

**New developments in the use of Internet for dissemination of statistical information
Eurostat 2.0**

Paper submitted by Eurostat¹

Summary

Eurostat is currently changing its web site and will introduce a more flexible and dynamic site later on this year. New developments include the possibility of electronic commerce, giving different views to different clients, using "push" techniques to disseminate information more efficiently and introducing a powerful search engine.

I. Major instrument for dissemination

1. Internet is a major instrument for the dissemination of statistical data. In 1998 Eurostat is planning to replace its web site in order to provide a more efficient and effective tool for the distribution of data. Eurostat's objective is to create a site, which has easy access and contains a rich variety of information at different levels for different users. Its prime goal is to inform people about Eurostat, its products and services and to market and sell them.
2. Eurostat's first provisional web site was launched in April 1996, it contained press releases and some basic information about Eurostat and its products. This site was developed and Eurostat 1.0 was launched last year. Strengths of the present site are the graphical quality and that it is trilingual. Its weak points are that it is static, it takes too long to download information, there is no search tool for the whole site and that maintenance is very costly and complicated.
3. The new site will be in three languages – English, French and German - and include many new and useful functions for informing, marketing and selling statistical information. Biggest changes will be the development of a search engine for the site and a system that makes it possible to personalise the

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contents depending on the user profile. Moreover, electronic ordering of products and the possibility of electronic payment will be used. Lastly, the management and administration of the site will be made simpler to save resources.

II. Key objectives with the new site

To inform

4. Our first objective with the site is to inform users about Eurostat's different kinds of products and services. The site should give clear and complete information about products and clearly notify users whenever new products are available. Easy access is also essential.

5. There will be three types of information:

- Institutional information about Eurostat (static information)
- Product information (more dynamic information)
- News (news releases, indicators, dynamic information)

To deliver content

6. Our second objective with the site is to deliver the content of statistical products by electronic means (on-line or by e-mail), by postal services or a combination of both.

To sell

7. Our third objective is to sell statistical products to users both by electronic means and by existing means. The objective will be to encourage users to use electronic means as much as possible, but if users prefer to use bank transfers or cheques, they will be able to use the existing payment procedure

To manage

8. Another objective is to have a cost-effective management of the site. The dynamic nature and the need for regular feedback on its usage will be balanced with a simple and straightforward system administration.

To promote

9. Our last key objective is to promote new products on the site or on other related web sites. Product promotion information will be dynamic, eg temporary publicity on other web sites.

III. Required services

10. To obtain the objectives the server will have to have the following functions:

- a) communication functions
 - b) a system which makes the site personal depending on the user
 - c) electronic shopping
 - d) a system for subscriptions of different types of information ("push" techniques)
 - e) the possibility for users to connect to data bases and dynamic pages
 - f) search engine
 - g) safety provisions
- a. *Communicating with the user*

11. Internet is an excellent tool for the exchange of information. It can also easily be used as a platform for discussions in newsgroups or chats. The system that will be used will be similar to the DSIS-IRC². The tool will provide the following services:

- simple e-mailing and the possibility of using mailing lists
- discussion forums such as newsgroups or chats
- a function that manages documents like in a library with a possibility for users to upload information.
- shared agenda
- shared directory

b. Personal site for different users

12. Eurostat wants to be able to provide users with a personal web site. The system will recognise a user who has registered his preferences and will generate a personal/customised view of the site automatically for that specific user.

13. Advantages of a personalised system are that customers will find information more quickly and encourage them to return often. It will provide users with information according to their own preferences and it will allow Eurostat to have a presentation that is not only based on products or on “statistical themes”.

Different levels of information

14. Information will be disseminated on different levels for different users. Some information will be distributed free of charge and some will be charged for depending on the user profile. Below we have defined four groups of users: general Internet users, users that need statistics for professional use, resellers and media.

Type of user	Description
General user	General internet users, will have limited rights to access products. They have no discount on paying products but they can benefit from free products. They have no direct access to databases.
Professional users	These users need statistical information for professional use, their user profile allows them to access all product categories including databases and it is free of charge for them.
Resellers	Resellers are the distributors of hard goods, their user profile allows them to get discounts when paying for products and to benefit from free products. They have no direct access to the databases.
Media	Mainly journalists who need statistical information from Eurostat for their work. Their user profile allows them to have access to all product categories without paying for it, except the databases.

² The DSIS-IRC is a web site for particular interest groups. It is currently used by the EU National statistical institutes' press offices and Eurostat for the exchange of information.

15. News releases, some indicators, product presentations, events and software will be free for all users. Access to Eurostat's short reports called *Statistics in focus*, nomenclatures and databases will depend on the user profile.

User views

16. Users will have the ability to view the Eurostat site according to their points of interest. Options are:

- **themes** – the user will have a web page, which allows him to see Eurostat's nine themes.
- **categories of products** – The products are news releases, Statistics in focus, CD-Roms, printed publications, methodologies, nomenclatures, software, indicators, statistical files, data bases, product presentations, forums, events.
- **free or paying information**
- **most recent information:** The user will see the most recent information assorted to all themes or products and he will also have the possibility to choose a specific theme or product.
- **reseller:** the user will see all information of a reseller in relation to the user's geographic localisation
- **user profiles:** Users have the possibility to customise (personalised view) their own views of themes, categories of products, free or paying and most recent information, including their preferred language.

c. Electronic shopping

.1 17. One of the objectives of the Eurostat site is to sell statistical products. Traditional payment methods we currently offer will continue to be used in the future. On the new site, the users will also have new methods of paying for their purchases. The main difference with the existing method of payment is that a user can provide his credit card number on-line.

18. The site should also allow the visitor to group its purchases in a basket and he should be able get the total of his purchases and to change the products in the basket at any point in time. The site should also make it easy to market products. It should have the possibility to market products and manage prices dynamically, for example by temporary and targeted promotions and reductions given after a certain amount of purchases.

19. The electronic commerce tool should have standard functions or integrated modules for:

- registration, subscription and ordering
- billing
- electronic catalogue for soft goods as well as for hard goods
- customer care
- help desk (for accepting credit card numbers by phone, fax or e-mail and for questions from users)
- clearing (with banks and credit card companies)
- alternative electronic payment method (bank transfers and cheques)
- corporate account (with discount possibilities for specific users)
- customer self management (for customisable views)
- fraud and bad debt detection and delinquent account management
- EDI interface for professional users

Corporate account

20. Anyone who frequently orders products on Eurostat site can have a corporate account. This account is especially meant for companies or organisations, which have several employees who can access the Eurostat site and want to order products, which must be paid for. The corporate account should be a module of the selling tool.

d. Subscriptions

21. All Internet users will be able to surf freely on Eurostat 2.0 and see what kind of services and products Eurostat offers. The user will be able to select information and then subscribe to information that is regularly updated (news releases, indicators, Statistics in focus etc). However to be able to have a subscription the user will have to register.

22. Three levels of relation with the users are foreseen:

- users who do not wish to leave any trace on the site
- users who register by leaving their personal data in an on-line form
- users who wish to subscribe to one or more Eurostat services. These users will have to leave more than their basic data if they wish to pay on-line for instance.

23. When users subscribe to a service, they will get a notification as soon as a new product is available on the Eurostat server. This notification is free of charge. When subscribing, the user can choose between being informed that new information is available on the site or receiving the new information automatically.

e. Connection to the databases and dynamic links

24. All Eurostat information is stored on different database servers and it is vital that access and selection of information can be done from these databases.

25. Eurostat 2.0 site will support more than one language, therefore, it is necessary that the multi-lingual web pages work independently from each other. However, the same links inside the different multi-lingual web pages need to point to the same product, when this will be requested by the user.

f. Search engine

26. It is very important that the users are able to find information in a minimum amount of time and with a minimum of clicks. Therefore a flexible and powerful search tool is essential.

The search engine will be able to search in all Eurostat databases, such as the News Forum. Also search engines can be used to search for information stored with the search response time in spite of the large volume of data in Eurostat databases.

g. Security

27. Security management includes the management of user profiles and the security of connections.
28. Eurostat 2.0 will distribute some data to everyone, some under limited access and some will be charged for. It is therefore necessary to identify the visitors in order to determine if they have right to consult the information they are asking for.
29. The levels of security include:
- secure access, when user-id and passwords are used, so that the visitor gets the correct access rights on different pages or parts of the server
 - privileges, ie the right to read, write and administrate parts of the server
 - safety for credit card transactions.