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FSO Dissemination Policy

About this document

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Definitions, abbreviations and acronyms	
Term/abbreviation	Description
ADB	Article planning database
BstatG	Swiss Federal Statistics Act of 9 October 1992
Charter	Swiss Public Statistics Charter (2nd edition January 2008)
CMS	Content Management System
CoP 15 Ind. 1	Code of Practice (European Statistics Code of Practice, February 2005) Principle 15 Indicator 1
FORS/CEDIF	Swiss Foundation for Research in Social Sciences/Centre de Données et d'Informations de la statistique publique (Centre for public statistics data and information)
GOP	Good Output Practice
GNP	Good News Practice
GAP	Good Answering Practice

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1 Introduction

The purpose of a public statistics organisation is to provide information services on behalf of and for the use of the public, which are aimed at a wide range of target groups. Public statistics play a central role in the decision-making processes of the political and business worlds. The role of making information (the statistical outputs) available (dissemination) to the general public is one of the key tasks of the Federal Statistical Office. This policy document describes the foundations, principles and objectives of the dissemination of statistical information.

Dissemination as described in this policy document consists of generic considerations and measures and deals in particular with the form, the means and the tools used to make statistical information available. The content of the statistical outputs, on the other hand, is defined in the strategic business areas, in analysis concepts, in the statistical multi-annual programme and in dissemination concepts.

Important terms

- **Dissemination** covers concepts and activities relating to the output of statistical information.
- The statistical **output** can consist of both results and metadata.
- The **results** can take the form of **aggregated data** or personal data. **Personal data** is generally governed by data protection legislation and is provided on the basis of data protection and confidentiality agreements.
- **Products** are the themed units of information into which the statistical results (the outputs) are grouped.
- **Dissemination concepts** form the basis of the planning process for the article-based dissemination of one or more products.
- **Articles** are self-contained sets of information or information services with a specific content and form which are supplied to users within the context of a product. Articles can have a standardised or customised form.
- **Standardised articles** are information services which are not created in response to specific orders or requests, but are prepared by default and made available via the various distribution channels or media.
- **Customised articles** are prepared and supplied in accordance with individual requests or orders. These can be single or recurring requests. **Data deliveries** to international organisations are one type of recurring request.
- Standardised and customised articles are provided via various **(distribution) channels or media**: in printed form, on data media (such as CD-ROM) and online (internet, telephone or television and radio. The last two are not directly available to the FSO).
- **Article profiles**. Depending on the requirements of the various target groups, articles have a number of different profiles. These article profiles (for example, a brief and easily understood presentation or an in-depth analysis) form the basis for the design of the article models.
- **Article models**. Articles are provided in a number of forms or containers, which are referred to as article models (for example, Leporello or the data/indicators page on the Swiss Statistics portal). Authors can choose a suitable article model when planning specific articles for a certain target group.
- The **article portfolio** is based on a dissemination concept and includes all the articles intended for dissemination relating to one or more products.
- The **publication programme** is the article portfolio for a specific year.
- The **publication process** consists of the following subprocesses or phases: product range planning, publication planning, article production (GOP, GAP) and distribution (GNP).

2 Principles and objectives

The dissemination process must be sufficiently flexible to meet constantly changing requirements.

The dissemination process has to take into account on the one hand the position of and developments in society's information requirements and information technologies and on the other hand, the dissemination resources available within the FSO. Flexibility is essential in order to optimise the way in which tasks are completed. This process of optimisation includes, in particular, ensuring that the dissemination process focuses primarily on the rapid provision of statistical information, but also takes into account the quality of the presentation, which is important for the organisation's image.

The dissemination process is based on the specifications and basic conditions laid down in legislation and in national and international ethical guidelines.

Under the terms of the Swiss Federal Statistics Act (BStatG), the Swiss Public Statistics Charter and the European Statistics Code of Practice (CoP), this includes, in particular, the following essential principles for the dissemination process:

2.1 The public, access and copyright

The most important statistical results and basic data are published. Results which are not published are made available in an appropriate way.

Information is published in the official languages of Switzerland and in English. The specific implementation of this principle is defined in the translation policy of the FSO.

Specific evaluations and tailored analyses are prepared and published when feasible. Short-term research, analysis and consultancy projects can be implemented at the client's expense.

Data deliveries to international statistical organisations are based on agreements or contracts.

Access to microdata is permitted for research purposes. This access is governed by strict regulations as specified in the data protection policy.

(BStatG 18/19, Charter Principle 1, CoP 15 Ind. 3)

Modern information and communication technology and, if appropriate, traditional hard copy are used to distribute information to the different user groups in an objective, professional and transparent manner which meets the users' needs.

(BStatG 18, Charter Principle 9, CoP 15 Ind.1, 2)

The statistical results which are published, made available or produced using data from the federal statistics can be used or reproduced with an indication of the source and without copyright approval.

(BStatG 20, Charter Principle 2, CoP 15)

The statistical information is documented to ensure that it is easier to understand and can be used correctly. The methods and procedures are made publicly available. The relevant standards are defined in the quality policy (for example, concerning the publication of confidence intervals, response rates and sample designs).

(BStatG 18.1, Charter Principle 3, CoP 6 Ind. 4 and 15 Ind.1, 5, 6)

2.2 Objectivity and independence

All statistical information is compiled, presented and annotated on an objective basis, without proposals or recommendations concerning political objectives and measures.

(Charter Principle 6, CoP 6 Ind.1, 2)

Public statistics bodies are entitled to comment on distortive presentations or improper use of their statistical results.

(Charter Principle 8)

2.3 Time of publication and equal treatment

No users are given advance access to statistical information. All users have equal access to statistical data at the same time and privileged pre-release access to any outside user is limited, controlled and publicised. Specific public authorities may be given information in advance under a temporary embargo to allow them to prepare for potential enquiries. The details are described in the policy on consultations and advance information.

(BStatG 18.1, Charter Principles 9 and 10, CoP 6 Ind. 6)

The time between the reference period and the publication of statistical results must be kept as short as possible. The date and the time at which the statistical data is published are announced in advance. A standard time of day is set and adhered to. Any divergence from the publication schedule is publicised in advance and explained and a new publication date is set.

(Charter Principle 11, CoP 6 Ind. 5, 13 Ind. 2, 4)

2.4 Corrections

Results containing significant errors are corrected and the public is informed about this. At the very least, the results are no longer published. This is governed by the policy on the correction of statistical results.

(Charter Principle 12, CoP 6 Ind. 3)

2.5 Archiving

Statistical information is stored in as detailed a form as possible in order to ensure that it can be used by future generations. It contributes to the country's collective memory.

3 Strategic issues

3.1 Target group and product focus

The dissemination process focuses on specific target groups and products. The organisation of information according to surveys is of no relevance for users and therefore does not apply to the dissemination process.

The target group can be divided into three global user groups with specific dissemination requirements: ordinary users, commercial users and academics. Marketing considerations which differentiate users in more detail are based on these three groups.

- **Ordinary users** are interested parties (generally well-informed laypeople) who are looking for information to help them form opinions in their professional environment, in relation to their private interests, in a socio-political context or for educational purposes. Occasional use by the general public (general interest/tourists).

- **Commercial users** are decision-makers (they are usually specialists in their areas, but generalists in terms of methods) who deliberately obtain figures and studies to allow them to make decisions or to support proposals and opinions as part of collective decision-making processes. Goal-directed use by politicians, representatives of industry etc. (business interest/farmers).
- **Academics** are specialists and experts who regularly and on a professional basis collect, search, compile and prepare data and integrate it into proposals and reports for specific purposes or for other people (decision-makers). Further use by specialists and researchers (research interest/miners).

For the purposes of dissemination to specific target groups, a range of article profiles has been defined which are based on the needs of the users. Each article profile has different, carefully defined article models for the print, online and offline media. These article profiles and article models are documented in detail in the publication guidelines. They can be used as specifications when planning articles aimed at specific target groups.

3.2 Structuring the statistical information available/Selecting the dissemination medium

The dissemination process is structured on the basis of the 21 themes of public statistics for all the media. It adheres to the corporate design image of the Swiss Confederation.

Wherever possible, standardised articles are used for dissemination purposes in order to keep the effort and costs involved in producing customised articles (information, specific evaluations) to a minimum.

Particular attention is paid to the dissemination of metadata, in particular the metadata used to make the information on offer available to the public.

Information is disseminated in print, offline and online media. However, online dissemination (www.statistics.admin.ch) takes priority. Guidelines for the choice of the dissemination medium are given below.

3.2.1 Online output

The guidelines for online output specify that all the statistical information on offer must be available online. This includes the electronic versions of printed publications (in PDF format).

3.2.2 Print output

The range of printed publications available is being reduced and replaced by electronic publications (in PDF format) or specific online article models (such as the encyclopaedia, data/indicators and analyses).

The guideline for printed publications is therefore to **focus on a core offering**. This includes:

- Popular brief presentation of the most important results (such as pocket statistics guides on specific products)
- Focus on activities (for example, informing respondents about surveys, multi-annual programme)
- Overview publication in the form of a flagship publication or a product yearbook with the most important results and brief analyses
- Presentation of important news in press releases
- Analyses or studies on important legislative or political themes

The following items also form part of the print output as an **additional offering**:

- Annotated presentation of the results of individual surveys. This print document is produced only in exceptional cases, such as complex surveys which are only carried out every few years and are often co-financed
- A regular themed newsletter as part of the news service containing information about statistical activities and references to further sources of information

3.2.3 Offline output

The guidelines for offline output on data media (such as CD-ROM and DVD) focus on reference works. Collections of detailed results (tables, text, graphics, including diagrams and maps) can be published on data media and are generally incorporated into flagship publications or studies.

3.3 General guidelines on processes and tools

Information should, as far as possible, be disseminated automatically and on the basis of standardised data in order to ensure that it is up-to-date, to reduce the workload of authors and of the central dissemination functions and to keep costs to a minimum.

The tools used for dissemination will periodically be modified to meet changing requirements. These tools are also available to other statistics producers for the dissemination of their results.

The dissemination process for information for research (personal data) is determined in collaboration with the relevant institution (FORS/CEDIF). (The issue of whether this covers all the themes is currently under discussion).

Part of the information disseminated is subject to charges. Statistical information can also be used in a limited context and with special consent for commercial purposes. The principles are defined in the price policy of the FSO.

3.4 Quality assurance

The dissemination process is governed by quality criteria which are specified in the quality management system (quality policy). The dissemination process is periodically evaluated on the basis of specific performance indicators.

Employees of the FSO and other statistics agencies receive training on dissemination for specific product ranges. Information events covering the effective use of public statistics can be held for data users.

The dissemination policy and its individual provisions are evaluated as part of the general quality management process.

3.5 Organisation

The conceptual and operational responsibilities in the area of dissemination are defined in the → dissemination role concept.

4 Processes, planning and tools

Regulated processes are used to disseminate information in all the media via a single point of output which is defined in the processes.

Planning

- In order to ensure that the article portfolio of a statistics product is consistent, continues over several years and is aimed at a specific target group, clear dissemination concepts must be drawn up. These focus on target groups and products and therefore not on surveys.
- The article portfolio and publication programme are planned at periodic intervals on the basis of the dissemination concepts using the article planning database (ADB). The publication programme is authorised by the management team. It forms the foundation for the GOP and GNP processes and for the creation of the agenda in the Swiss Statistics portal.

Production

- The Good Output Practice (GOP) determines the physical production process for the individual articles and the relevant approval points from the approval of the manuscript through to the approval of the completed article which is to be made available to the public.
- The Good Answering Practice (GAP) governs the process of preparing data for customised articles.

Approval for public release

- The Good News Practice (GNP) ensures that the standardised articles and reference activities are released to the public punctually and at the same time.

The various processes include **tools** for authors (or in some cases tools are being planned) which allow them to achieve the strategic focus for the dissemination process referred to above. These tools are:

- The centrally managed and locally maintained article planning database (ADB) for planning the dissemination of information.
- Business intelligence systems, such as the Content Management System (CMS), an editing system and other tools planned as part of the SIS@BFS/Output Services project, for article production.
- A customer relationship management tool for creating customised articles and supporting marketing measures.

New articles are announced at least four months in advance on the Swiss Statistics portal (News/Agenda), in particular press releases.

5 Finance

The resources needed to implement the dissemination policy will be made available as part of the standard budget.

6 Entry into force

This policy comes into force on 01.06.2008.

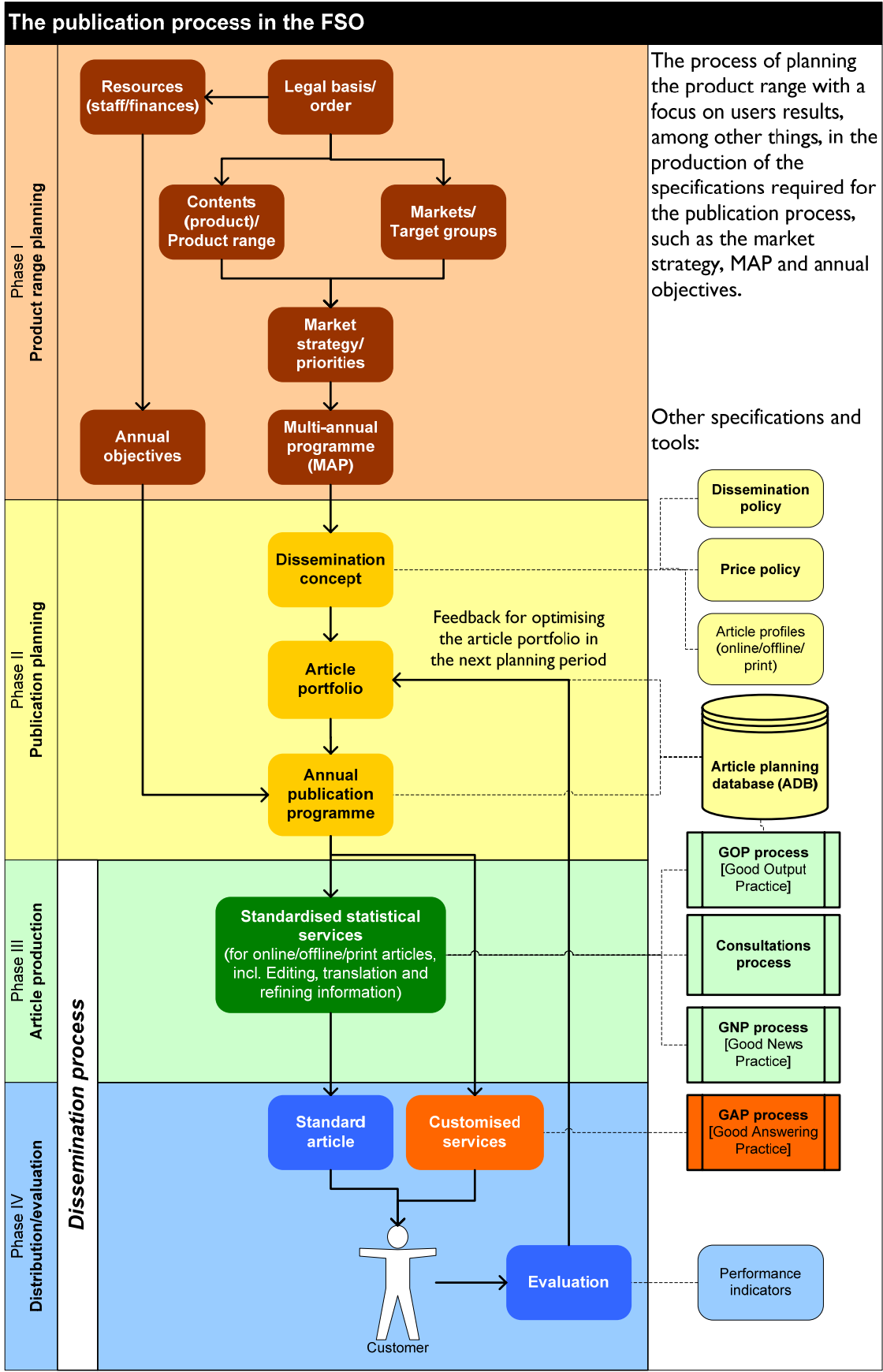
Federal Statistical Office

Dr. Adelheid Bürgi-Schmelz
Director General

7 Appendix/References

Comprehensive documentation on the dissemination process is available on the FSO intranet only.

7.1 Overview of the publication and dissemination process



The article production subprocess (phase 3) is further divided into editing and refining the information. The sequence of events and the responsibilities are defined in the *Good Output Practice guidelines*.

