

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

UNECE Work Session on Communication and Dissemination of Statistics
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Topic - Improving internal communication: working better together

BOOSTING COMMUNICATION AMONG STATISTICIANS IN EUROPE

Submitted by Eurostat¹

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Over the last two years Eurostat has increased its efforts to improve communication among statisticians in Europe. Two tools have been used – a new website, called *Insite* and a re-design of Eurostat's external magazine *Sigma*. *Insite* targets staff in the National Statistical Institutes (NSIs) linked to the European Union, as well as the European Central Bank and the United Nations Economic Commission and *Sigma* aims at reaching those interested in statistics in Europe. The paper *Boosting communication among statisticians in Europe* outlines the aspirations of *Insite* and *Sigma* and gives an overview of the developments so far.

II. INSITE

A. News for statisticians

2. Insite is the 'internal' website for the European Statistical System (ESS). The aim of Insite is to spread news on appointments, conferences, upcoming events and training within the ESS. In addition it promotes the exchange of information, which can be fed into Eurostat and National Statistical Institute (NSI) intranets as well as external websites.
3. Insite targets staff who work in the National Statistical Institutes or in other parts of the National Statistical Systems.
4. The name is a play on words (*website* and *insight*) and implies that the website gives a better insight into ESS matters. The abbreviation commonly used for National Statistical Institutes (NSI) is also part of the name **INSite**.
5. Insite was launched in June 2007. Today all the NSIs in the 27 EU Member States, three candidate and four EFTA countries as well as Eurostat, the European Central Bank and United Nations Economic Commission for Europe participate. All information on Insite is in English.
6. In Insite each partner has its own dedicated section with the same structure. The content is organised into two different parts: partner news and permanent information. On the partner news page only news from that country or organisation is displayed.

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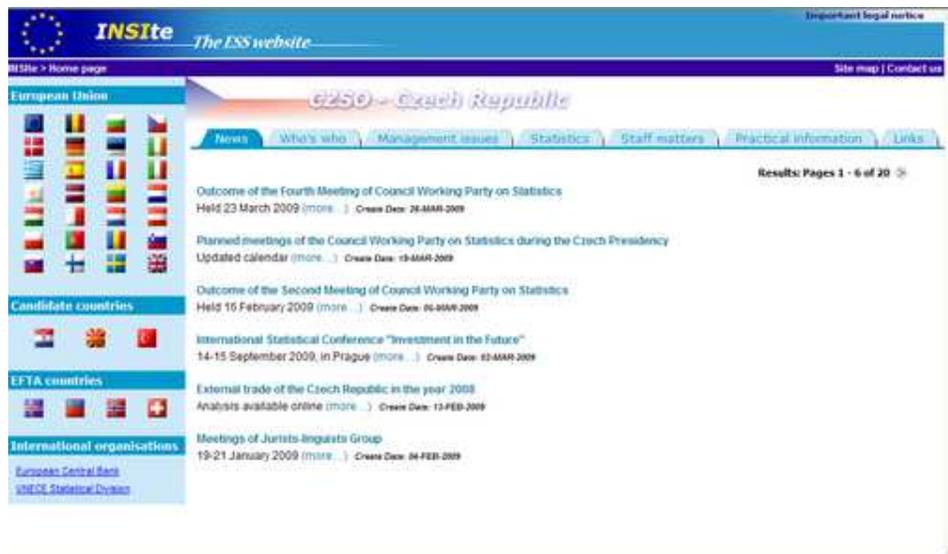
B. News sections

7. Insite's homepage displays the latest news items from all partners and links to each country's or organisation's section. The news items are published both on Insite's homepage and on the partner's news section.



C. Permanent information sections

8. The permanent information is organised into six tabs, which are *Who's who?*, *Statistics*, *Management issues*, *Staff matters*, *Practical information* and *Links*. The tab names are the same for all partners, although their contents may be customised by the NSIs. Below are some examples of the sort of information which can be found under each tab:



- **Who's who?**
 - Presentation of Director-General
 - Who does what?
 - Organisation chart
 - Telephone list
 - Missions of Units and Directorates
 - List of task forces, working groups and their mandates
- **Management issues**
 - Strategy
 - Work programme
 - Statistical Committees
 - European Code of Practice
 - Meetings calendar
 - Statistical law
- **Statistics**
 - Quality
 - Methodology
 - Data transmission
 - Statistical projects
 - News releases
- **Staff matters**
 - Job opportunities
 - HR strategy
 - Training programme
 - Exchange programme
- **Practical information**
 - Contact details
 - How to access the NSI
 - Regional delegations
 - Basic facts about the country
- **Links**
 - NSI website
 - Databases
 - Publications
 - Release calendar
 - Links to members of the national statistical systems

D. Content management

9. Eurostat's Communication Unit manages the contents of the website and liaises with the network of Insite correspondents. The correspondents send in news and information for the permanent pages. Eurostat publishes the information and informs the correspondent when the update has been done. Sometimes the Communication Team does minor edits of the contributions for harmonisation purposes.
10. The website is not password protected, so no confidential information is published.

11. Eurostat has recommended all partners to create a link to Insite on the local intranets and to also disseminate the link to other members of the National Statistical Systems.
12. As Insite is a potential source of information for intranets and external websites it is also a good idea for the Communication Teams in the Statistical Offices to keep an eye on the news items at least on a weekly basis. The same is true for Training Teams, as all European Statistical Training Programme are posted on Insite. Eurostat Communication Team regularly sends out an email alert to the network of Insite correspondents, to keep them up-to date with the latest news published.

E. Future

13. Insite will celebrate its second anniversary in June 2009. In January and February the website had more than 1.3 million hits each month. However, the website is still under development. Insite has experienced some technical and resource problems which have hindered its full development. It is also a relatively new tool for the exchange of information and it will not bloom until more people learn about its existence and find it useful. When this happens it is likely that we will experience a 'snowball effect'. Therefore, the Communication Team believes that Insite could reach its role as a key information player for the European Statistical System in three to five years' time.

III. SIGMA

A. Magazine for those interested in statistics

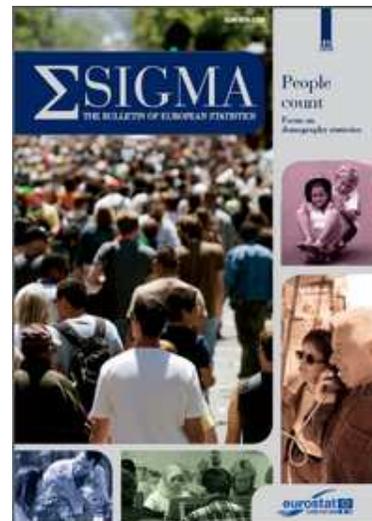
14. Sigma is the 'Bulletin of European Statistics' and the aim of the publication is to make statistical issues understandable to a wider audience. The magazine targets those who are interested in European statistics, but are not necessarily statisticians. Sigma complements Insite with more in-depth information on statistical themes.

B. Thematic approach

15. To make Sigma as accessible as possible each issue focuses on one specific area, for example national accounts statistics, demography statistics or price statistics. The idea is to present each field from different angles, while focusing on the production side and the user side of the statistical area.

16. A typical Sigma will give an idea of how data are compiled in Eurostat. Concepts, work on collecting data, harmonisation, methodology and future developments are in focus. We also highlight the production in some Member States, who are known for their high performance in the featured thematic area or work on a specific methodological problem related to the theme. On the production side we also publish articles, which feature current and future developments in international statistics, for example in the European Central Bank, the OECD or the United Nations Statistical Commission.

The magazine also presents articles on the use of statistics for European policy making, as well as different organisations or businesses, which use European or national data in their work.



17. The issue *People count – Focus on demography statistics* covered census taking, migration and asylum statistics and population projections. In the chapter devoted to census taking we first presented the work done on census taking in Eurostat. Then we portrayed different methods used by the Member States. Interviews were made with Statistics Ireland to exemplify the traditional approach to census making; Statistics Sweden, which illustrated the register approach; Germany with a mixed approach and France exemplified a rolling approach. Finally the chapter on census featured an interview with UNECE and their work to set standards for their member countries for the 2011 World Population and Housing Census Programme.
18. In *Getting the price right – Focus on price statistics* Sigma covered different aspects of the harmonised index for consumer prices, energy prices, service and industrial producer prices, agricultural prices, import prices and purchasing power parities. In the chapter which dealt with agricultural prices, the evolution, present state and future challenges of Eurostat's agricultural price data were presented. The production in a Member State was illustrated by an interview with an agricultural price statistician at the French National Statistical Institute and Statistics Denmark presented a specific methodological problem related to the farm land prices. The chapter was concluded with two user interviews. The first one with the European Commission's Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development and the second with Committee of Professional Agricultural Organisations, who gave user perspectives on agricultural prices.

C. Special events

19. Since 2008 Sigma has also been covering special events, such as the National Statistical Institutes Directors General Seminar (DGINS) conference on the reduction of response burden. The resulting special issue of Sigma *Cutting red tape – Focus on statistical response burden* featured a number of interviews with leading NSIs, as well as the point of view of the European Commissioner on Economic and Monetary Affairs. Topics dealt with tools used to measure response burden, solutions to fight negative perceptions, new technologies and the use of administrative sources to reduce response burden.

D. Reader friendliness a priority

20. Sigma is published in English two to three times a year. Subscriptions to the paper version are free of charge and the magazine is available on Eurostat's website. Around 5000 copies are disseminated each time. Subscribers include statistical offices, universities, libraries and private people.
21. As you have seen we approach each theme from different perspectives and we put great stress on making the information clear and easy to understand for a wider audience. In the last two years the team behind Sigma has focused on making articles shorter (not more than two pages), more attractive and reader-friendly. Most articles are based on interviews done and written by the Eurostat's Communication Team who have backgrounds in professional communication and journalism. Furthermore, the layout of Sigma has been improved to increase reader friendliness and attractiveness. We try to use a mix of text, fact boxes, pictures and their captions to convey the messages of each article.
22. The feedback we have received has been positive and our aim is to continue making Sigma even more accessible and to reach more people who work or are interested in statistics.



For further information:

- [Sigma 1/2009 – Cutting red tape – Focus on statistical response burden](#)
- [Sigma 3/2002 – The economy by numbers – Focus on national accounts](#)
- [Sigma 2/2008 – Modern Statistics for Modern Society – Eurostat conference December 2007](#)
- [Sigma 1/2008 – People count – Focus on demography statistics](#)
- [Sigma 2/2007 – Getting the price right – Focus on price statistics](#)
- Sigma contact point: eurostat-pressoffice@ec.europa.eu
- [INSite](#)
- Insite contact point: estat-insite@ec.europa.eu