

## MEDIA POLICY

Public confidence in official statistics is a vital ingredient of democracy. True democracy is based upon a full and unbiased flow of information and access to it. In the dissemination of its information, the National Statistics Office recognises that the news media, finely tuned to public attitudes and needs, are important partners. The news media have the potential to raise a high degree of public awareness and interest; for this reason, they are invaluable partners to a statistical office that seeks to build confidence and trust in the information it releases. In this light, the NSO seeks to abide by the following principles:

- National and international journalists are provided with easy access to relevant and correct statistics that have been compiled according to transparent and internationally-accepted methodologies. The NSO makes no distinction between journalists working for television stations, radio stations and newspapers, whatever their affiliation, and freelancers.
- Whenever appropriate, journalists are provided with yearbooks, topic publications, analyses, etc. which have been prepared on the basis of already-published information.
- Information is disseminated to the news media in a comprehensible manner. The NSO makes no assumption regarding any specialised knowledge on the part of journalists in the field of statistics. Hence, it is responsible for the clarity and coherency of the statistics it releases.
- The statistical units of the NSO are briefed to cooperate with the news media in statistical matters regarding their particular subject-area. In its day-to-day contact with the news media, the NSO empowers the heads of the various statistical units, or indeed any other employee designated by the Director General, to comment on or to clarify aspects of the statistics for which they are responsible.
- If for some reason it is impossible to contact the statistical unit concerned, journalists are free to contact the Library and Information Unit whose staff will then deal with the query, either on the spot or by re-directing it to an alternative source.
- The NSO sees to it that enquiries from the news media are dealt with quickly and decisively. An employee tackling an enquiry from a journalist is responsible for:

Passing it on to the appropriate person **or**

Passing it on to the Library and Information Unit

In dealing with enquiries from the news media, the Library and Information Unit can be considered as a primary source for NSO statistics, in line with the statistical units responsible for originating the information.

## **NEWS RELEASES**

- News releases are published at 11.00 am and are made simultaneously available to everyone including the news media via e-mail, fax and the Internet.
- For every news release, the NSO tries to ensure that the design and layout enhances the usefulness of the news content to the media, i.e., clear and concise, with the most important news items tackled first. In this, the NSO seeks to avoid the classic 3Ds associated with statistics - they should not be made to seem dull and dry as dust.
- The initiative to issue a news release may originate from the Director General's office or from the statistical units. The text, tables and graphics are provided by the statistical units. The final editing of the text and touches regarding layout are carried out by the Library and Information Unit in dialogue with the statistical unit originating the news release.

## **MISCONCEPTIONS, ERRORS AND CRITICISM**

- The NSO may respond to any misunderstandings or errors regarding its statistics as reported in the news media. Likewise, it may react to criticism based upon these errors.
- Where an error in the text or statistics released by the NSO to the news media is detected, this is promptly rectified by means of an additional news release. Corrections and rectifications are also applicable to the figures disseminated by means of the Internet.
- The initiative to respond or to rectify, as the case be, may originate from the Director General's office or from the Library and Information Unit.
- The Director General is responsible for deciding whether to respond to criticism carried in the news media of any aspect of the work carried out by the NSO. He is also responsible for the manner with which to respond, i.e., by means of a verbal or written contribution, by means of support to the statistical unit concerned, or by means of a discussion paper formulated by the NSO.
- The Library and Information Unit oversees the news media on a daily basis and makes sure that media mentions are brought to the notice of the statistical units and the Director General's office.

## RELATIONSHIP WITH THE NEWS MEDIA

- It is in the interest of the NSO that its publications and statistics are featured in the news media, for stories as well as for news items. Consequently, all statistical products, be they publications, CDs, statistics on diskettes or otherwise, are free of charge to the media. Supplementary data are also free of charge to the media if they are already available within the statistical unit or can be compiled by means of limited efforts. In the case of individual service products, the news media may be charged for cost recovery at the same rate as all the other NSO clients.
- The statistical units and the Library and Information Unit endeavour to be aware of new angles to already-published statistics that could interest journalists. The Library and Information Unit assists journalists to contact the right quarters in this respect.
- The NSO encourages the employees who may have to deal with the news media to keep themselves informed of the NSO's day-to-day and long-term activities and projects.

Invitations to NSO conferences, seminars and workshops are regularly sent out to members of the news media. Press conferences announcing new projects or changes in methodologies are normally held on the NSO premises.