channels and received some positive responses from audiences.
9. The ONS shared its experience in transition from print to web publishing. The presentation explored key aspects of this transition such as the role of drivers for digital transformation, dissemination opportunities offered by web publishing, challenges that ONS faced in the process and outcomes and lessons learnt. It was noted that transition to web publishing demands adequate investment in business change and specialist skills, bolstered by a commitment to invest in continuous improvements. The transition is a cultural shift that requires those involved to develop a digital mindset.
10. Issues raised during the discussion included:
 - Importance of a multidisciplinary approach to producing electronic products;
 - When making data available via government portals, it is important to communicate that official statistics are independent of government;
 - Organizations use less technical and more web-friendly language for writing for the web;
 - Organizations recognize the importance of promotion of their new online initiative. But the approach to the promotion and its degrees vary;
 - Visible and concrete successes of web product distribution help persuade higher management of the need to migrate online.

Session 2: Changes in communication

11. ONS talked about how it uses interactive charts, video and infographics to disseminate statistical messages and increase the understanding of statistics among its user groups. The

talk specifically outlined the benefits of using infographics for illustrating and creating stories about data. ONS also noted how it combines videos and infographics to make communication even more effective. The presentation highlighted that new technologies had made it easier and more cost effective to enter the field interactive design in communication. The benefit of entering the field is an ability to produce engaging content that gives users a wider range of options to choose from.

12. ONS presented its highlights on moving from old means of data visualization to new platforms. By using HTML5, the organization produces appealing and exciting visualizations on complex issues using publically available data. It was noted that new technologies make it possible to produce advanced statistical visualizations with a wide appeal. Syndication of those visualizations represent a huge opportunity for increasing an outreach.
13. UNESCO talked about its experiments in data visualization. The organization adds interactive features to its graphs illustrating a particular issue. It also provides exploratory tools for the data. Increasing the appeal of data, UNESCO also developed a game on gender and education designed for younger audiences. All those efforts increased the exposure of website's visitors to the data.
14. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office noted the importance of mobile devices as means for access to information on the go. The presentation stated that a mere redesign of traditional websites was no longer enough to meet the challenges of the increasing use of mobile devices, of infostreams and the search as a means of accessing the huge amount of information available online. More extensive adjustments are necessary to ensure content management that is non-redundant and independent of presentation, to make this available for many different media and devices and also to ensure, through semantic indexing that this content is used in search requests and infostreams. Content is very important and web services play assisting roles to the content. Statistical information is becoming a service-based service.
15. The presentation from Canada talked about its experience in adopting an employee-driven and stakeholder-focused approach to publishing and interacting online. The organization empowered its employees in posting information about their programs in the public domain. Canada also encouraged its stakeholders and the general public to comment on the content online. Along with it, the organization uses complimentary social media platforms (Twitter, Facebook and YouTube). Canada noted that social media offers a new dimension to communications by fostering real-time exchanges in locations visited by the organization's programs and activities on a continuous basis.
16. Georgia talked about its digital dissemination strategy: online questionnaires, database for administrative sources and different channel for data provision such as press releases, an android app, PC-Axis for web dissemination, the NADA (National Data Archive) system and business portal. There is also an online forum and a Facebook page where users can exchange their views on data. It was noted that the organization became more transparent because of those initiative and it also increased the trust toward the organization.
17. U.S. Census Bureau talked about its approach to data dissemination strategy via various digital platforms. The presentation highlighted the importance of keeping mobile devices in mind while distributing statistical information online. The organization also talked about new digital initiatives it is implementing including new mobile apps, online portals and

website. The importance of internal communications was stressed, and examples of the 'mission data clarity' were presented.

18. Issues raised during the discussion included:

- Infographics can be extremely helpful in explaining data to audiences but they need to be approach also with a visual identity of an organization in mind;
- Graphics and video are important in statistical communication but one needs to have a story in mind before producing those;
- Effecting cultural change may prove to be difficult;
- Respondents are hugely important to the core work and visual communications. There is a need to connect with the respondents and convince them in the benefits of communicating with statistical organizations;
- It is important to find different ways to convince people to responds to surveys and communication managers need to be proactive in increasing the response rates;
- One of the ways to reach respondents can be different lobby groups.

Session 3: Understanding and responding to user needs

19. NSO presented challenges and opportunities for identifying, prioritizing and responding to user needs. Varied and dispersed nature of both the user and producer communities in the United Kingdom creates an environment rich with opportunities for user engagement and evaluation. The presentation gave concrete examples of using different online spaces for identifying the types of behaviour and user needs.
20. The presentation from France focused on an experience in collecting user feedback online and presented 10 recommendations based on that experience. The recommendations included focusing on few precise topics, choosing new topic each year, working closely with colleagues, interviewing specialist and beginner users from different professions, knowing different methods of collecting feedback and varying those methods based on the topic, using the feedback to define actions, issuing the main results of the feedback and acting quickly.
21. Russia noted the challenges created by the increased demand for statistical information and talked about the activities of the Information and Publishing Centre to address those challenges. The presentation also talked about the assessments that the Centre conducts among its users. Russia is currently working on a survey that would fully allow it to analyse the expectations of clients and their satisfaction level.
22. OECD presented its approach to understanding the user needs based on a survey the organization contacted recently. The presentation stressed the importance of ease of access to data, as well as the demand from users for help in understanding and using the available information/data. OECD noted that the continuous change in users' needs must be recognized and organizations need to collect information about those needs repeatedly to ensure the adequate organizations' adaptation to the needs. The presentation also talked about several OECD's initiatives in addressing the users' needs.
23. ONS' presentation focused on stakeholder engagement. It talked about a new user engagement strategy, its goals, delivery options and achievements/results. The organization noted that its new user engagement strategy is a demonstration of the ONS moving toward a more flexible approach to engagement that adapts to changing relationships and

incorporates a wider range of users of statistics. The organization stressed its commitment to becoming more proactive and solution-oriented.

24. U.S. Department of Agriculture talked about its experiences in soliciting and using feedback from various data users and providers. Based on those experiences, the organization noted its desire to increase an ability to communicate with data users and providers to gather a continuous feedback. Although there are many ways and tools to gather the feedback, the U.S. Department of Agriculture focuses on those tools it believes to be the most effective. The organization also noted that it wished to engage its counterparts in government statistical communications and dissemination in a discussion of success and best practices in the field.
25. The presentation from IMF focused on enhancing user value of macroeconomic and financial statistics. It was noted that optimizing user value requires satisfying specific and individual data dissemination user needs. This may be done best by ensuring end-user customization and requires developing flexible and adaptive tools. And this, in turn, can be combined with some degree of user differentiation of customization options based on self-selection designed to fit the characteristics of broad categories of users.
26. Issues raised during the discussion included:
 - There is a need for balance between opening statistical products and APIs to wider audiences' free-of-charge and preserving financial sustainability of those products in some organizations.

Session 4: Good practices in communicating methodology

27. ONS talked about communicating the methodology measuring the coverage of the 2011 Census in England and Wales. The organization produced an acclaimed publication and conducted interactive meetings and work discussions. The meetings and publication targeted general audience with minimal statistical knowledge, as well as statistical community. The messages were targeted accordingly. As a result, ONS noted an increase in better-informed users and less challenges to the estimates of the census.
28. Denmark outlined the basic principles of communicating methodology and talked about challenges in this field. The organization also presented its initiatives and policy on communicating errors and changes in methodology. It was noted that the biggest challenge was to find ways to make the process of communicating methodology more effective and to establish a more consistent system across documentation systems. But a new project in the organization and the setup of its documentation system are expected to effectively address this challenge.
29. Norway presented the principle and challenges of the independent and equal treatment policy in the organization. While communicating the exception to the policy, the organization opted for updating the metadata web document "About the statistics." This change attracted attention of many users and proved that there was more to be done in this regard. It was noted that the communication department, as well as the quality, metadata and legal staff should collaborate even more to provide updated information about the independent and equal treatment policy on time. This is being taken into account in the view of the next peer review of the European Code of Practice that will take place in 2014.
30. Issues raised during the discussion included:

Session 5: Future ideas in communication

31. Eurostat talked about promoting the European Statistical System. Tackling several challenges that ESS faces, Eurostat developed the product identity including a logo, dedicated website and ESS report. The presentation went into details about each of those products.
32. New Zealand's presentation focused on the importance of internal communications and outlined the changes that the organization had to go through in this regard. Enhancing the staff engagement and understanding, the organization focused on creating the story, supporting the members of the organization who can advocate for change, developing tools that make the transformation real and sustainable and creating an internal environment that enabled the external story.
33. European Central Bank presented ways to enhance the communication of statistics based the best practices. The presentation focused on presenting statistics in electronic publications, targeting non-native English speakers, allowing users to replicate statistics for their use, adapting statistical products for mobile devices, using social media, making online statistical products user-friendly, combining maps and charts, presenting easy-to-compare country statistics, featuring the most commonly used statistics and utilizing visualisation in presentation of statistics.
34. China shared some experiences and practices in evaluating the prospects of traditional media to communicate data, the role of new media platforms in communicating statistics, practices in educating media practitioners in statistics and merging internal and external strategies. The presentation also noted that although traditional media are still valuable in communicating statistics, the organizations need to develop more appealing products to meet the needs of younger audience.
35. The second Eurostat presentation focused on a new way of bringing senior management closer to staff by introducing an Advent Calendar with daily personal articles written by top managers.
36. Canada presented new approaches to support, foster and manage innovation within the organization. The employees were offered an opportunity to address challenges that the organization faced. The presentation outlined collaborative tools designed to generate innovative ideas.