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CONFÉRENCE DES STATISTICIENS EUROPÉENS
Cinquante et unième réunion plénière
(Genève, 10-12 juin 2003)

RAPPORT DE LA RÉUNION DE TRAVAIL D'OCTOBRE 2002 SUR LA PRODUCTION DE STATISTIQUES POUR DIFFUSION AUX MÉDIAS

Note établie par le secrétariat

1. La réunion de travail s'est déroulée du 28 au 30 octobre 2002, à Genève. Y ont participé les représentants des pays suivants: Allemagne, Belgique, Canada, Chypre, Danemark, Estonie, États--Unis, Fédération de Russie, Finlande, Hongrie, Irlande, Israël, Italie, Lettonie, Lituanie, Norvège, République tchèque, Roumanie, Royaume-Uni, Suède et Suisse. L'Office statistique des Communautés européennes (Eurostat) et l'Organisation internationale du Travail (OIT) étaient également représentés.

2. L'ordre du jour a été adopté.

3. M^me^ Victoria Crompton (Canada) a exercé les fonctions de présidente et M^me^ Angela Schaff (Allemagne) celles de vice-présidente.

ORGANISATION DE LA RÉUNION

4. Les questions de fond ci-après ont été examinées au cours de la réunion:

   i) Examen du projet de document «Les statistiques dans les médias − Guide des meilleures pratiques en matière de relations des services de statistique avec les médias»;

ii) Méthodes, politiques et techniques de diffusion des statistiques;

iii) Utilisation des nouvelles techniques audiovisuelles, électroniques et d'impression pour diffuser les données aux médias.

5. Les participants suivants ont animé les discussions: Thème ii) − Mme Yael Nathan (Israël), Thème iii) − M. Leon Östergaard (Danemark). Les personnes suivantes ont été chargées de réviser les différents chapitres du guide: chapitre 2 − Victoria Crompton (Canada), chapitre 3 − Marc Debusschere (Belgique), chapitre 4 − Per-Åke Bladh (Suède), chapitre 5 − Colleen Blessing et Marianne Zawitz (États-Unis), chapitre 6 − David Marder (Royaume-Uni), chapitre 7 − LaVerne Collins (États-Unis).

TRAVAUX FUTURS

6. Les participants ont décidé d'intituler la publication: «Communiquer avec les médias: Guide destiné aux services de statistique». Le guide comprendra deux versions différentes:

– Une version condensée résumant les principaux éléments qu'il convient de garder à l'esprit lors de l'exécution d'une tâche spécifique;

– Une version détaillée (en hypertexte) sur le Web, reprenant la même structure que la version imprimée, mais qui fournira davantage d'explications, des liens vers des exemples de pays et d'autres informations utiles. Le guide sera publié en anglais. Les services nationaux de statistique pourraient toutefois traduire la version imprimée dans leur propre langue. Le guide comportera un index destiné à faciliter la recherche d'information.

7. Les participants ont recommandé qu'une équipe spéciale soit créée pour achever le guide. Les personnes suivantes se sont proposées pour faire partie de l'équipe spéciale: Victoria Crompton (Statistique Canada), Angela Schaff (Office fédéral allemand de la statistique), Yael Nathan (Bureau central de statistique, Israël), Marc Debusschere (Institut national de statistique, Belgique), Per-Åke Bladh (Office suédois de la statistique), Colleen Blessing (Energy Information Administration, États-Unis), Marianne Zawitz (Bureau of Justice Statistics, États-Unis), David Marder (Office for National Statistics, Royaume-Uni), Laszlo Holka (Bureau central de la statistique, Hongrie), LaVerne Collins (Census Bureau, États-Unis), Sergey Kolesnikov (Comité d'État de la statistique, Fédération de Russie). L'équipe spéciale fonctionnera par courrier électronique et téléconférences, et aucun voyage n'est par conséquent prévu. Le guide devrait être prêt et publié au plus tard en mars 2003.

8. Les participants ont examiné les travaux futurs relatifs aux produits statistiques destinés à être distribués aux médias. Un groupe directeur a été créé pour réfléchir aux futurs travaux éventuels du groupe et à la façon de les préparer. Les personnes suivantes se sont proposées pour faire partie du groupe directeur: Victoria Crompton (Statistique Canada), David Marder (Office for National Statistics, Royaume-Uni), Yael Nathan (Bureau central de statistique, Israël), Andrei Maslianenko (Comité d'État de la statistique, Fédération de Russie), Angela Schaff (Office fédéral allemand de la statistique), Jan Tuček (Institut tchèque de la statistique), Audrone Miskiniene (Institut lituanien de la statistique). Les participants ont estimé qu'il était souhaitable qu'un représentant des États-Unis fasse partie du groupe directeur. La personne en question n'a pas encore été choisie.

9. Les participants ont été informés d'une proposition faite par le Service norvégien de statistique et Statistique Canada, et appuyée par le Service suédois de statistique, visant à lancer un débat concernant la diffusion de commentaires statistiques: expliquer des chiffres avec des mots. Les participants ont recommandé qu'un groupe directeur soit créé pour élaborer un projet d'organisation de réunion qui serait consacrée à ce thème. Les pays suivants proposé de participer à ce groupe: Canada, Danemark, Fédération de Russie, Hongrie, Italie, Norvège, Roumanie, Royaume-Uni, Suède et Suisse.

10. Les participants ont souligné les avantages d'une coopération internationale renforcée dans les activités consacrées à la diffusion, à la communication et à la promotion des statistiques.

11. Les participants ont adopté le rapport de la réunion lors de la séance de clôture. Les autres conclusions des participants sont reproduites en annexe au présent rapport (en anglais seulement).

ANNEX

SUMMARY OF THE MAIN CONCLUSIONS REACHED AT THE WORK SESSION

Session A: Review of the draft Handbook on best practices for statistical offices in dealing with the media.

Working Papers number 2,3,4,5,6,7.

1. It was decided that the publication will be called ***Communicating with the Media: a Guide for Statistical Organizations***. The meeting discussed the content and structure of the Guide, as well as its format and the procedures for finalizing the material after the meeting. The discussion was based on the draft prepared by Laszlo Holka (Hungarian Central Statistical Office) and the revision of chapters done by a Steering Group consisting of Victoria Crompton (Statistics Canada), Marc Debusschere (Statistics Belgium), Per-Åke Bladh (Statistics Sweden), Colleen Blessing (U.S. Energy Information Administration), Marianne Zawitz (U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics), David Marder (Office for National Statistics, U.K.) and LaVerne Collins (U.S. Census Bureau).

2. There was general agreement that the Guide would be useful for improving statistical data dissemination to media in the ECE region and outside. On the one hand, it would serve as a reference guide for less advanced statistical agencies, and on the other hand, as an inventory of accumulated experience in the more advanced agencies. The target user group are the newcomers to media relations work, as well as more experienced staff. It can also provide information to the management of statistical offices helping to plan the work of dissemination and press departments.

3. It was agreed that the language of the Guide should be clear and simple, and the titles should be short and define the content clearly. The Guide should focus on the specific needs of media and convey to statisticians an understanding of the way the journalists work. The format of the Guide will be twofold:

a) A short printed version in A5 format (about 30-60 pages) summarizing the points to keep in mind when carrying out a specific task. The text of this part will be concise and with short paragraphs listing briefly the key issues. The short version will focus on issues related to media.

b) An extended version (hypertext) on the Web following the same structure as the short version, with more elaborated text on topics (dos and don'ts, pros and cons, etc.), including country examples and links to other useful information. Some topics that are not exclusively dealing with the media (e.g., branding, corporate identity, increasing statistical literacy) will still be available in the extended version. The short printed version will contain references to the hypertext-version.

4. The Guide will include an index to facilitate finding information. The Guide will be produced in English but the national statistical offices might consider translating the short version into their national language.

5. For these parts in the Guide where no or very little material is available from the previous work sessions, the Chapter coordinators are asked to formulate a short text to explain the problem. These issues are also highlighted as potential topics for future work of the group.

6. The meeting agreed on the structure of the Guide as follows:

I. Introduction
II. Objectives, principles and management issues
III. Organizational matters
IV. Methods and tools
V. Web-based dissemination to the media
VI. Training of journalists and statisticians
VII. Media crises

7. A proposal was made to move the chapter dealing with organizational matters after chapter V. The Task Force will decide on the final order of Chapters when all the updated texts are ready.

8. The **introduction** should be fairly short (about one page) and give an overview of the content of the Guide, its target audience and how to use the material.

9. **Chapter II: Objectives, principles and management issues**. Victoria Crompton (Statistics Canada) presented the revision of chapter II. It was agreed that the word ‘media’ should be clearly defined, and distinction should be made between different groups of media, such as television, newspapers, news agencies, general or specialized media, electronic or print media, local or national media, etc.

10. It was recommended to highlight in the dissemination principles that the national statistical offices (NSOs) are important, relevant and vital to the country. The focus should be on user-friendly dissemination towards media, that is, on the objectives of dissemination that are specific to the media (such as timeliness, newsworthiness, etc.). The importance was stressed of building the relationship with the media to achieve effectively these objectives. The chapter might also touch upon the coordination of dissemination to media with dissemination to the general public without the mediation of journalists (e.g. via websites).

11. There was general agreement that the issues of branding and corporate identity will not be included in the short version of the Guide. However, these materials will be available in the extended version on the website.

12. It was noted that the information on pricing practices in NSOs concerning products disseminated to the media requires updating. To this end, the UNECE will send out to the meeting participants once again the questionnaire on pricing that was used for the 1999 survey.

13. It was decided to move the topic ‘dealing with authorities’ (linked also to the problem of independence of statistics) from chapter III to this chapter. The question of who decides what and when to release to the media is a management issue and concerns the integrity of the press office. The Russian Federation promised to contribute to this section.

14. **Chapter III: Organizational matters.** March Debusschere (Statistics Belgium) presented the revision of the chapter. There should be a clear distinction between the management issues (Chapter II), organizational issues (Chapter III) and methods (Chapter IV). Therefore, this chapter should include answers to the 'what' and 'why' of organizational issues, but not the operational aspects. Useful material and country examples for this chapter can be found in the papers considered during the session 'Methods, policies and techniques of statistical dissemination' of the meeting.

15. The section III.1 'Data types, formats and dissemination strategies' will cover also the issues to be considered when choosing between print and electronic products. Which is the best format depends on the data type and the dissemination strategies to different kinds of users. The chapter V "Web-based dissemination" will deal with the problems occurring when the choice for electronic dissemination via the Web has already been made.

16. The meeting noted that the relations between media services and the 'back-office' is an important topic belonging to this chapter. This concerns the organization of work of the different units and databases in the statistical office in order to provide a fast and accurate response to the demands of media. The position and responsibilities of the press department and the organization of communication with the media in statistical offices should be also covered here.

17. There is a possible overlap between this chapter and the chapter on media crises. It was agreed that there can be some overlap considering the same things from different angles but repetition should be avoided. Instead, reference can be made to other parts of the Guide. The topics on handling media crises and dealing with negative press coverage will remain in a separate chapter. However, the organizational issues related to promoting key statistical releases covered in chapter VII should be incorporated into chapter III.

18. Angela Schaff (Germany) agreed to supervise the finalization of chapter III with the assistance and input from Marc Debusschere (Belgium) and Yael Nathan (Israel). Marc will update the chapter according to comments made at the meeting and then transfer the work to Angela.

19. **Chapter IV: Methods and tools**. Per-Åke Bladh (Statistics Sweden) presented the revision of the Chapter by outlining its four main issues. These are:

a) how to obtain more publicity;
b) news releases, who should write, how to write, how to disseminate;
c) positive and negative experiences with embargos and lock-ups;
d) who is to be the spokesperson.

20. This chapter will contain the 'how' of the operational issues in communicating with the media. Useful information on methods and tools can be taken also from Chapter VII presented by the U.S. Census Bureau.

21. It should be clearly defined what is meant by a press release and a news release, including electronic press release. The practices vary between countries. Not all released data merits a press release and some statistical offices do not have good experience with news releases. To

address this issue, for example, Statistics Canada makes a distinction between major and minor releases. Donato Speroni (Italy) agreed to contribute explaining the needs for different kinds of press and news releases depending on the type of media (e.g. general and specialised newspapers, financial agencies, news agencies, etc.).

22. The scheduling of press releases was discussed. The Guide could include a brief summary of issues to consider when thinking about the timing of releases, for example, taking into account the opening of financial markets, periods when newspapers have little other material and the probability of getting media coverage is higher (e.g. on Sundays). When the news releases are issued, the access to persons who could provide more information and explanations should also be guaranteed.

23. The issue of how to write press releases was discussed at length. Participants agreed that it is worth highlighting in the Guide the different ways in which NSOs prepare releases. A good principle to always keep in mind is KISS: Keep It Short and Simple. Examples of different practices concerning the formulation of titles, referring to persons (using direct speech, quoting statistical office's staff, etc.) could be given in the Guide. There should be a warning about the implications of a journalistic title: creating 'snappy' titles can possibly distort coverage in the media. However, a 'hook' for the story is often required to attract the attention of journalists. Marc Debusschere promised to provide examples for that. Canada, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Sweden and U.S. Energy Information Administration have produced useful manuals on how to write press/news releases. The participants were asked to send such materials (or links to them) to Per-Åke Bladh to include in the extended version of the Guide. It was also suggested to have good and bad examples of press releases in the extended version.

24. The question of who writes the press/news releases is solved in different ways in different agencies. They can be written by statisticians, and afterwards edited by journalists, or they can be written by journalists in the first place. The pros and cons of both approaches should be reflected in the Guide. It was considered important to mention in the press release a reference person whom media representatives could contact for further information, including outside work hours. If there is an official spokesperson for the office, which is in many cases the director, a briefing to him/her should be given by the statistician releasing the data. The messages given by different people should be coordinated so that the statistical office speaks with one voice.

25. It was decided to move the 'Use of computerized statistical output in communication with press and other media' to Chapter V. At the same time, the topics dealing with lock-ups, premature releases, broken embargoes, evaluating communication with journalists outside the web, and new communication technologies for supporting contact with the media will be moved from chapter V to chapter IV. Finally, it was agreed that this chapter could be longer than the others, since it covers many practical and operational aspects.

26. **Chapter V: Web-based dissemination to media.** Colleen Blessing (U.S. Energy Efficiency Administration) presented the revision of the chapter that she did with Marianne Zawitz (U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics). There is a lack of examples from NSOs on the topics covered in this chapter, but these issues should still be mentioned, and examples collected from NSOs as soon as possible. Useful material and country examples for this chapter can be also

found in the papers considered during the discussion on 'Use of new audio-visual, electronic and print technologies in disseminating data to the media' of the Work Session.

27. It was decided that when discussing these issues in the Guide, the word 'Internet' should be replaced with 'web', or 'website'. The Guide will emphasize that dissemination via the web itself is not enough to ensure better accessibility of statistical data. With the growing number of users, the role of intermediaries has, in fact, increased. The move from presenting only numbers to disseminating text should be reflected in the text.

28. The pricing of data dissemination to media is in general covered in Chapter II. However, the questions of cost recovery of web dissemination can be considered here. David Pullinger (UK) promised to send material on that topic to Colleen Blessing.

29. It was felt important to discuss the required skill mix for implementing web dissemination and to mention the issue of training current staff and hiring new staff to maintain websites. Providing the services required with the changing demand from users presents new challenges and calls for new resources from NSOs.

30. A topic requiring further work in future is a style guide for NSO websites. It could provide recommendations on the structural architecture and content of statistical websites. Some offices prepare templates for their web pages so that standards are followed and all pages bear a corporate identity. Germany and Israel will send examples to Colleen Blessing and Marianne Zawitz.

31. Concerning web customer feedback, the need was highlighted to get feedback on how the media uses the NSO websites and exchange experiences regarding user surveys. This chapter should also address how portals could be used for media access. If there are portals that include statistics maintained by government or other agencies, the statistical press releases could be also made available there.

32. See para 25 above for the issues that should be moved between chapters IV and V.

33. **Chapter VI: Training of journalists and statisticians**. David Marder (UK) presented his suggested structure of the chapter. This chapter was seen as a model that others could follow (style with bullet points, positive and negative sides). The topic of 'increasing statistical literacy' will solely be presented in the hypertext, and not in the short version of the Guide. The hypertext can include links to more information on that issue, such as a website on a conference on increasing statistical literacy which is held every three years. Giovanni Barbieri will send David Marder the link to this website.

34. **Chapter VII: Media crises**. LaVerne Collins (U.S. Census Bureau) presented together with her colleagues Kenneth Meyers and Mark Tolbert the revision of chapter VII through a teleconference.

35. It was agreed that the part concerning promotion of key statistical releases should be incorporated in Chapters III and IV dealing with organizational issues and tools respectively. In this case, the crisis management could be extended from the present version.

36. The participants considered it desirable to have a classification of media crisis in the Guide, based on the one presented by LaVerne Collins. Strategies for handling crises should cover also other types of crisis that are not caused by mistakes in communicating with the media. Events such as natural disasters might require a statistical office to address the general public through the media to explain the situation and, if possible, to ensure that the statistical office is able to continue its work. A good example was the presentation by the Czech Statistical Office of its response to the damage caused by the recent floods.

37. To be able to react quickly in the event of a crisis, it is advisable to have a list of standby statements for different types of crises that can be modified according to the situation. An example of such a list could also be included in the Guide.

38. The occurrence of media crises can be seen as an indication that the statistical office's practices of communicating with the media and general public should be reviewed. For example, in Germany the statistical office changed totally its communication strategy after a major crises during the population census in 1987 and the same kind of crisis has not been repeated afterwards.

Session B: Methods, Policies and Techniques of Statistical Dissemination

Invited Papers by Norway (WP.8) and Italy (WP.9)
Contributed Papers by Azerbaijan (WP.10), Denmark (WP.12), Kyrgyzstan (WP.11), Russia (WP.21) and ILO (WP.20)

39. The presentation by **Norway** (WP.8) focused on 'statistical storytelling' as an extended form of statistical analysis, aimed at increasing the number of users/customers of statistical products and statistical knowledge among the public. It emphasized creativity in the presentation of statistics and relating data to people's lives. The presentation by **Italy** (WP.9) dealt with statistical advocacy and dissemination, and the need for capacity building in these areas in developing and transition countries. The need to spread internationally good practices in statistical dissemination calls for the establishment of a global network of statistics disseminators for the exchange of experience among colleagues worldwide.

40. The five contributed papers illustrated the different ways in which ILO and NSOs disseminate statistical data to the public and improve working relationship with the media. In **Azerbaijan** (WP.10), the process of collecting and disseminating statistics in an electronic form has been restructured to be in line with international standards. However, the main form of dissemination is currently printed publications. The Government of **Kyrgyzstan** (WP.11) has developed an information policy aimed at establishing a single information environment which will facilitate electronic access to data by both state bodies and the general public. The **Russian Federation** (WP.21) gave an overview of its wide-ranging media campaign to support the implementation of the 2002 Population Census. The campaign was successful in overcoming public mistrust in government institutes and resulted in a very high response rate. In **Denmark** (WP.12), a new strategy has considerably increased the use of statistics in the media as evidenced by monitoring the media coverage. The **ILO** paper (WP.20) elaborated on the ways in which the organization has disseminated international labour statistics for over eighty years, and its recent statistical Internet application (including access to the LABORSTA database).

41. The use of advanced information technology for statistics dissemination has considerably widened the categories of users. Statistical offices are therefore looking for ways to present data in a more user-friendly and simple way to the general public in addition to professional users. The media are seen as key users and conveyors of information to the wider public. It is important to use different channels and approaches to different media and for different types of data.

42. In the process of technological advancement, several important issues of dissemination might be neglected. There is still a need for activities aimed at expanding the use of statistical data and enhancing awareness among specific target populations such as students, manufacturers, advertisers, etc.

43. The shift of focus to electronic dissemination can initiate a transformation of the whole office and reviewing the way things are done. It emphasizes the need to integrate statistics and to have a topic-based approach. For this purpose, collaboration between the different subject-matter areas, and between statisticians, IT specialists, media specialists, etc. is important.

44. Statistical bureaus throughout the world have begun to employ an increasing number of programmers and systems analysts, while emphasis has been placed on electronic dissemination. In some countries, plans are discussed to discontinue printed publications altogether. However, the dissemination strategies often focus too much on the technical aspects and do not pay enough attention to content-related aspects.

45. The demand for more statistical data and with more detail creates a challenge for statistical offices to find ways to meet these demands. The dissemination often tends to focus on production of information for “intelligent users”, while devoting less attention to guiding users and teaching them how to “use information wisely”. Feed-back from customers, focus groups and surveys on the services provided by NSOs is important to enable a better supply of information. User research can be outsourced in order to get more objective information.

46. All countries agree on the importance of working closely with the media. The most efficient methods for that depend largely on the local circumstances. For example, in some countries press conferences are very popular receiving a lot of interest from the media. In other countries the press prefers more “exclusive” means of communicating with the statistical offices. The statistical agencies also have to take into account the competition among media. Sometimes the newspaper editors want to have the same stories as published in other media, sometimes they are looking for specific information that is not distributed in competing channels.

47. Participants shared positive experiences of being pro-active with the media, for example by visiting them and proposing ideas for data that could be of interest to the general public. Experience has shown that ready-made stories are often used by journalists. The importance of maintaining independence and objectivity when it comes to a pro-active engagement with the media was emphasised. It is important to find journalists interested in certain topics, which statistical offices can then target. It is also fruitful to target the news agencies that spread the news to a wider group of journalists.

48. Participants agreed on the need to find a balance between disseminating only figures and complementing the data with comments and analysis. Dry figures are not attractive to the

general public and the media. It is better to identify the story line (or highlight particular data) to help people understand the world around them. However, the storytelling might be more suitable for dissemination of social data while the experts on economic and financial data often prefer to analyse the data themselves. In finding the balance between the facts and the context, it is important to avoid political connotation.

49. A general trend towards more use of electronic products has been observed. At the same time, there is a consistent demand for print publications, especially for flagship publications, such as annual reports. The media often still likes to work from paper, even in technologically well-developed countries. Also, it seems that with spreading data dissemination on Internet, too much hope was put on users to find their own way to the data. There are still many users who do not know how to access the information on Internet and how to formulate requests in a way that will yield the required statistical information. The need for guidance to users in using the website and understanding the data should not be underestimated.

50. Experience has shown that it is good to offer both electronic and paper versions, and ask people to choose either of these. NSOs need to focus on the differences in presentation of data in electronic and print format to maximize the value of both presentation methods. With regard to publishing data on Internet, archiving and documentation is an unresolved issue that needs to be discussed in the future.

Session C: Use of new audio-visual, electronic and print technologies in disseminating data to the media.

Invited Papers by the Czech Republic (WP.13) and Italy (WP.15)
Contributed Papers by U.S. Energy Information Administration (WP.14), Hungary (WP.16), Russia (WP.17), and U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics (WP.18).

51. The presentation by the **Czech Republic** (WP.13) introduced the new website of the Czech Statistical Office. The website includes a database of frequently asked questions which allows to economize resources needed for client support and provides a useful source of information for improving data presentation on the Internet. The presentation by **Italy** (WP.15) called for cooperation between disseminators and media professionals to increase statistical literacy and the use of statistics as a tool for governance. Emphasis was placed on the important role of mediators: statisticians and journalists, and their increased responsibility with the advent of the Internet in enabling access to statistical information. The **U.S. Energy Information Administration** (WP.14) outlined the so-called ‘third generation’ of issues related to websites with emphasis on user-friendliness and responsiveness to feed-back from users. In this context, the agency has systematically conducted customer surveys on their website and developed web standards for easy access.

52. The three contributed papers dealt with new technology and methods of data dissemination and easy access. The paper from **Hungary** (WP.16) explained the Stadat system in use by the HCSO, which consists of two main parts: a static part including ready-made tables and a dynamic part providing online access to database. The **Russian** paper (WP.17) focused on the review of Goskomstat’s dissemination strategy over the last years, and in particular the launching of a website and establishment of the Information and Publishing Centre. The paper

by **U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics** (WP.18) presented ten design guidelines for developing user-friendly statistical data access on the web.

53. It was agreed that electronic dissemination is likely to constitute the main dissemination channel in the future, with print publications continuing but in a more supplementary form. Therefore, it is crucial that NSOs aim at making all their data available in an electronic format possibly providing access to databases. The electronic dissemination of figures should be supported with sufficient text to make the data understandable to the non-expert user.

54. Participants noted that with the increasing use of electronic methods for dissemination, the focus has shifted from dissemination problems to reception problems. With the growing number of ordinary users more emphasis should be put on communication skills and on the use of professional communicators, e.g. journalists. Measuring the usability of NSOs' websites was seen as a priority in future. User-friendly methods of navigation and search on the website become increasingly important. The glossaries of all common concepts and words used can also be helpful. Some offices try to group the data into themes arguing that if there is a very clear top layer, there could be no need for a glossary. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) is another commonly used tool to ease user navigation. In this case, it should be done based on questions as users formulate them, not statisticians. It is important also to let users know when data are not on your site.

55. The use of embargos and lock-ups was discussed. The NSOs have different methods for releasing the market sensitive data to the press and the choice often depends on the type of data. Embargos are used more for social data and less often for market sensitive economic and financial data. Many statistical offices do not use embargos as it is not easy to check whether the embargo was broken. Also, choosing the clients who can get data under an embargo can be considered a violation of the principle of equal access to data.

56. Another possibility is a lock-up briefing in a special room where all outward communication is cut until the time of the official release. The journalists are given detailed information and briefed by statisticians. This facilitates correct coverage and gives the journalists time to prepare their reports, a need that distinguishes media from other users. Lock-ups are used more for releasing financial and economic data from big countries that have an impact on world economy. It was agreed that the topic of using embargos and lock-ups could be further explored at a future meeting.

57. Another issue that requires special attention on the web is handling the revisions of data. Some NSOs just replace old tables with new ones which can create a discrepancy with an earlier press release on the same issue. Some NSOs only put the latest data and press releases on the web. If there is a major revision to data, a special notice on the web should be published and data should always be accompanied by the date of its last update. There should be a clear revision policy and it is advisable to post it on the website.

58. The need to target better the different users was discussed. Some statistical offices plan to set up portals for different users. The media can be reached via virtual press rooms on the Web. The press-rooms require contact possibility outside working hours. Some privileges can be

attached to the press-rooms (e.g. free material, data under embargo, etc.) to make them attractive to the media. This topic could be further explored in future.

59. There was general agreement that better methods are needed for monitoring to what extent and how media is using the NSO websites. Currently it is not done in a systematic way but some information can be retrieved from other customer feedback (phone calls, discussions etc). It requires a special effort to get to know who are the users on Internet, and it is even more complicated when the focus is on a specific target group like the media. This is another topic that merits attention in future.

60. Using electronic methods makes dissemination more timely. It was noted that the timing of print and electronic publications should be coordinated and the electronic release should not be held up when the paper publication is not ready. Dynamic access to the database can be an efficient tool to disseminate data outside official working hours. In this case, the problem of ensuring 24-hour customer support should be solved.

Session D: Future work

61. **Finalizing the publication *Communicating with the media: a guide for statistical organizations*.** It was decided to set up a Task Force to finalize the Guide. The Task Force would, to a great extent, consist of the people who worked on revising the draft. The following persons volunteered to participate in the Task Force: Victoria Crompton (Statistics Canada), Angela Schaff (Federal Statistical Office of Germany), Yael Nathan (CBS Israel), Marc Debusschere (Statistics Belgium), Per-Åke Bladh (Statistics Sweden), Colleen Blessing (U.S. Energy Information Administration), Marianne Zawitz (U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics), David Marder (Office for National Statistics, U.K.), Laszlo Holka (Central Statistical Office of Hungary), and LaVerne Collins (U.S. Census Bureau).

62. The Task Force will communicate by e-mails and teleconferences, so no travel is anticipated. It is planned to finalize the text for the short version by the end of November (except for Chapter III for which the deadline is end of December). All Chapters will then be sent to Colleen Blessing for final editing with a deadline for the edited version at end of January. After that, the material will be sent to the Task Force for final comments before publishing.

63. It is planned to hold a teleconference of the Task Force in January to discuss in more detail how the extended version of the Guide (hyptertext) will be organized. The version 1.0 is expected to be finalized and made available on the UNECE Statistical Division's website by the end of March. This version can be later amended and updated to reflect the changing practices of statistical offices media relations.

64. The statistical offices that did not yet check whether the examples from their countries are valid can do so after the meeting and send their updates to the secretariat (tiina.luige@unece.org).

65. **Statistical output for dissemination to information media**. A Steering Group was formed to think about possible future outputs of this group and the ways to prepare these outputs. The following persons volunteered to participate in the Steering Group: Victoria Crompton

(Statistics Canada), David Marder (ONS, U.K.), Yael Nathan (CBS Israel), Andrei Maslianenko (State Committee of the Russian Federation on Statistics), Angela Schaff (Federal Statistical Office of Germany), Jan Tuček (Czech Statistical Office), Audrone Miskiniene (Statistics Lithuania). It was considered desirable to have a representative from the United States also participating in the Steering Group, but the person has yet to be designated.

66. Several topics that would require further research were identified during the meeting and the consideration of the draft *Guide*. The Steering Group can keep these issues in mind when thinking about the future work of the group. These topics are:

- relations between media services and the back-office;
- dealing with authorities, independence of statistics and the role of the media in that;
- choosing between different data types, formats and their dissemination strategies;
- special needs of journalists;
- style guides for NSO websites;
- monitoring media use of statistics and statistical websites, user surveys;
- website usability;
- portals (statistical and others, gaining interest of press through portals);
- press rooms on the web;
- archiving and documentation of information resources on Internet.

67. The Work Session was informed about a proposal by Statistics Norway and Statistics Canada, supported by Statistics Sweden, to discuss the **dissemination of statistical commentary: using words to explain the numbers.** The meeting recommended that a Steering Group be set up to prepare a proposal for the organization of such a meeting. Representatives from the following countries volunteered to participate in this work: Canada, Denmark, Hungary, Italy, Norway, Romania, Russian Federation, Sweden, Switzerland and United Kingdom.
