

## Conference of European Statisticians

Seminar: **Balancing principles of professional autonomy and accountability with the mandate to produce policy relevant data**

Session III: **Accountability 'beyond the budget': measuring and addressing public expectations**

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Director general  
France

8-10 June 2009

Page 1



## Papers

- › Australia Brian Pink (ABS)  
The Australian Bureau of Statistics - does it operate independently from Government and successfully maintain public confidence?
  
- › Bulgaria Mariana Kotzeva (NSI)  
Accountability of Official Statistics
  
- › Sweden Helena Fredin (SCB)  
Efficient customer dialogue at Statistics Sweden

Page 2



## General themes (1)

### › Measuring the public expectations

- Intensive and extensive consultations with all users/stakeholders
- National statistical Council is not necessarily a decision making body, but should be at least a focal point for meeting the interest of various stakeholders

### › Professional accountability

- The world is constantly changing and new demands on quality in statistics, reduction of cost, reduction of response burden arise
- Referring to widely accepted technical norms and standards, professional accountability is fundamentally a multi-dimensional issue. It involves several performance evaluation criteria

Page 3



## General themes (2)

### › Administrative accountability

- Administrative accountability includes duty of NSI to give account for its performance, assessed by a superior authority
- Among others, a NSI must comply with the established procedures and rules in public administration and the correct use of public resources
- Should the professional accountability of official statistics be included or not in the general framework of administrative accountability?

Page 4



## General themes (3)

### › Professional independence

- One dimension of independence is the ability to provide objective information to the society
- A statistical agency can be considered to be independent when the chief statistician is the final decision maker with respect to all issues relating to the processes, practices and policies associated with data collection, data processing, and dissemination of statistics, and with ensuring that identifiable data collected by the agency is only used for statistical and related research purposes

### › Public trust

- Sound public administration involves public trust
- Since the general public does not always distinguish between one government data provider and another, NSI's role is to maintain the public trust in *all* of official statistics.

Page 5



## Outline of the presentation

### › How can we define the accountability of NSI? [Bulgaria]

- Administrative accountability
- Professional accountability
- Democratic accountability

### › A governance to ensure independence from government and maintain public trust [Australia]

- Public trust in all official statistics
- Governance in a context of numerous stakeholders

### › A marketing approach of accountability [Sweden]

- A specific situation with a high rate of commissioned work
- Extensive consultation of users and customers

Page 6



## Key statements

- › **Bulgaria**
  - It is unsustainable to attempt to exclude the classic forms of administrative accountability and establish professional accountability and control as the only form of accountability for NSI. Professional control and accountability of official statistics have to be included in the general framework of administrative accountability.
- › **Australia**
  - This relates to the ABS's role (and interest in) maintaining the public's trust in *all* of Australian official statistics
- › **Sweden**
  - Statistics Sweden's definition of customers is "those we are here for"

Page 7



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## Questions to authors

- › Q1 **Bulgaria**
- › You raise the question whether it is preferable for NSI to report directly to Parliament or to the Prime Minister. And gives your preference to the latter. Given the different traditions in the world in this respect, could you develop your arguments on the advantages and drawbacks of the two types of institutional arrangements?

Page 8



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## Questions to authors

› Q2 Bulgaria

- › You stress the necessity to match the classic criteria of accountability for an official public administration and the accountability of the statistics as a profession. According to your experience, do you consider it as possible to assess both kind of accountability within the same institutional procedure?

Page 9



## Questions to authors

› Q3 Australia

- › Given the ABS's effective strategic engagement with all the key stakeholders of Official Statistics, and referring to the 'temporary direct statistical action' procedure recently adopted alongside the European Statistics regulation, could you describe the institutional procedure at ABS to meet newly emerging demands for Official Statistics that were not dealt with in the current programme of work?

Page 10



## Questions to authors

- › Q4                      Australia
- › You mentioned the administrative systems of government as being an underutilized resource for statistical purposes in Australia'. Using already existing sources is surely a criteria for the professional accountability of Official Statistics. Could you briefly describe the current institutional and technical arrangement as regards the statistical use of administrative systems and the possible evolutions you are thinking of?

Page 11



## Questions to authors

- › Q5                      Sweden
- › Having a market provider-customer relationship surely must be a strong incentive to maintain the highest degree of accountability of Official Statistics. On the other hand, does it not hamper other kinds of relationships that may exist between administrations (such as non market exchanges of data, partnerships for publications...)? What is your practice in this regard?

Page 12



## Questions to authors

- › Q6                                  Sweden
  
- › Having a Council of Trustees representing the society to advise the Director General is another key point that should be underscored towards accountability of Official Statistics. Could you describe how it works? How does it coordinate with the Council for Official Statistics?

Page 13



## INSEE

- › Session III: Accountability 'beyond the budget': measuring and addressing public expectations

Thank you for your attention

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Page 14

