

## **Chairman summary of session STCPM29: The relationship with the providers of information for statistical purposes**

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In order to accomplish their missions, producers of official statistics have to compile significant amounts of data. The statistics are typically used in policy making that impacts the economy, and they provide a service to the community as a whole by meeting many of its needs for statistical data. In this context, fostering a culture of good statistical practices must rank among the top priorities of any highly principled producer of statistics. Solid relationships based on transparency and mutual trust between official statisticians and the respondents who provide their data naturally stand out as one of the main elements of such good practices.

The papers presented in this session come from all parts of the world, and provide a glimpse of an emerging tool in the data compiler's arsenal. Although markets, institutions and data practices differ among these countries, the link between relationship building and high-quality data is consistently evident. All of the papers recognize the importance of high-quality source data in achieving the ultimate objective of producing high-quality statistics. National practices illustrate the importance of building and maintaining trust within the data-providing community, as well as the many ways in which this may be approached.

The experiences discussed include: (i) requesting that users, as well as providers, attend meetings, thus raising awareness of the value to businesses of providing high-quality submissions; (ii) involving respondents from the start in the design of data collection forms; (iii) providing training, manuals and guidelines to those responsible for reporting; (iv) giving ongoing attention to reducing the reporting burden on companies; (v) placing importance on reciprocity: providing reporting firms with feedback in the form of relevant data, in order to ensure that the reported data is also a valuable asset to them, thus reducing the net social cost of the process; (vi) offering on-site company visits, seminars and events for data providers to meet with each other; and (vii) providing data reporters guarantees that their data will be treated confidentially and will be used only for statistical purposes.

The papers all emphasize the importance of maintaining excellent relationships with providers, and of voluntary cooperation, as opposed to coercive measures. It is critical in this connection to ensure that the provider community fully understands that the costs it incurs in providing data are offset by the benefits of the resulting statistics. To safeguard the pivotal role that producers of statistics play in the overall statistical process, however, cooperation with data providers must be assessed on an ongoing basis, and adjustments must be made to efficiently address users' changing interests, while keeping to an absolute minimum the burden on respondents.

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