

Communication strategy for Statistics Norway 2014-2017

Statistics Norway



Statistisk sentralbyrå

Communication strategy for Statistics Norway

Introduction and background.....	3
Principles of effective communication	4
Communication objectives 2014-2017	5
Target groups for Statistics Norway's communication	9
Communication channels.....	10
Responsibilities and roles in Statistics Norway's communication work ...	11

Introduction and background

Communication is an integral part of Statistics Norway's work

One of the primary objectives in Statistics Norway's Strategy 2014-2017 is for Statistics Norway to be society's leading supplier of facts and for the key element of Statistics Norway's reputation to be the high quality of its statistics.

Our reputation is created as a result of the work we do and how we convey that work. This entails the scope and quality of Statistics Norway's statistics and research being communicated in a way that supports Statistics Norway's credibility, with figures that are widely disseminated, easily accessible and understandable.

Official statistics are the nation's shared factual basis and are essential for a living democracy, effective social planning, evaluation, debate and research. Statistics Norway shall be a driving force in identifying new correlations and issues, and further analysis of the figures shall be facilitated through the communication work.

Communication work has gained a foothold in most businesses in the last decade due to the shift from a relatively simple information society to a complex and sometimes demanding public sector with large volumes of information. Technological developments have led to tougher and quicker-paced journalism, with deadlines around the clock. Non-journalists also make a large contribution to the dissemination of news and opinions on the Internet. Meanwhile, the Freedom of Information Act has imposed requirements on the adaptation and transparency of all public sector activities. In order to meet all such requirements, a separate organisation and communication strategy are needed.

Communication work differs from dissemination in that it has a more dialogic relation to its surroundings. Information is not only disseminated but there is an interest in who uses it, user needs are taken on board and consideration is given to whether the work is relevant. This applies both internally and externally.

All communication in Statistics Norway's name shall support Statistics Norway's credibility. This can entail everything from employees' behaviour in the media to the contact with survey respondents. If the communication weakens the credibility of our work, the high quality of the statistics and research will be of no help.

Internally, effective communication is important in order to share knowledge and to create a common culture and a good working environment. Responsibility for communication lies with whoever is responsible for the relevant issue, but is also a managerial task. Communication is therefore an integral part of Statistics Norway's work and applies to all employees.

Statistics Norway's communication strategy describes how to communicate with anyone that we have contact with or would like to have contact with. Details of objectives and instruments are given in activity plans and guidelines.

Principles of effective communication

Statistics Norway's principles of effective communication shall be adhered to, regardless of the target group, channel or client, and shall reinforce Statistics Norway's credibility. Those we communicate with should be able to have confidence in Statistics Norway being professionally autonomous and in statistics and research results being supplied without interference from clients or political authorities. Statistics Norway shall use the best methods, carry out quality assurance, be transparent about errors in sources and methods, and comply with the rules on the confidentiality of information that is collected for statistical and research purposes. Facts about statistics and meta-data should provide users with useful background information and give meaning to the figures.

Statistics Norway's communication should be transparent, accessible, understandable and independent.

Transparent

Statistics Norway shall endeavour to be transparent in all aspects of its statistics, research and analyses. Statistics Norway shall announce statistical releases and be transparent about errors in published material, clearly indicating corrections. Transparency also applies to strengths and weaknesses in statistics and analyses through documentation of metadata. As many as possible relevant statistics shall be converted to open data (machine-to-machine communication) that can be freely used by other activities or private individuals.

Accessible

Statistics and research published on ssb.no are public goods and should be freely available for everyone. Statistics Norway's figures shall be easy to find and use, and universal formulation requirements shall be complied with. The communication should be adapted to the relevant channels and formats, and should largely be in both Norwegian and English, as well as in compliance with the legislation on the use of bokmål and nynorsk.

Statistics Norway shall help users with complex enquiries that they cannot find answers to on ssb.no. Users should be able to find information easily on how they can get assistance. Statistics Norway shall be available and open to feedback from users of statistics, analysis and research, as well as those who supply data to Statistics Norway or participate in surveys.

Understandable

Statistics Norway's communication should be clear and unambiguous, and the message should be understandable. Statistics Norway shall use plain language and the main results of statistics and analysis that are of interest to the public shall be understandable without the need for expert knowledge. Statistics Norway shall have good-quality metadata and definitions of terms. Research and analysis of statistics should be enlightening and provide a better understanding of statistics in society.

Independent

Statistics Norway's credibility depends on the quality of its statistics, analyses and research, as well as adherence to the principles of equality and independence. Statistics Norway's statistics, analyses and research shall use the best scientific method without the influence of political guidance or clients' wishes. Statistics Norway will not suppress findings that are controversial.

Releases of statistics and analyses shall be notified well in advance and made available to everyone at the same time – 10am each weekday.

Access to statistics for external users before publication shall be limited and made known in the About the statistics documentation. Clients can access publications and other analyses before their release, but only for internal use. The media cannot access content before a release, nor be given a press embargo.

Communication objectives 2014-2017

Communication objectives that shall underpin the main objectives in Statistics Norway's strategy: Statistics Norway shall be society's leading supplier of facts

Improve society's knowledge and use of Statistics Norway's statistics and analyses

Statistics Norway has overall responsibility for preparing and disseminating Norwegian official statistics, and shall ensure that information is independent, impartial and of a high quality.

We shall:

- communicate statistics, analyses and research that are important for public and private sector planning, debate and research, and that reflect the main features of social development
- disseminate balanced, accurate and complete statistics, analyses and research, independent of authorities, interest groups and political causes
- communicate statistics in such a way that figures are accessible and understandable

Improve society's knowledge of Statistics Norway's role and activities

Teaching society about Statistics Norway is important for our work and for ensuring that the results are used. Everyone that is asked to report information for statistical purposes (those with a duty to report and other respondents) must know the importance of contributing to Statistics Norway's surveys. Authorities, other clients and those who set our framework conditions, must have adequate knowledge of, and confidence in, Statistics Norway.

We shall:

- conduct thorough reputation surveys of Statistics Norway, which will form the basis for analysis of the outside world, so that we will know where it is most important to profile and position Statistics Norway
- systematise public relations work and ensure that we are visible and present in central and key arenas, and secure a good overview of arenas where Statistics Norway's employees already have a presence
- strengthen the part of the media work that profiles the institution of Statistics Norway
- help to ensure adequate participation in surveys

The statistics shall meet user needs and relevant research and analysis shall give added value to the statistics.

Improve our knowledge of Statistics Norway's users and their needs

On an ongoing basis, Statistics Norway shall learn about its users. Statistics Norway shall also have good channels and interfaces for feedback. We will distribute and adapt information on the digital platforms that users want, facilitate the sharing of content on ssb.no and continually assess the use and adaptation of new channels.

Statistics Norway aims to have satisfied users and help them to meet their needs within statistics, analysis and research.

An important goal is for ssb.no to be the preferred channel for statistics on Norwegian society. The ssb.no website shall be developed in a way that facilitates the increased use of self-service online.

We shall:

- maintain a user-friendly website that is developed in line with user needs, technological developments and requirements for universal design
- be available digitally so that users can reach us whenever and wherever they want
- analyse feedback and user behaviour on ssb.no
- continue to conduct user surveys on ssb.no in order to ascertain whether people find what they are looking for
- systematise and follow up information about users and their needs that we receive from the Information Centre
- systematise and analyse other user contact between employees in Statistics Norway and external users

We shall:

- use understandable language and review statistics in order to adapt the dissemination to user needs
- visualise more of Statistics Norway's statistics in order to reach new user groups, thereby encouraging greater understanding of the statistics
- facilitate greater analysis of statistics, both on ssb.no and in the media
- strengthen our efforts in social media as an arena for dialogue and communication

Statistics Norway shall participate in the international cooperation to improve statistics.

Monitor international trends in the communication of statistics

In order to meet user needs for international comparable statistics, Statistics Norway shall report figures to international organisations. It is also important that we know about and are inspired by effective communication solutions used by other statistical agencies and international organisations.

We shall:

- participate in international meetings and conferences on communication in order to learn about effective communication solutions within the field of statistics
- present experiences from Statistics Norway's communication activity in international forums
- enable users to find international comparable statistics

Statistics Norway shall have easy access to data sources.

Improve communication with parties reporting data to Statistics Norway

In order to ensure the quality of statistics, it is important that the individuals and businesses selected to participate in Statistics Norway's sample surveys, or reporting to Statistics Norway in some other way, actually participate and respond. Statistics Norway shall explain why they should participate and how to submit their responses. The confidence we build through data collections also affects the public's perception of Statistics Norway.

We shall:

- improve the information to participants about our surveys
- encourage user-friendly systems for businesses, register owners and other parties with a duty to report
- use electronic communications in order to streamline and improve the communication with respondents and clients
- use new channels in order to motivate respondents and provide user support, e.g. through social media
- use measurements of non-response, the response burden and feedback on the data collections as a source for improving the communication with those who supply data to Statistics Norway

Statistics Norway shall be an effective and knowledge-based organisation

Improve the communication skills of Statistics Norway's employees

We will strengthen efforts to improve the communication skills of Statistics Norway's employees, both in relation to the contact with the press and in connection with large presentations. This also entails understanding when individual employees should respond to enquiries from the press and other external parties, and when the Department of communications should be involved.

When an enquiry requires more than purely guidance on statistics it is not always the person most closely connected to the relevant issue who should be the press contact. Advice on dealing with the media will take place through ongoing contact between the statistics departments and the Department of communications.

Statistics Norway is a producer of official statistics and a research institution, which entails special attention to media matters. Statistics Norway's researchers are free to speak publicly about their own research, but media statements that go beyond their own research must be cleared internally first. In cases where internal research and analyses in Statistics Norway show conflicting results, good communication is particularly important so that the communication externally supports Statistics Norway's credibility.

We shall:

- clarify the Department of communications' role and responsibilities in the interface with the media
- prepare a media handbook for Statistics Norway's employees
- conduct regular media training courses
- arrange courses every year on writing articles
- conduct courses in presentation skills/communication

Strengthen the internal communication in Statistics Norway

Effective internal communication creates knowledge, understanding and trust in the organisation, both between managers and employees and between employees. The responsibility for information lies primarily with managers in Statistics Norway and whoever is responsible for the relevant issue, but all employees have a responsibility to contribute to effective internal communication. A prerequisite is the willingness to share relevant information. This requires establishing good routines and accessible information channels.

Relevant channels for internal communication are the intranet, e-mail, regular meetings and meeting platforms, in and across departments, horizontally and vertically in the organisation, one-to-one contact and general meetings.

The Department of communications shall provide professional advice and expertise on information.

We shall:

- map the current situation and the desired situation in Statistics Norway. This should include various forms of information and the use of channels/instruments in internal communication
- manage and give good advice on intranet content

Target groups for Statistics Norway's communication

Statistics Norway's target group is the entire Norwegian population, and can be divided into general users and expert users. Breaking down the target group into smaller, different and partly overlapping groups enables us to adapt the content as needed for the individual target group. In all communication activities, it is important that Statistics Norway is aware of who we want to reach. Some of the target groups communicate the content to other parties, thus making them both a target group and a channel – the media is one such example. This means that we need to think about how we can facilitate multiple target groups simultaneously.

In addition to the external target groups, our own employees are an important target group. Employees are often the best ambassadors for an organisation, but this requires them to be properly informed about Statistics Norway's strategy, statistics and research. Thus, Statistics Norway's employees are also often a target group and a channel.

Target groups:

- the general public/everyone
- politicians and public administration
- the research and education sector
- voluntary organisations
- journalists and the media
- the business sector
- respondents and clients
- international organisations/institutions
- Statistics Norway's employees

Statistics Norway's goal is that statistics and research disseminated on ssb.no are adapted to relevant target groups and their needs. We shall pro-actively prioritise target groups, i.e. resources shall be prioritised for work that is beneficial to a large user group or to user groups that Statistics Norway believes it is important to reach.

Communication channels

Statistics Norway communicates in a variety of ways with different target groups. After assessing the target group and its needs, a suitable communication channel is then selected.

StatBank on ssb.no is the main channel for the dissemination of statistics and analyses, and shall promote self-service among the users. Via websites and through the media we encounter many parties with the same information. Material published on ssb.no should follow guidelines on content on ssb.no in order to ensure effective communication in the web medium.

Other digital channels – APIs, social media, information screens and e-mail may be suitable for targeted communication and dialogue with selected user groups.

The media – The amount and diversity of news media makes the media the most important channel for external communication in the public sphere. The fact that Statistics Norway's statistics and research are used editorially shows the significance and relevance that Statistics Norway has for society.

Information Centre – Our users can write to or call Statistics Norway for help to find what they are looking for. The Information Centre receives many thousands of enquiries every year, which is a clear reflection of the extensive need for our services, and also shows that Statistics Norway is a transparent and accessible organisation.

Response service – Everyone who reports to Statistics Norway or responds to surveys can get help and information from the response service.

Statistics Norway's publications – Statistics Norway's publications and periodicals present analyses of statistics and survey results. The publication series enables us to publish both broad-based analyses across various statistics and more in-depth analyses. Statistics Norway shall primarily publish electronically and facilitate the digital reading of publications and periodicals.

Community contact/arenas – Attendance at conferences and other arenas gives Statistics Norway direct contact with smaller and often more homogenous groups. This applies both to arenas where Statistics Norway's employees represent the institution and where we shall present professional content. Close contact with the rest of society is important for the confidence in Statistics Norway and to achieve good framework conditions for the activity.

Courses – Statistics Norway shall hold courses on how to find national and international statistics and guide users in how the statistics can be understood and interpreted.

Employees – Statistics Norway's own employees are both a target group and a channel in the efforts to support Statistics Norway's credibility.

A description of how Statistics Norway uses the various communication channels, and the goals set for these, is given in activity plans and guidelines on the intranet.

Responsibilities and roles in Statistics Norway's communication work

The Director general shall be kept informed of any major communication issues. The Director general shall also decide who should respond on Statistics Norway's behalf to media enquiries relating to Statistics Norway as an institution or that have a bearing on Statistics Norway's reputation.

The Director of the Department of communications shall be responsible for following up and implementing the communication strategy in close cooperation with the Director general and other senior management.

The Directors and other managers in Statistics Norway shall ensure that the employees know and follow up the guidelines in the communication strategy. Managers should involve the Department of communications in media matters before decisions on posts or editorial contributions are made. They shall contribute to an effective flow of information internally in relation to their field and ensure that draft texts are supplied for articles and presentations.

The departments shall work on how they communicate with relevant target groups and recommend communication instruments in their area. The departments shall ensure that the Department of communications is involved in major and minor issues that may have communication potential/challenges. This particularly applies to contact with journalists beyond offering guidance on the statistics.

The Department of communications shall be a driving force of effective communication measures, and ensure that these are well utilised in Statistics Norway. The department shall draw up guidelines on effective dissemination of statistics and analyses, effective communication in social media and other channels, and be responsible for compliance of these. The department shall help to formulate the message and evaluate the choice of channels. It shall also be responsible for media relations, media management, media monitoring and analysis. The Department of communications shall be responsible for processing articles and other texts, and for media training and training in media relations.

The Department of communications shall be responsible for Statistics Norway's visual profile and linguistic standards in Norwegian and English. The department shall prepare all publications for release on the website and advise employees who are publishing statistics and analyses.

The Department of communications shall be responsible for updating policies and guidelines on communication.

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