

Conference of European Statisticians

Relationships between Statisticians and Policy Makers

Maintaining independence whilst addressing demands

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Programme

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|------------------|---|
| 1010-1025 | Introducing the papers
General themes
Key statements |
| 1025-1110 | Part 1: Questions on understanding the
boundaries of official and unofficial
statistics |
| 1110-1130 | Break |
| 1130-1230 | Part 2: Questions on understanding the
relationships between statisticians and
policy makers |

Papers

- **Australia** **Brian Pink (ABS)**
Are the Boundaries of Official Statistics being Challenged?
- **Canada** **Munir A Sheikh (Statistics Canada)**
Maintaining Independence whilst addressing data demands
- **Chile** **Mariana Schkolnik (INE Chile)**
Interpreting Chilean reality through National Statistics
- **Netherlands** **Frans Hoeve (CBS Netherlands)**
Statistics and Policy Making in the Netherlands
- **Ukraine** **Oleksandr Osaulenko (SSCU Ukraine)**
Assuring Professional Independence and Objectivity of information
- **UK** **Richard Laux (UK Statistics Authority)**
Boundary Issues in relation to UK Official Statistics

General Themes (1)

- **Legislation**
Is statistical legislation necessary to achieve right balance between independence and relevance?
If so, which legislative model should be recommended?
- **Institutional Structures**
There are many different statistical systems (centralised, decentralised, devolved, mixed economy, etc.). To what extent does this affect independence and addressing demands?
- **Scope**
Where should the boundaries of official statistics stop? (confined to NSO and NSO-supervised? Extended to all Central Government? Local Government? Arms-Length bodies? Researchers?)
What do the associated governance arrangements look like?
How do we help the public to distinguish between the various categories of quantitative information? Differential branding?

General Themes (2)

- **Independent Scrutiny**

Is it necessary to have an independent Watchdog?
If so, what model should be used?

- **Stakeholder Networks/Relations**

Is it necessary to establish a formal "User Council"?
If so, what feedback/networking model works best?

- **Professional Behaviour**

Is it necessary to have a code of practice and/or code of conduct?
If so, to whom should it apply? (Ministers? Officials?
Professionals? Together? Separate?)

General Themes (3)

- **Statistical Programming and Reporting**

To what extent should there be a statistical programme/plan?
Over what timeframe?

- **Funding**

What importance should be attached to (a) the source of statistical funding and (b) the timespan of statistical funding

- **Release Practices**

Does privileged early access to statistical releases constitute a threat to professional autonomy and independence?
If so, what sort of controls should be placed on preferential early access?

General Themes (4)

- **Status of Chief Statisticians/DGs in NSOs**

What sort of status should the Chief Statistician have within the machinery of government?

What should be their method and duration of appointment?

What should be the conditions of their appointment?

- **Governance/Operational Structure**

Should the Chief Statistician establish any particular type of organisational structure? (along functional or cross-cutting lines?)

Should the Chief Statistician establish any particular type of committee structure?

What sort of Chairmanship/membership arrangements work best?

- **Outsourcing of Delivery**

To what extent can delivery be left to outside contractors or the private sector?

Key Statements

Australia

“The blurring in the mind of many users of the boundary between “official” and “unofficial” statistics should be of concern to all of us with responsibilities for the evolution of official statistics at both national and international levels in the 21st century”

Canada

“To be credible, NSOs **must be** fully independent of policy making departments but to be relevant, NSOs **must not be** isolated from policy making departments”

Key Statements

Chile

“Chile has a decentralised statistical system in which 55 institutions produce diverse statistics”

Netherlands

“An independent statistical agency **means** honouring the principle of non-exclusivity of information.... There **cannot be** a preferential treatment for government parties”

Key Statements

Ukraine

“Statistical independence is determined by legal status of the statistical office, visible influence, the legal framework, level of culture in society and historical traditions”

United Kingdom

“There are over one hundred producers of official statistics in the UK.... ONS accounts for about one fifth of the UK statistical system activity.... 19% of National Statistics are produced by ONS”

Part 1

Understanding the Boundaries of Official and Unofficial Statistics

Q1

Australia

Is it the role of the NSO to determine the boundaries of official statistics or is this a role for policy makers in government?

Q2**United Kingdom**

With such a decentralised and devolved statistical system in the UK, how is it possible to manage the boundaries of official statistics effectively?

Q3**Netherlands**

Do any difficulties arise from other Ministries producing figures that are not classified as Official Statistics?

Q4

Australia

How should NSOs enforce the boundaries of official statistics?

Q5

Chile

Your paper describes the decentralised nature of statistics in Chile. What is your approach to defining the boundaries of official and unofficial statistics?

Q6

United Kingdom

What are the major challenges in building trust through a broad interpretation of official statistics?

Q7

Australia

How do we tackle confused perceptions about the utility and integrity of the growing range of unofficial statistical sources?

BREAK

Part 2

**Understanding the Relationships
between Statisticians and Policy
Makers**

Q8**Canada**

The Canadian Chief Statistician is a Deputy Minister. Does not that imply some political partiality and create difficulties?

Q9**Ukraine**

Has the historical difficulty of ensuring independence improved since procedures for appointment of Regional Heads were changed in 2004?

Q10**Netherlands**

You say that in CBS, there cannot be preferential treatment for government parties. How do you achieve this in practice?

Q11**Chile**

Your paper describes the importance of policy making through statistics. Please describe the quality of relationships with policy makers? How do you maintain independence whilst addressing demands?

Q12

Canada

The paper implies that it is policy makers that must identify the statistical priorities of their country. What about other users of statistics?

Q13

Ukraine

What efforts have been made to measure public impressions of political impartiality since the adoption of the new law on State Statistics?

Q14**United Kingdom**

Has the establishment of the UK Statistics Authority Monitoring and Assessment team made a difference to relationships between statisticians and policy makers?

Q15**Netherlands**

With limited human resources, how does CBS decide which additional statistics may be produced with additional funding? What system is used to determine customer priority?

Q16**Ukraine**

SSCU is an independent state government body but its activity is coordinated by the government and its Chairman and Deputies are appointed by the government. Given this situation, how do you minimise the impression of political influence?

Q17**Canada**

Please could you explain the concept of independent intimacy with policy makers to achieve relevance and credibility?