

How to tailor press work if quality standards of official statistics conflict with media interests

European Conference on Quality in Official Statistics
Q2016 in Madrid, 2nd June

Session 14: “Satisfying Users' Needs: Communication“

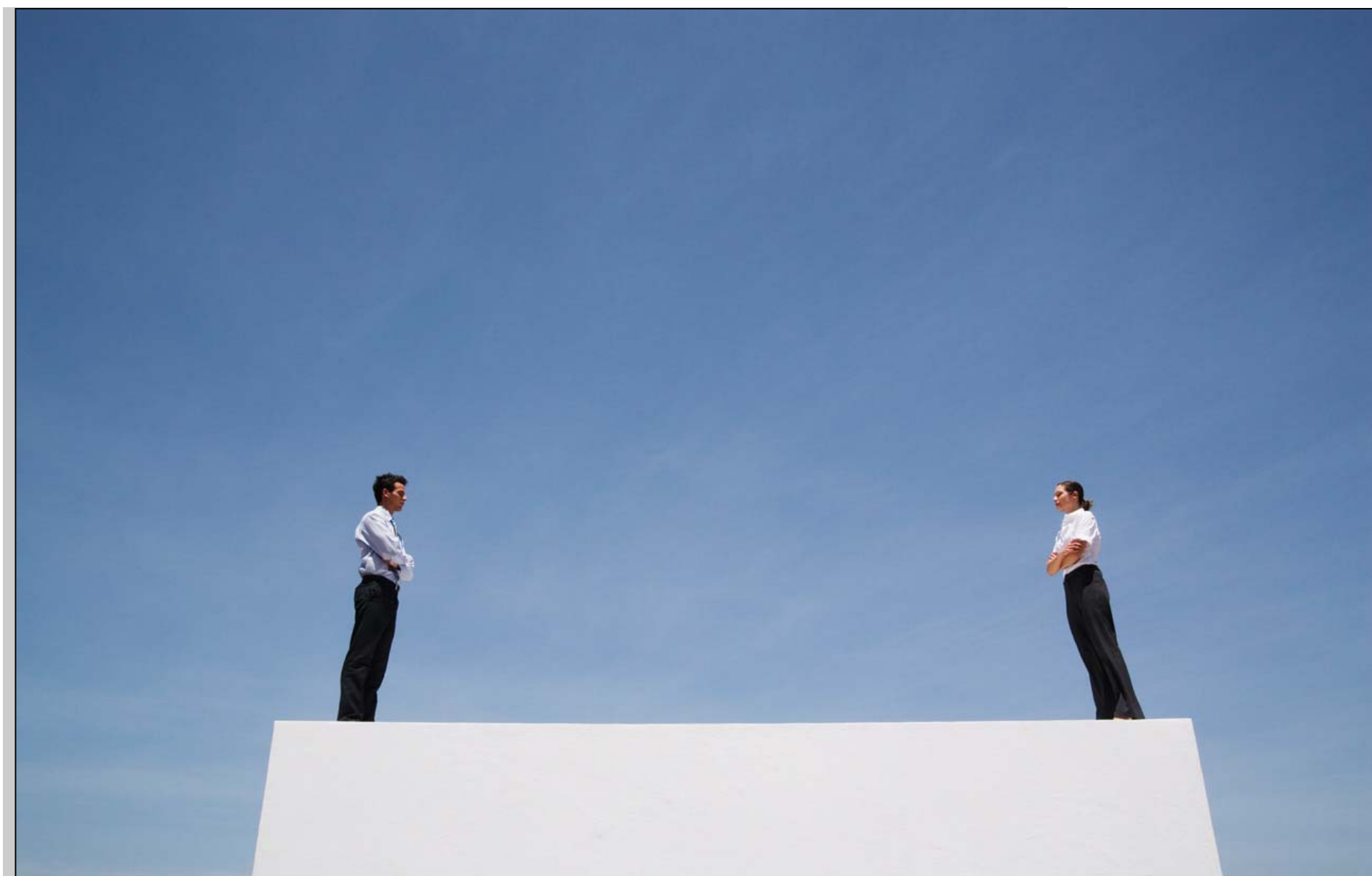
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Relationship between official statistics and the media

- Journalists are gatekeepers and disseminators of information

- “News value” – our figures should
 - have to do with unexpected events
 - affect many people
 - arouse emotions
 - deal with conflicts (...)

- Our data allows journalists to build on unbiased evidence



**1st example:
statistical confidentiality ↔
transparency**

Initial situation

Foreign trade statistics

- Detailed data on export of military weapons were treated confidentially
- Established practice was reconsidered to increase transparency for all data users
- Little publishable information due to data protection rules

Tailored communication strategy

- Fast access to comprehensible background information about data protection rules
- Letter to the editorship

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Waffenexporte

Statistisches Bundesamt verschleiern Rüstungsdaten

Das Amt wollte eigentlich eine Revolution starten und geheime Rüstungsdaten veröffentlichen. Doch jetzt wird wohl das meiste geschwärzt – auf Wunsch der Waffenexporteure.

Lessons learned

- More emphasis on uncertainty of detailed data dissemination in the face of statistical confidentiality

**2nd example:
impartiality ↔
exclusive information**

Initial situation

Labor market

- “Figure of the Week“ about working on Sundays
- Link to promote indicator report on quality of employment
- After newspaper article, high interest in fixed-term contracts and complaints
 - Information was not explicitly mentioned in press release
 - Data could not be found on website
 - False impression that equality of data users was violated

Tailored communication strategy

- Personal conversation on the phone
- Individual guidance through the website to show that indicator report was freely available to all data users

Lessons learned

- Impartiality does not absolve the media from data research
- Data access should be facilitated
 - Overview of available indicators in press release
 - More prominent presentation at homepage
 - Distribution of graphs via Twitter
 - Workshops on data research

**3rd example:
clarity ↔
public interest**

Initial situation

Methodological revision of national accounts

- Methods and concepts need to be adapted from time to time
 - Expenditure on R&D most relevant change
 - Illegal activities included, but insignificant

- The media reduced methodological complexity
 - Relevant details were omitted
 - Reports started with sensational headlines

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Was künftig alles unser BIP aufpimpen soll

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VON MICHAEL KRUSE

FOCUS-MONEY | Nr. 6 (2014)

MONEY INSIDE

Ein neuer Schuldentrick in Euro-Land

Mittwoch, 29.01.2014, 00:00 - von FOCUS-MONEY-Chefredakteur Frank Pöpsel

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Partnerangebot

Preisfrage: Wie senkt man die Schuldenquote in der Euro-Zone auf einen Schlag um knapp zwei Prozentpunkte?

Tailored communication strategy

- Pre-notification of methodological revision
- Press release with main reasons for adaptations
- Website with detailed background information
- Press briefing
- Interviews with subject-matter experts

Lessons learned

- Easy introduction into difficult topic should be accepted as long as correct background information follows
- Potential targets of criticism should be pre-identified to prepare preventive measures
- More emphasis on regularity of revisions in the context of user communication on data quality

Summary: effective press work

- Seeking personal dialog with journalists
- Preparing suitable background information as a preventive measure
- Facilitating online access to statistical results
- Training journalists in data research
- Embedding user communication into overall strategy on data quality (and vice versa)

Coming together is a beginning;

keeping together is progress;

working together is success.

(Henry Ford)



Thank you for your attention.



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