



## Final Panel Discussion

### Conclusions and Questions



## Boundary for Official Statistics?

- No consensus on a “precise boundary”
- **Broad** definition would cover all relevant statistical information produced by “public authorities” but even here boundary is being challenged in public perception (e.g. high profile statistics produced by business groups or research agencies)
- **Narrow** definition might involve one or more of:
  - Produced by NSI
  - Included in formal statistical programme
  - Subjected to quality assessment (e.g. by reference to Code of Practice)
- Situation in decentralised systems may be more complex
- NSIs must, as a first priority, guarantee the quality of own output but should also actively engage with and assist other producers



## Independence versus Relevance

- There may be a trade-off or tension between maintaining full independence and ensuring that statistics are relevant (e.g. need to avoid isolation from policy makers etc.)
- Statistical legislation and other support arrangements (e.g. user councils) are essential in ensuring that the right balance can be achieved
- NSI must be pro-active in bridging any divide
- Role and status of the Head of the NSI very important but what relative weights should be attached to key job requirements of professional status; managerial leadership ability; and knowledge of or ability to interact with political/administrative system?



## NSI undertaking other activities

- Examples presented of NSIs engaging in other activities such as forecasting, modelling and establishment of general purpose business register
- Synergies obtained and potential conflicts avoided through careful management of the risks
- Fundamental Principles of Statistics relating to **impartiality** and **confidentiality** are the most relevant in assessing compatibility of other activities
- A strict interpretation of the FP would be very restrictive and raises the question whether a more flexible view should be entertained that might focus on risk management rather than risk avoidance?



## Accountability

- Three forms of accountability can be identified, namely: administrative, professional and democratic – all are important and must be addressed
- The desirability of direct accountability to Parliament as opposed to Government is perhaps worthy of further discussion?
- Active dialogue with customers is a key element in ensuring effective accountability – can be facilitated through users councils/forums, customer satisfaction surveys and dedicated marketing/communication strategies
- The professionalism and positive public image of the NSI are indispensable in maintaining public trust