



**Danish  
"dame"  
magnum  
opus**



# Statistics in the 21st century

**Eurostat in the  
next decade**

Yves Franchet's  
"personal certainties"



**Asia and the  
black snake**

Bill McLennan  
in top form!

**Hans E Zeuthen  
registers the future**



**Statistics  
in pictures**

Swedish news graphics  
boss Folke Straube on  
the future now

Winter 1995





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Marie George, on detachment to Eurostat from Statistics Sweden, is spending her second winter in Luxembourg but this one with a new perspective - Sweden's membership of the EU.

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# ***Sigma*** **comment**



# STATISTICIAN HEED THE USER

This is a new-look *Sigma*.

It's right, I think, to start our new look with a look ahead to statistics in the 21st century. In the following pages several major players on the European statistical scene present their vision of the future.

*Themes emerge that cannot be ignored.*

You expect Bill McLennan to be controversial - and he is. After shaking up the British statistical system he is now going back to Australia to head theirs. We congratulate him and acknowledge him as a major force in international statistics.

His basic message is: question everything. Example: are statistics influenced by orthodox Western economics right for us now and into the next century? How relevant are they for the very different economies of the Asia/Pacific region which so clearly are changing the world economic balance and its statistical measurement?

Above all, I think, his message is: statistician heed the user - a theme echoed by all our contributors.

Jan Carling of Sweden insists that only a close relationship with the user will enable statisticians of the future to produce statistics of indisputable value to the political process.

Another strong theme is measurement of the environment. The environment is often a subject clouded by emotion. Quite rightly - the future of the world depends on it. As Egon Holder says, accurate statistics on the environment help take the heat out of the debate: help lead to proper decisions - decisions which, make no mistake, are vital for the future of our children and our children's children. Could there be a more important task for the statistician of the 21st century?

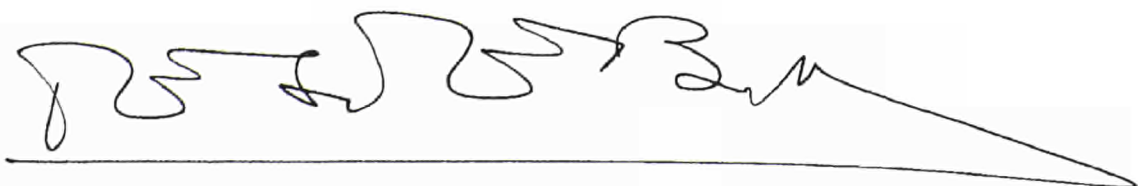
Is all economic growth by definition "a good thing" when so often it damages the environment and thus the quality of

life? My personal prediction is that linkage of economic and environmental statistics will be one of the most significant statistical developments beyond the millenium.

The changes in Central and Eastern Europe will have profound effect on the socio-economic map of Europe and the world - and its statistical measurement. So will rapid advances in technology. But, as Ad Abrahamse emphasises, we must be alert to respondents' fears about invasion of their privacy.

Back to McLennan: he insists that statisticians of the 21st century will have to be more than just statisticians. They will need the vision and skills to really understand the world they are measuring - and increasingly the context will be *the world*. Otherwise we shall lose our relevance.

**Could there be a worse fate for us?**



Fernando de Esteban  
Managing editor

# A time of profound and rapid change



**BY YVES FRANCHET**  
DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF EUROSTAT

*By the end of the 20th century statistics were an essential component of well-functioning democracy and the market economy. They are the reference base in negotiations between nations and of political assessment. They influence the actors on the economic stage and enable them to evaluate the impact of their decisions.*

Developing statistical work is like developing infrastructures: generally costly and long to implement. For example, changing the nomenclatures of activities and evaluating the effect takes many years. This is because such a change implies negotiations with national economic and social partners. The outcome may only be fully understood perhaps ten years later when a census records the result.

The statistician must listen to the surrounding world and supply statistics that the world needs to give life to its ideas. He must continuously anticipate these ideas.

Before we talk about statistics in the 21st century we must think of the profound changes during this century. It seems to me that three such changes have important consequences for the future of statistics:

THE ADVENT OF THE  
"INFORMATION SOCIETY"  
GLOBALIZATION OF THE  
WORLD ECONOMY, AND  
PEOPLE'S NEED FOR  
"LOCAL SPACE"

**The information society** means a proliferation in the production of microdata and the capacity to disseminate and process them in real time.

**Globalization of the world economy** is leading progressively to an international statistical language: statistical classifications, standards and definitions will have to be coherent at world, national and regional levels. At the same time much of the current basis of statistics, linked as it is to the regulation of national activities, will disappear as such activities disappear in the process of globalization.

**Occupation of "local space"**, as I call it, will be a consequence of the other two changes: the citizen will be in a position to live and work where he or she wishes. Statistics will need to take account of this movement.

## WE MUST KEEP UP

Within the European Union the Commission will remain the most important user of Community statistics. But the European Parliament, national authorities and other important actors on the socio-economic stage will become much larger users than now.

It is very likely that agricultural statistics will become enterprise statistics like any other as the Common Agricultural Policy evolves; agricultural businesses will play a central role here. Major developments will influence statistics on the environment, on the information society (data on which is very poor at present) and on regional and local activities.

So, statisticians will lose many of their traditional administrative bases due to the deregulation process. They will have to supply more information to a more complex society. They will have to do this without increasing the burden on

respondents. To do this, they will have to turn to intensive use of electronic data derived directly from economic activity. They will plug into telematic networks for the collection and dissemination of statistics - notably agricultural, environmental and certain local data.



They will make extensive use of expert computerised systems and geographical information systems to analyse and interpret the results.

This profound change will have to be very fast. In a world in which all types of information are obtainable in real time, official statisticians will have to match such speed and quality, otherwise many users will be lost.

### *Several conflicts will appear:*

- The need for rapid technological development versus limited budgets. Essentially, statistics will remain a public asset and the necessities of such a change will conflict with limited national or Community resources.

- Increased use of computerized data versus protection of individual data. In order to develop in the way described official statisticians will have to make more use of computerized registers, both public and private. At the same time they will have to convince society that this is compatible with the protection of individual and business security.

- Continuous training of both statisticians and users. Such rapid changes will require important training for both producers and users of statistics. This in turn will increase budgetary pressures on the statistical services.





## STATISTICS REINFORCED

What will Eurostat become within the next decade?

Several scenarios can be and are envisaged. I'll risk a few personal certainties:

- National statistical offices and Eurostat will be able to convince their authorities of

the necessity of giving statistics more of the resources they need to cope with these changes. Statistics will be reinforced at both national and Community levels as well as within the European Statistical System (ESS).

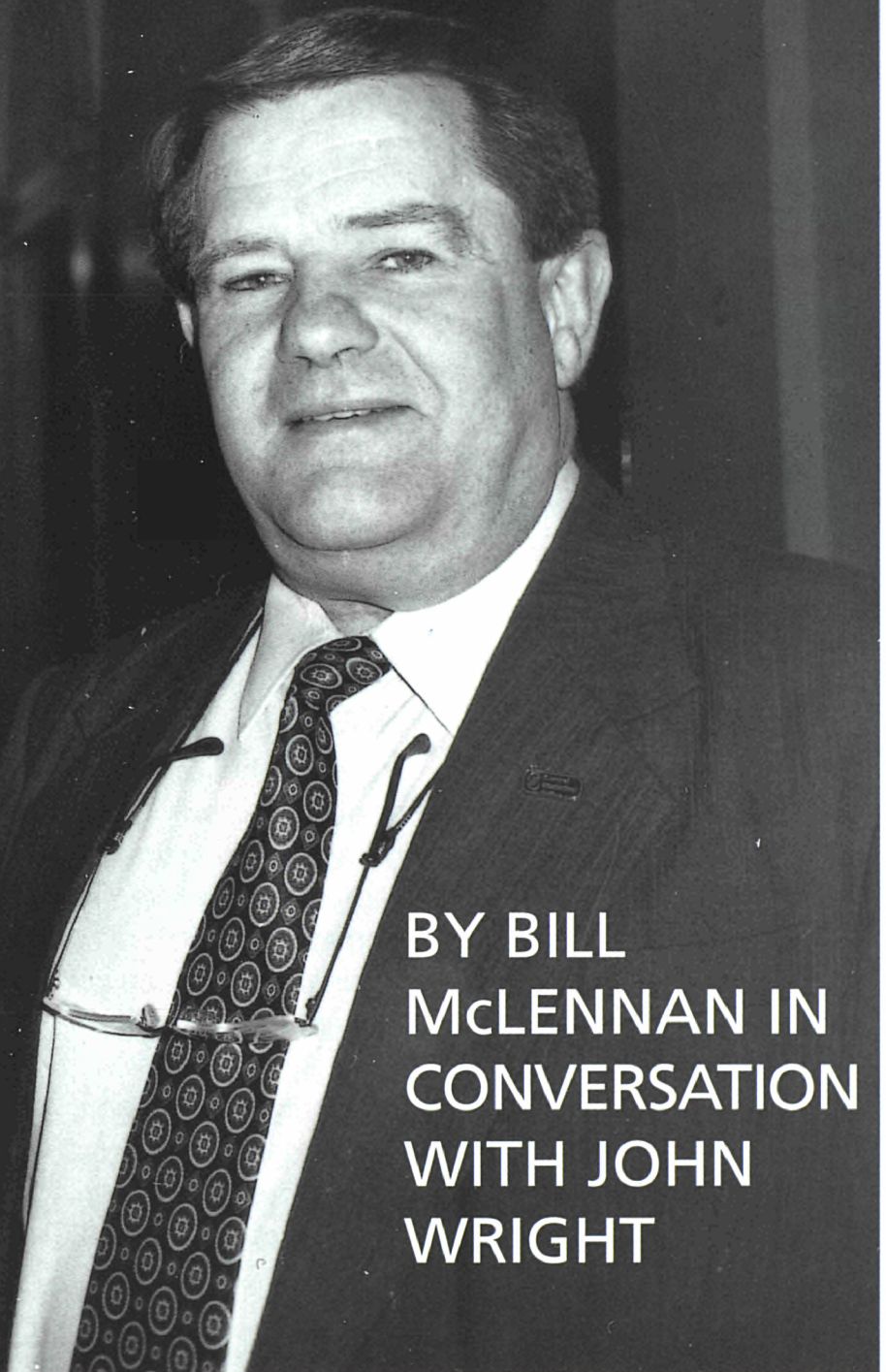
- Partnership between Member States and Eurostat will grow closer to maximise the capacity of the ESS.

- Participation of Central and Eastern European statisticians within the ESS will develop strongly - whatever is decided on the speed of political integration.

- Training, research and information technology will play an increasing role within the ESS.

- And, finally, the ESS will continue to play a key role in the development of the world statistical system.

# Living with Asia and the black snake



BY BILL  
McLENNAN IN  
CONVERSATION  
WITH JOHN  
WRIGHT

*There's an Australian saying, "It's easier to kill a highly venomous 6ft black snake with a piece of balsa wood than to stop a statistical series." So I don't see all that much future in mass reductions in today's statistical series.*

But I do see very major statistical developments as we approach the 21st century.

For a start there's going to be a bigger thrust around the world on measuring socio-economic topics, and on measuring environmental issues.

In both cases I think the emphasis will be on less developed countries. There is a tendency to concentrate the discussion on the statistics of Europe, North America, Australia etc, forgetting that the majority of the world lacks the statistical background and databases "we" have.

There's a need to bring the databases of underdeveloped countries up to the standard of "ours". I've felt for some time that many statistical constructs, such as national accounts, retail prices etc, don't make all that much sense in the developing world. These are sophisticated concepts designed for Europe by Europeans. They can't be taken as gospel everywhere.

Many of our statistical systems are based on classifications of manufacturing industry created in Britain many years ago when manufacturing was more important to her. How relevant are they to modern China or remoter parts of Asia?

There's much talk among statisticians about data on services. Where are we going - are we getting enough? The answer is "no". Are the classifications relevant; should they be changed, added to, improved? The answer is "yes".

This is a developing area on our side of the fence. But how much of this work will be applicable in China or Afghanistan or Brazil? I'm rather sceptical about its global application.

## COWS AND YAMS

I don't know what the answer is but I am sure these things will come to the fore in the world economy in the next 20 years. I even wonder if our statistical system has to change to take more account of reality.

What should third world countries be measuring? Of course, you could ask the same question in the West today...

What do gross domestic product and gross net product in the national accounts mean in the context of the UK/European economies?

In essence they are an accounting construct based on Keynesian economics, which, of course, move in and out of favour. It is arguable whether such a construct is right for where we are in Europe today. I can't immediately point to something better, but I don't think we do enough talking and thinking about whether there might be something different.

And in many Asian countries the concept of GDP doesn't make very much sense when so many people are wandering around making a subsistence living and wealth is measured by the number of cows owned or yams in the ground.

The IMF lends money to these countries so they are forced to have good banking statistics; but I'm not sure how good or relevant such figures are in terms of the ordinary citizen.

Statistics in the next 30 years will probably be dominated by the smaller countries in the Asia/Pacific region, which will become much larger in terms of economic output. To put it in context: Indonesia already has half as many people as the EU, and it won't be long before the output of such countries is as big as some of ours; so their responsibilities and problems will become ever more important on the world scene.

# "FORTRESS" COUNTRY IS DEAD

On another dimension: statisticians in the UK and Europe and Australia have been very much input rather than output or consumer orientated, although they are moving in this direction.

Therefore we have never looked at our statistical products as something to solve someone else's problems by bringing together lots of data - both from within a statistical agency and from other sources - to apply to a difficult issue. We always view our job as putting out statistics rather than using them to solve problems.

This approach will be forced on us - otherwise there is the danger that we shall start to lose our relevance. For example, social and economic issues are really indivisible: you can define them in different ways - and we do - but quite often the solution to social problems are economic and *vice versa*. But in the UK and Australia we don't do enough to combine these things in our measurement and analysis of them.

We must - especially in the Asian context where dynamic and subsistence economies rub shoulders with all the social consequences that implies.

And there's another thing in the world that we haven't really appreciated. The concept of "a country" is not dead but most - except perhaps vast remote countries like Australia, and even Indonesia - can no longer be considered "a fortress". Most now see themselves as part of a global market place.

In the context of the UK, do we really reflect this in our statistics? Does France, Germany? Some thought is given to this issue but not much. I'm not sure that Eurostat has its act together here either. It has lots of roles but an important one is to make sure there are *European* statistics available - comparable sets of numbers across all countries.

# RUBBISH

Recently I've been looking at retail price indices and, in my view, the figure for European inflation is not only suspect, it's a load of rubbish: you can't compare apples and oranges. In the UK we treat mortgage interest as the major part of owner-occupied housing costs. France leaves it out completely and Germany uses equivalent rent. In the context of having a number for Europe it may not necessarily be a bad thing, but clearly there is a problem in making sensible comparisons.

Returning to output: changes here, of course, will be heavily affected by electronics, although not as heavily as I would like. All the market research says that most people, other than financial people, want data on paper not electronically. But I believe that will change as more and more computers appear in schools and homes and more and more people will be looking to access databanks.

This opens up the scope for people obtaining data from all sorts of places to solve their own problems. Statistical offices must have their data available in this way - the right facilities, packages, programmes.

Most importantly, which most people forget, we must make sure that our data which is picked up in this manner is explained in such a way that people can relate it to other data.

This is the challenge of metadata. When this electronic revolution comes in the next 15

to 20 years this broader management of data will become one of our most important concerns. Of course, I'm going back to Australia where I can expect to head the statistical system until the year 2002.

How might it change?

Well, fundamentally, of course, Australia is an Asian/Pacific country. Historically, Australia has compared itself statistically with Europe and the United States but in the last ten years we've been comparing ourselves more and more with the Asia/Pacific region.





## GLOBAL COMPLEXITY

Having said that the statistics still have to reflect the fact that the United States and Britain are very large investors in Australia and Australia is the second largest investor in the UK. And, of course, Australia is becoming a beachhead for European countries and the States to establish themselves in the Asian markets. All this is further evidence of the global complexity of statistics.

I think the biggest change that is going to happen to statistics is that they are no longer going to be regarded as a free good. More and more countries are aggressively marketing statistics. It's not so much for the money but as an indicator of what statistics people want because they are prepared to pay for them.

If people are prepared to pay, others are prepared to provide - it's fundamental. This brings us to the importance of non-government statistical agencies in the statistical world. You have to wonder whether in 20 years' time they will be bigger players in producing reliable, credible numbers with high integrity that people will be prepared to use to make significant large-scale decisions.

I think the answer is probably "yes".

But I don't think this will diminish the role of government statistical agencies. The more sophisticated we become and the more electronics we use the more data will be required. I don't think we're in a declining business. But I don't think - with

declining government spending - that we shall be in a position to meet all the demand. Entrepreneurs will step in as they do elsewhere. They already have - offering services that 15-20 years ago would have been classic government statistical work.

What we have to do is to work with them.

Statistical offices are going to have to be more cosmopolitan, more rounded - we need not just statisticians but people who know about business, accounting, economics, sociology etc.

If the statistical world is to solve a problem it must first know about the bloody problem!

# MAC GOES BACK



There's no doubt about it: Bill McLennan is one of the major players on the world statistical stage. Those who work with him either love him or hate him - but he is impossible to ignore. Australia clearly loves him. After three years in "exile" as head of the UK Central Statistical Office he is going back to the top statistical job in his native country.

## **The *Financial Times* in London reported it this way:**

*Bill McLennan...is leaving to become Australian Statistician. McLennan, 52, who joined the CSO in 1992 after serving as deputy director of the Australian Bureau of Statistics, brought a breath of fresh air into the operations of the statistical service. During his time in office he has sought to tighten up government leaks of information, develop a strong business focus and make the CSO more self-financing. The changes have significantly boosted the credibility of the CSO in the*

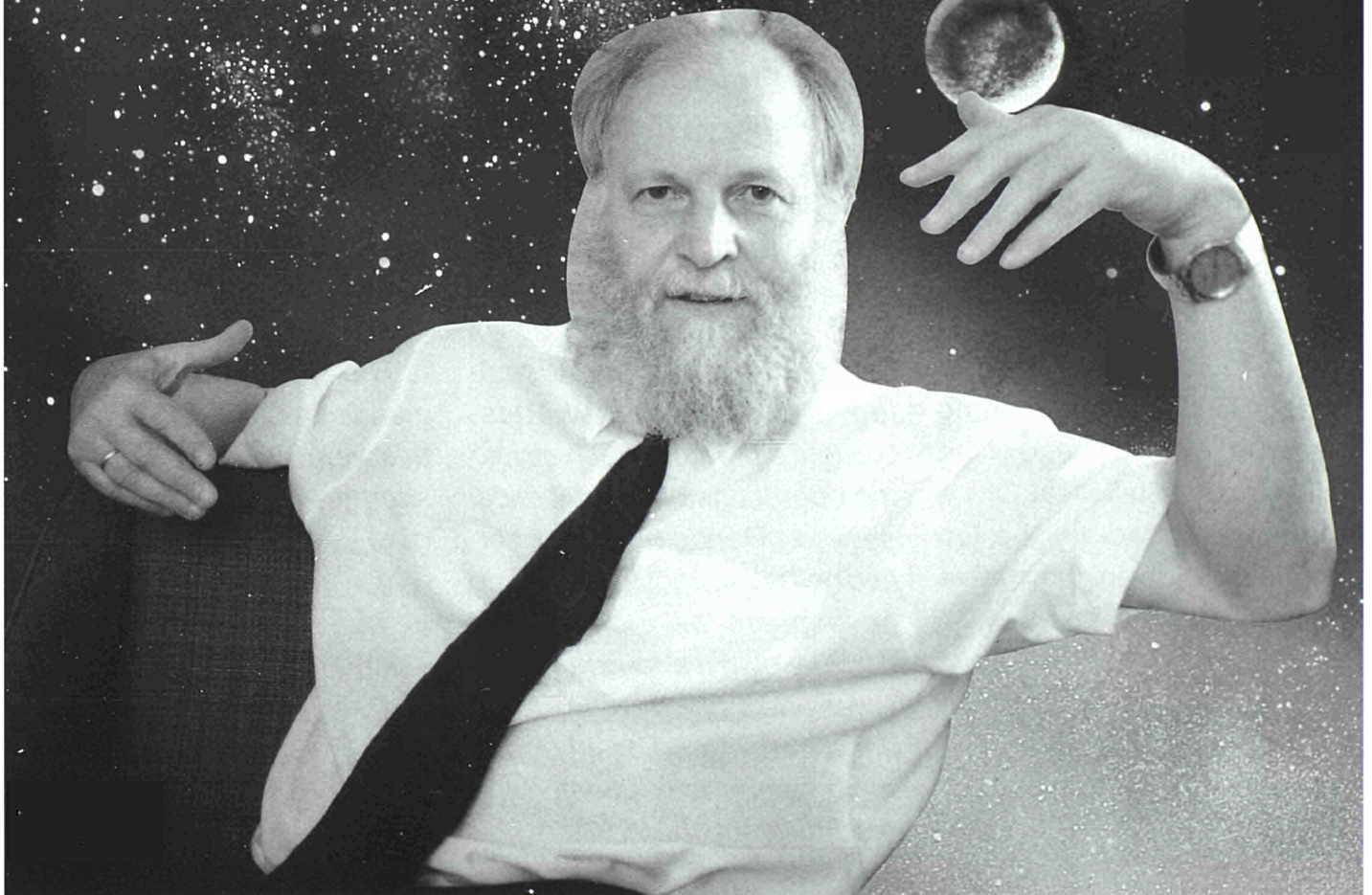
*City, although his forthright and colourful style has occasionally seemed at odds with British Civil Service traditions.*

*"I found the culture change bigger than I expected - it took me 12 months to realise all the subtle cultural differences", McLennan says.*

*McLennan, one of the highest-paid civil servants, will leave the CSO in March after serving out his three-year contract. He said that he had decided to return to the post of director of the ABS, which he first joined in 1960, because he wished to "go home" and be closer to his two children. "It's a great job - not the sort I am ever likely to be offered again", he said.*

*His post, which commanded a salary of £114,000 this year, will be advertised shortly.*

Hans E Zeuthen (58) has been the National Statistician or Director-General of Denmark Statistics since 1988. He has been a professor of economics since 1977 and from 1975 to 1983 he was chairman of the Danish Council of Economic Advisers. Main developments of Denmark Statistics since his arrival have been further expansion of statistics based on administrative registers, establishing environmental statistics, increasing sales and marketing and a major expansion of internal information technology.





# Capturing data in the 2000s

by Hans E Zeuthen

There is no doubt that demand for official statistics will continue to grow up to and way beyond the year 2000.

As our societies increasingly become more complicated, governments need more and more detailed information on what goes on in *individual* enterprises etc. This is a necessary requirement for efficient taxation, environmental control, effective subsidy of various activities, and so on...

Communism's firm belief in controlling the economy no longer exists in our part of the world. Nevertheless, our "winning system" is not a *laissez-faire* society, and in spite of several attempts at deregulation and getting rid of bureaucracy, governments in the West need an increasing amount of data to run and control their countries.

At the same time individual businesses need more and more systematic internal information for their own effective operation.

Simultaneously, budgetary pressures on governments as well as private companies tend to grow, and respondents become more and more reluctant to deliver data to statistical offices and other government agencies.

A close coordination of "data capture" for internal, administrative and statistical purposes will clearly reduce this dilemma considerably, as will advances in the EDP field. But in my opinion the most crucial issue is coordination, and government statisticians have an important role to play.

Obviously coordination can only take place if there is a will to coordinate. We do not live in a planned economy, therefore it cannot be done to a central plan. Bits may be done centrally - for example, agreeing on the same concepts in the external accounts of companies, the taxation system and official economic statistics.

## FEAR OF "BIG BROTHER"

For many people a strong coordination of data collection and data use clearly smells of a centrally planned, unfree, undemocratic, "big brother is watching you" society.

In the field of data on persons the Nordic countries have already achieved a system with comprehensive "capture" of data from administrative registers. In Denmark and Finland this coordination has made traditional censuses unnecessary. It is hardly reasonable to describe these countries as less democratic than those with weaker coordination of the registration system!

Fear of coordination of business data is, to a large extent, of a different nature. The worry here is more likely to be that a comprehensive and coherent system makes it more difficult to hide business secrets from competitors. As such a system will also make it easier for governments to control the plausibility of, for example, taxable income, this may add to business reluctance towards extensive coordination of data systems.



Building up a system in which it is possible to share data with anybody having a legitimate right to use them not only requires good legislation but also mutual trust.

## IT MUST BE VOLUNTARY

For many reasons it is not realistic in the foreseeable future to achieve an all-embracing data system where everything is coordinated. But going even some way would be of great help. Seen through the eyes of a government statistical office, coordination of data collection from other branches of government might be a very valuable first move.

Another important step for statistical offices would be coordination with data already "captured" for non-statistical purposes by individual businesses or their trade associations.

At the same time it is increasingly important that the public sector as a whole - including statistical offices - do not ask questions that another part of it might have already asked (still worse, of course, if the same organisation repeatedly asks the same questions).

Due to such fears and the difference in registration systems, it is unlikely that all businesses would sign up to a system in which a statistical office "captures" data through the information systems of the private sector. Obviously this would reduce the advantages. But even if partly successful it would make it easier for both businesses and statistical offices to obtain data, and quality would tend to be higher.

The question is what to do with those not joining the system.

## WITHOUT

The most expedient thing might be to do without or almost without those who remain outside, especially if there is a good comprehensive business register with basic background data. This would make it easier to adjust for the outsiders in a sensible manner; and without the need to conduct a parallel traditional survey, the statistics in question probably could be produced quicker - and certainly cheaper.

The problem that would have to be faced is of companies already contributing to the data collection system wishing to withdraw. A government statistical office might find it difficult to have a system where it is possible for respondents to avoid the burden of delivering data rather than facing the compulsion of traditional surveys.

Data capture solely through access to the information systems of the businesses must be voluntary. However, this will make agreement difficult on data sharing.

## CRUCIAL

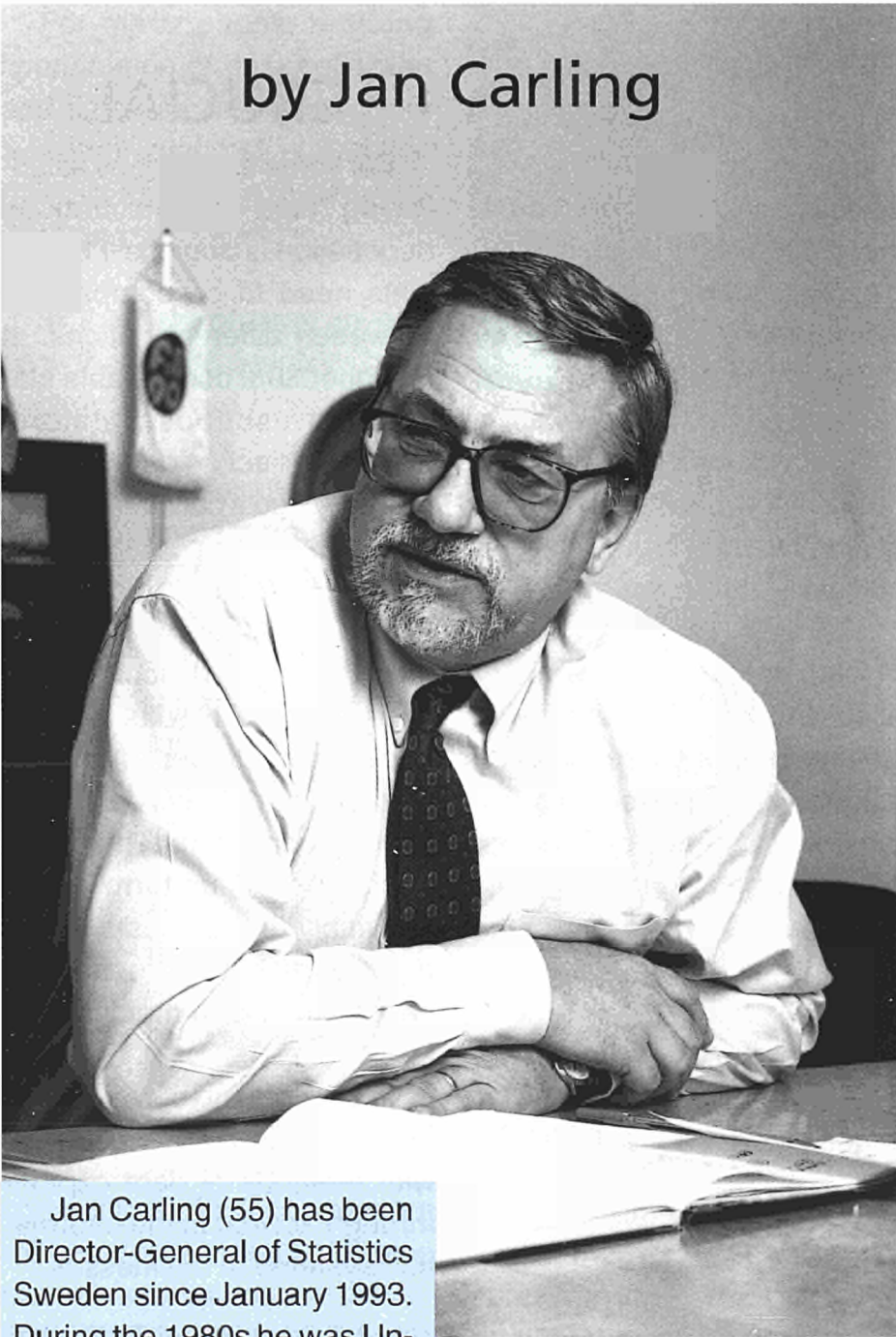
For some statisticians establishing "data capture" through negotiation is dubious if the results need to be comparable between different nations. It is argued that comparable statistics presuppose uniform ways of collecting data. This is probably true if conditions in the countries to be compared are rather similar. But to compare countries that vary in many different ways is difficult in any case and the results are not necessarily the best if uniform methods of data collection are forced upon them. This is especially so if uniform methods imply greater costs than if the countries were free to choose their own methods.

In the years to come the important thing is to experiment with methods of data capture through access to the information systems of businesses.

In my opinion success in this field is crucial to the success of statistical offices beyond the turn of the century.

# Filling vital gaps

by Jan Carling



Jan Carling (55) has been Director-General of Statistics Sweden since January 1993. During the 1980s he was Under-Secretary of State at the Ministry of Industry. In 1989 he was appointed Director-General of the Agency for Administrative Development. For the past two years he has faced the challenge of making Swedish official statistics more responsive to users.

*Any ideas about statistics in the next century must necessarily rest on a vision of long-term changes taking place and of society to come. Statistics are and must remain a vital factor in that development, and changes in the social and economic structure must find their expression in statistics.*

I have no doubt that the overall demand for statistics will grow. But to fit our resources to the increased demand reductions in some areas of statistics are probably on the agenda.

In the field of economic statistics, for example, it is, above all, agricultural statistics that spring to mind. We are seeing a gradual reduction in the relative importance of agriculture in Western Europe and a simplification and phasing out of large parts of the vast system of subsidies is unavoidable.

Even today there is reason to question the usefulness of some of the agricultural statistics, and in the latter part of the 90s we should begin to see a manifest scaling down in this area.

Generally speaking, the goods producing sector is given undue space in today's production statistics. The growing importance of the service sector has not yet found expression in a comparable expansion of the statistics. While it must be admitted that there are still many practical problems to be solved, this has also been true of the goods sector - take, for example, the deflation problem - but this has not stopped heavy investment in statistics on goods production.

Obviously resource limitations have played a role in the meagre state of service statistics - yet one cannot help but

notice the evident lack of rationality in the present imbalance between these two areas, both with regard to the amount and the quality of the statistics.

## DIRE NEED

There is a basic lack of data in many areas of service statistics, not least where services are financed from the government budget. In the Nordic countries, for example, where most education, medical care and many other services are produced in the public sector, measures of production and productivity trends are largely lacking. This points to an area in dire need of development in order to lead to regular production of relevant statistics on the other side of the year 2000.

The household sector and the (probably) growing informal sector are further areas that today are too poorly illuminated. An efficient means of improving statistical information in these areas are time-use studies. These bridge the gap between economic and social statistics and deserve a more central place in any future statistical system.

In an international perspective, the Nordic countries have come far in the field of social statistics. There is still a great deal that needs to be done, but the most important thing perhaps is that our experience is used in the extension and development of social statistics about to take place on the European level.

Another area that must be included in any discussion of statistics of the 21st century,

especially, in an international perspective, are environment statistics.

## INTERNATIONAL PRIORITY

The environmental questions that we face do not stop at national borders. Measures to protect the environment, and statistics as a basis for decision-making and monitoring, must be made a common international priority.

What, in my view, merits the greatest attention are statistics that reflect the state of the environment and the effects of various measures. In other words, what we primarily have to do is to measure very concrete environmental phenomena and present facts that are sufficiently basic and unequivocal to be immediately useful as a foundation for decision-making and practical measures.

Another very crucial aspect is how well we, as producers of statistics, are able to convince our users of the value of statistics. Personally I feel that we could learn a great deal from how successful private enterprises use modern concepts of quality, placing client satisfaction squarely centre stage.

But there are other useful ideas within the quality approach. One is securing the active involvement of all personnel - a central factor in such learning organisations as ours. Another is systematic benchmarking - definitely an area where our international cooperation could be improved.

When it comes to technology we can expect a great deal of change during the remainder of this century. Plainly, more and more dissemination will take place via the rapidly-developing electronic media; but the development of techniques for data collection is no less interesting. Incumbent on us will be to offer our respondents, especially within the business sector, alternative ways of supplying data, in order to reduce non-response and obtain a high-quality input.

## INTERESTING & RELEVANT

Ensuring high quality primary data is a strategic matter for statistical offices everywhere. In the Nordic countries we have an advantage in that we can use extensively data from administrative registers, a method that yields both qualitative and economic gains.

Our task in the future will be to pursue high quality while continuing to develop our statistics in close cooperation with users. If we succeed in this we shall be producing the truly interesting and relevant statistics that are of indisputable value in decision-making, research and public discourse everywhere.

# 21st Century

## WE MUST PLAN NOW

BY AD ABRAHAMSE

Ad Abrahamse (56) has been Director-General of Statistics Netherlands since 1991. Before that he was Professor of Statistics at Rotterdam's Erasmus University. Under him Statistics Netherlands has undergone major reorganisation to promote the timeliness, efficiency, modernity, professionalism and objectivity of its operations.

Governments need information to outline their policies. Citizens and their associations want information to evaluate political results and to re-elect (or not) their governments. Businesses need information to guide their strategic and operational decisions.

In the European context these features are obvious. The European Commission is the key client of Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union. Statistical information is of overwhelming importance in the realisation of European Monetary Union. And multinational and supranational companies increasingly use detailed statistics when they decide on new products, new establishments, and so on.

We, the statistical offices of the European Union and its Member States, must constantly reflect and work on the quality of the services we offer.

*Some relevant questions:*

Do we fully anticipate tomorrow's problems and challenges? Are we starting to produce the statistics that will be needed for tomorrow's policies?

Strategic choices must be made in time by management in our statistical offices. At a recent ISI seminar on the future of international statistics Robert

Groves of Michigan University told us that the cycle from the identification of statistical needs to the implementation of plans usually takes more than ten years. And then the time series have to be expanded for some time before they can be fully exploited.

**STATISTICAL  
INFORMATION  
IS A  
PREREQUISITE  
FOR BOTH  
DEMOCRATIC  
SOCIETY  
AND THE  
MARKET  
ECONOMY**

These choices often have to be defended against the short-term demands of established clients and against a shortage of available means. Since 1970 Statistics Netherlands has invested in a system of environmental statistics which has now gained an international reputation.

## TECHNOLOGICAL REVOLUTION

Do we effectively and efficiently employ the potential benefits of modern technology?

The use of electronic data interchange can fundamentally improve the collection of data from business and government: it can reduce the response burden, enable the use of population rather than sample data, and speed up the publication of results.

On the output side the dissemination of data can be improved just as dramatically: an integrated and documented database can be used as a source for paper publications, for telephone enquiries, for tabulation on demand and for on-line consultation by (paying) external subscribers.

Entering a keyword should be sufficient to retrieve fully-integrated statistical information on such different dimensions as employment, production, turnover, possession, consumption, investments, exports and imports for a specific commodity.

The speed and possibilities of technological change for statistics were sketched at the same ISI seminar by Wouter Keller of Statistics Netherlands. In the new organisation of Statistics Netherlands we have taken the first step towards the implementation of such ideas

by forming separate input and output divisions.

Will politicians and the public who decide on the future of official statistics have enough confidence in their quality and performance?

Several related questions are at stake here. In many Member States NSIs are facing decreasing budgets and have to earn more money. But this apart it is important to heed the market signals in themselves: which publications are sold, which press releases are quoted?

Private companies sometimes turn out to be strong competitors from whom we can learn. Cooperation with them is another way of heeding market signals. But in the first place we shall have to invest heavily in our networks with public authorities, opinion leaders and the public at large. We shall have to convince them again and again that public statistics have to be paid from collective funds. They are too dear to be left to the market forces proper.

Marketing official statistics - which is not necessarily equivalent to commercial exploitation - will become a key component of the activities of strategic management. The Anglo-Saxon countries have taken the lead in this respect. We can still learn a lot from our non-EU colleagues as is evident from a

continuous stream of contributions from Australia, Canada, and New Zealand.

## PROTECTING PRIVACY

A particular challenge, in my eyes, is going to be the protection of privacy. The technological advances and our clients' wishes, be they academic researchers or marketeers, will boost the demand for detailed data from the NSIs. Both from a statistical and a technological and financial point of view the use of all kinds of modern devices is extremely attractive.

Using and scanning aerial photographs for statistical purposes may, however, easily lead to unwanted administrative or penal consequences - for example, against people who grow illegal crops or companies who pollute the environment.

Chipcard information on shopping and spending patterns by consumers is another extremely rich source of information for statisticians, in particular in combination with other information such as that on income etc. It goes without saying that such detailed information may be even more valuable to marketeers and direct mail companies.

In order to give a relevant and objective description of European society the NSIs must be able to collect and publish data on such phenomena without fear of negative individual consequences for their respondents, their most important capital. If we cannot answer specific demands from our clients for this reason, it is better to be straight with them and say "no".

One last aspect worth mentioning here is the internal organisation of work within the NSIs. As statisticians we have to be acquainted with mathematical methods, computer hardware and software, the subject matters we describe, important scientific theories and concepts concerning these subject matters, and with the management of our relations with respondents, clients and decision makers.

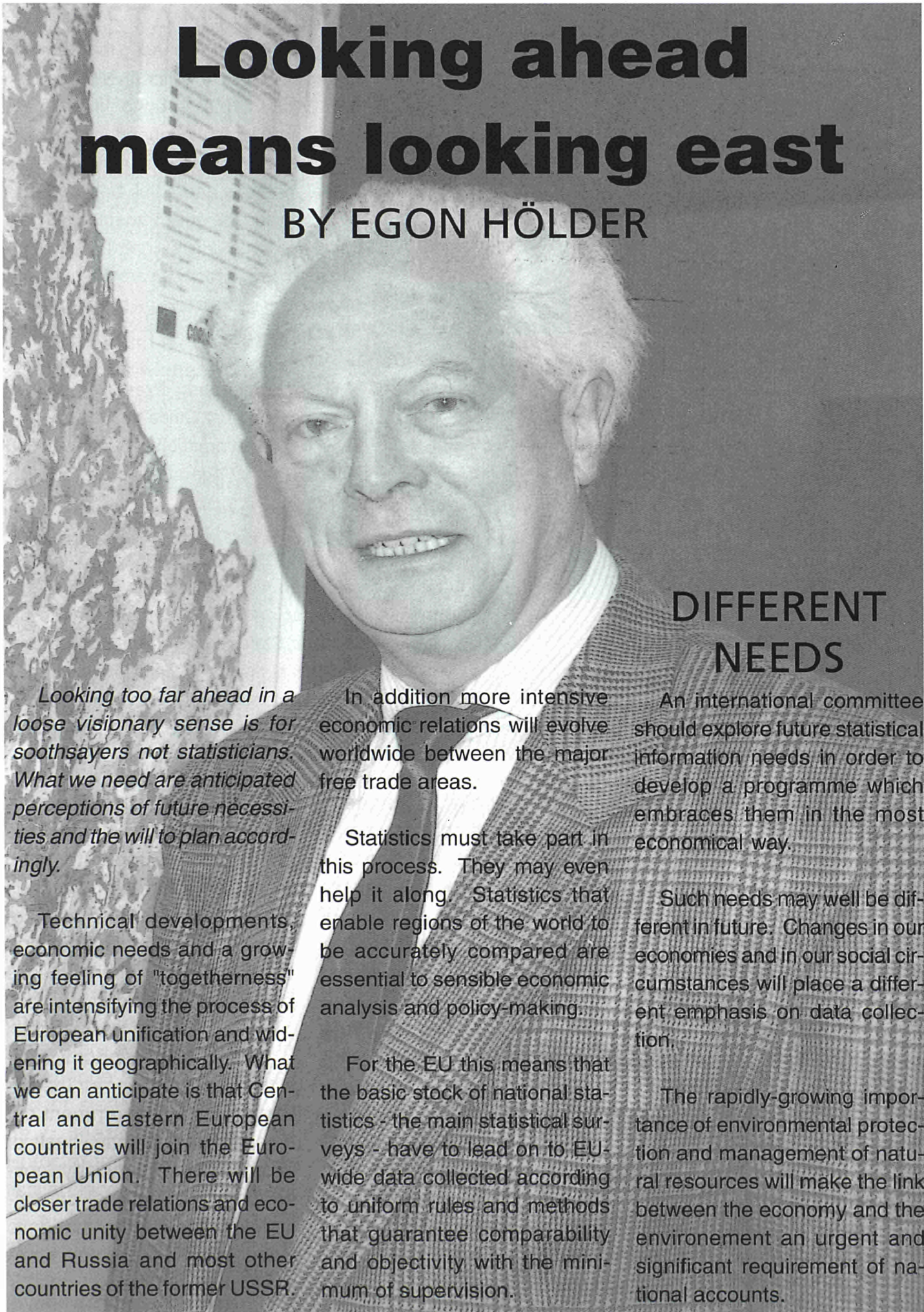
It is my strong conviction that we must invest in new management structures and styles, in an *education permanente* for our staff and in intensive communication between colleagues to establish the statistical offices of the European Union and its Member States as centres of excellence. The TEMPO reorganisation at Statistics Netherlands is a reflection of this conviction.

If we do not give heed to the statistics of the future, there is no future for statistics.



# Looking ahead means looking east

BY EGON HÖLDER



## DIFFERENT NEEDS

*Looking too far ahead in a loose visionary sense is for soothsayers not statisticians. What we need are anticipated perceptions of future necessities and the will to plan accordingly.*

Technical developments, economic needs and a growing feeling of "togetherness" are intensifying the process of European unification and widening it geographically. What we can anticipate is that Central and Eastern European countries will join the European Union. There will be closer trade relations and economic unity between the EU and Russia and most other countries of the former USSR.

In addition more intensive economic relations will evolve worldwide between the major free trade areas.

Statistics must take part in this process. They may even help it along. Statistics that enable regions of the world to be accurately compared are essential to sensible economic analysis and policy-making.

For the EU this means that the basic stock of national statistics - the main statistical surveys - have to lead on to EU-wide data collected according to uniform rules and methods that guarantee comparability and objectivity with the minimum of supervision.

An international committee should explore future statistical information needs in order to develop a programme which embraces them in the most economical way.

Such needs may well be different in future. Changes in our economies and in our social circumstances will place a different emphasis on data collection.

The rapidly-growing importance of environmental protection and management of natural resources will make the link between the economy and the environment an urgent and significant requirement of national accounts.



Egon Hölder (67) headed the German Federal Statistical Office in Wiesbaden from 1983 to 1992. During this time he fought hard for the independence of official statistics, the modernisation of statistical methods and a link between the economy and the environment in the national accounts. He is a great believer in citizens being directly aware of the value of statistics. This explains his emphasis on press relations.

Before becoming President of the Federal Statistical Office he was coordinator for the automation of public administration in the Federal Ministry of the Interior.

Since leaving the statistical office he has been working as a consultant with Eurostat and the statistical offices of Member States on cooperation with the Russian statistical office. This continues his long-standing links with statistical offices in former Eastern bloc countries.

When it comes to the environment, official statistics are able to offer objective figures - in particular of the consequences of the combined effect of human and economic influences. A new special system of national accounts on this theme should be able to do this as reliably as the national accounts reflect the development of the economy now. In this way official statistics are able to lend objectivity to a subject vital for the future of mankind but too often discussed in a way that is politicised and emotional and often factual wrong.

Introduction of a European currency will affect many areas of statistics. Data on prices, for example, will allow new insights into the economic situation of Member States, no longer clouded by the effect of exchange rates. However, uniform rules for collecting data throughout the EU will be important.

Over the years, growing demand for economic information has led a boom in private sector firms specialising in data collection and opinion research.

Official statisticians must not regard them as troublesome competitors. Cooperation with them, providing their methods are valid, will lead to an economical division of labour and an increasing number of results being available faster.

In the market economy, statistics are no longer for the exclusive use of government but a neutral and objective basis of information for everybody: government, the political opposition, economists, the academic world, business, the news media and the individual.

# CONSTANTLY ON GUARD

The neutrality that governs official statistics implies a "level playing field" for all in the dissemination of data - especially when it comes to statistics that can influence the financial markets. We must be constantly on guard against the use of "insider knowledge" to obtain unjustified economic or political advantage.

Official statistics will always remain in big demand because of the neutral way they reflect the human condition in so many ways. Traditional publishing apart, the work of statistical press offices is becoming more and more important. Statistics are news. Accurate interpretation of their content and meaning is important for both the media and the public they serve, and often leads to substantial demand for data in greater depth.

One cannot look to the future without looking to Central and Eastern Europe. Enormous changes have taken place; even more are to come. One big change is the transformation of statistics to serve the new market economies. Eurostat and the national statistical offices of Member States as well as organisations such as OECD, the IMF and the United Nations are all heavily involved in this.

## A COMMON STATISTICAL LANGUAGE

Such cooperation not only offers opportunities for the countries in transition but also for the EU and especially for the development of statistics as a supra-national instrument.

The national statistics of Member States and the statistical system of the EU are themselves in a process of change. Important parts need to be totally standardised - data collected and processed according to the same rules. A "common language" of statistics should be Europe's contribution to the important worldwide standardisation of official statistics.

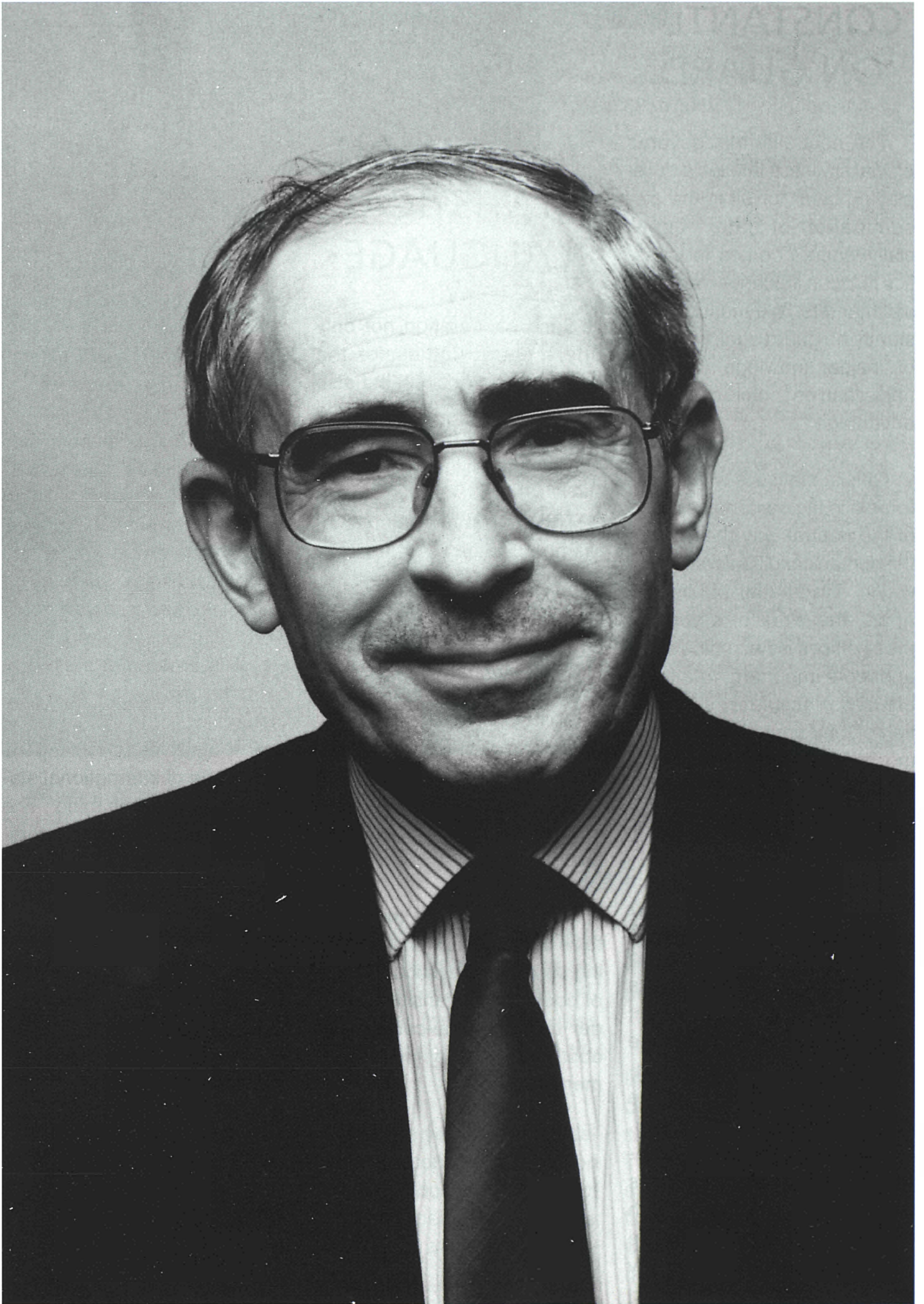
It is important for this effort to be coordinated with the building up of the statistical system of countries in transition in order to avoid time-consuming, costly and confusing adjustments later on.

This is why, in my view, Eurostat, the Russian statistical office and the statistical committee of the CIS should form a joint institution open also to other countries outside their groupings. Such an institution should determine the official data needs of the future and propose statistical surveys, including the necessary methodology, that would form the basis of international statistical agreements.

This would serve to keep the coherence of international statistics very much in mind. The aim, surely, must be fully comparable statistics in all main areas stretching from Lisbon to Vladivostock.

With such an information resource, politicians, economists and entrepreneurs could forge ahead with economic development far surpassing that achieved so far by the European economic groupings.

Surely such a prospect justifies the effort involved?



# Too big for small problems,

*Nothing appears more desirable to me than thinking about the future of statistics in the 21st century. In my view, a good statistical system is as essential for the proper working of society than such infrastructures as energy or transport.*

One example: the concept of national accounts emerged around half-a-century ago. It was able to become operational due largely to the ability of statistics to measure the result. Today - and probably for a long time to come - it determines the way we study macro-economic change.

Selecting a statistical framework is just as much of a long-term investment as building a high-speed railway or a series of nuclear plants.

Because of the timescale involved, decisions on future statistical concepts should not be taken on the basis of demand today but of likely demand tomorrow; and they must preserve margins of flexibility that make future adaptations possible.

What can be said about statistical demand within the next 25 years? This leads me to a comment by American so-

ciologist Daniel Bell: "Governments tend to become too small for big problems and too big for small problems." This comment might easily apply to statistical systems. Conceived on a national scale and applicable most often to national aggregates, they might appear too provincial for an economy rapidly becoming global and too rigid for social reality that is becoming more and more fragmented.

What should we be aiming for?

# too small for big ones?

BY JACQUES LESOURNE

On an EU and global scale, we should be trying to achieve the availability of data that today exists on a national level. Much has been done over the last 20 years but the figures are still too few, too general and often too late.

We need figures that are not merely an extension of national data but which really do add to our knowledge of international industry, travel and tourism, environmentally damaging emissions etc - of all the elements necessary to stimulate thinking on sustainable development.

Social fragmentation will stimulate several different needs:

Firstly, a demand for data at geographic levels smaller than a state - for example, a region or discrete urban or rural area. Such a change is already well under way in developed countries.

Secondly, a statistical description of specific groups - for example, the handicapped or similarly underprivileged.

## CONJECTURE & CERTAINTY

In addition to what I see as an explosion of such needs, which are the consequence of the changing role the "state" is playing in our lives, I think we need to examine one conjecture and one certainty:

**The conjecture?** The progressive widening of statistical measurement, which has been a distinct trend of the last 50 years, going hand in hand with social, medical, academic, scientific, cultural and environmental advances, will continue apace - especially in the field of relating such advances to their effect on the environment.

**And the certainty?** Each individual, each organisation, will receive far more information that they will be able to use and will need the ability to reduce it to essentials.

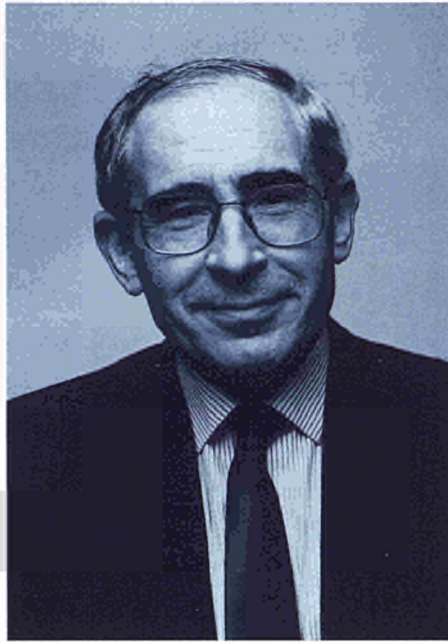
Some information will be so useful that people will be willing to pay a high price for it. Much more will not be worth the time spent on obtaining it. The frontier between statistics that are freely available and those

that command a price will be influenced significantly by this trend towards a proliferation of multimedia data.

The process of distilling large amounts of available information into relatively small amounts of useful information inevitably will lead to the loss of some data that might have been valuable to the user.

Nevertheless, after a transitional phase during which many may feel buried under an avalanche of data - statistical data in particular - individuals and organisations will adapt to the new situation.

I think these brief comments reveal the necessity - and the intellectual challenge - of thinking about how statistical systems might evolve in the next 25 years. Such a process must address potential user demand, data collection and production, dissemination, communication between everyone involved, and the criteria for selecting the allocation of the substantial investment that such developments imply.



Born in 1928, Jacques Lesourne graduated from the Ecole Polytechnique and Ecole des Mines in Paris and in 1959 founded the Sema Metra group, which became one of the foremost European consulting organisations. He left in 1976 to devote more time to thinking and research. In 1974 he was elected Professor of Economics at the Conservatoire National des Arts et Metiers (CNAM), one of France's oldest and most prestigious high-level educational institutions. From 1976 to 1979 he directed OECD's Interfutures Project on long-term evolution of the world economy. Then from 1991 to 1994 he was chief executive of the newspaper *Le Monde*. He is now back with CNAM. Professor Lesourne has written 15 books and published many papers on long-term analysis, economic theory, economic policy and management.

# Statistics in pictures

Increasingly, official statistics are presented to the public via television or newspapers in simple pictures - or news graphics. It seems an unstoppable trend that statisticians have to learn to live with.

Feeding the demand are national and international news graphics agencies. They take the output of statistical offices and package it for the media market. One such agency is *Globus* in Sweden. In this article its managing director, *Folke Straube*, explains the philosophy behind this growing phenomenon ...





*In today's society there is an immense amount of information that is open and accessible. Statutory rights to freedom of information and the need to provide insights into the workings of public authorities and organisations, combined with technological advances, have served to open virtually all doors.*

We are living in an increasingly complicated world where time has become a resource in short supply. Yet to get our message across, more time is needed...

A simple example: God's Ten Commandments were set out in 93 words; in the 18th century only 275 words were needed to draft the American Declaration of Independence; but today the EU needs 27,962 words (in Swedish) to regulate the export of duck eggs!

Looking at it today it appears that Orwell got it wrong. Knowledge is not power. The *right* knowledge is power.

The picture has become more sophisticated. In essence it is now a question of three priorities:

- Not drowning in the flow of information
- Gaining access to the right information
- Being able to rapidly assimilate the information.

Clearly, new methods are needed to communicate complicated information.

Newspaper readers or television viewers have little time at their disposal and need all possible assistance in order to assimilate information. Consequently, presenting information straight on a platter is no longer possible.

Folke Straube (38) is managing director and editor of Globus Graphics in Helsingborg, southern Sweden. He founded the firm in 1986. Before that he was managing director of the Academic Bookstores in Sweden. From 1991 to 1994 he was Lord Mayor of Helsingborg, which has 110,000 inhabitants.

This means that the medium of pictures is already the best (or perhaps even the only conceivable) method of conveying complicated information.

Pictures are also the natural means by which the brain interprets figures. When the reader is confronted with two figures - say, 75 and 150 - the brain converts them into two quantities and arrives at the conclusion that one is twice as big as the other. These quantities together with the figures are then stored in the memory as an image.

Images convey the very heart of complex problems in a simple guise that is easy to survey. Figures are presented and interpreted by capturing and harnessing the reader's own fantasy.

## THE IMAGE SOCIETY

From a society once governed by verbal communication we are now moving towards a world of pictures - be they on television or in newspapers.

The young in particular have grown up with pictures as their medium - with daily life characterised by everything from comics to pop TV. And multi-media beckons just round the corner, integrating as it does all the old media in a new picture-based form.

The possibilities are unlimited. An attractive picture leads the reader to the written word. In the actual process of writing the journalist is thus free to write independently of all background facts that, although important, tend to interrupt the flow of the article. For the TV journalist working within even tighter restraints pictures are a simple necessity.

# NEWS GRAPHICS

Technology for weaving text, photographs and illustrations into an integrated whole is called *news graphics*. The idea is not new but the breakthrough occurred during the 1980s. Today there are news agencies and newspapers throughout the world specialising in this field.

Modern computer technology has made rapid creation of maps and diagrams possible. These can then be directly imported into the newspaper's layout system or displayed on the television screen. The computer performs the necessary calculations and plots different kinds of diagrams for use as basic data for generating ideas and outlines. The graphic designer then creates an illustration using a programme such as *FreeHand* or *Illustrator*.

This leaves enormous scope - for errors as well as opportunities! And the big risk factor lies in the unlimited possibilities presented by computers: it is easy to overload an image.

There are some simple, basic rules to be followed:

## **1. Captivating the reader is the primary purpose of a picture**

The reader's attention should lock on to the picture

and not merely sweep over to the next page. This means that the picture must be exciting, attractive or funny.

## **2. The picture must help the reader to understand the underlying message**

The very first glance must convey *what the picture is about* as well as the gist or core of the information to be conveyed. When figures are presented in context they are easier to understand. To this end we work with symbols that are familiar to the reader - for example, a construction worker's safety helmet covered in a cobweb to indicate unemployment; a basket of goods (food, house, car...) for inflation; a vulture representing bankruptcy...

The means of presenting the figures must reflect the underlying information. The picture must match the message. A picture of prosperous people could not be shown in a feature dealing with aid to the developing world.

It is important to pause here and take note of the cultural differences between countries. What may be seen as an obvious and logical practice in one country may be perceived as racist, prejudiced or crude in another. It is a difficult path to tread and limits must never be overstepped.

## **3. The illustration must be integrated with the information**

A person could be standing, for example, with his arm at an angle used to represent the curve of a diagram, or the size of an oil barrel might be employed to depict oil imports. And the illustration should not be squeezed in as an appendage to a traditional diagram. In the best of pictures the figures and illustrations are woven into an integrated whole.

## **4. The message must predominate**

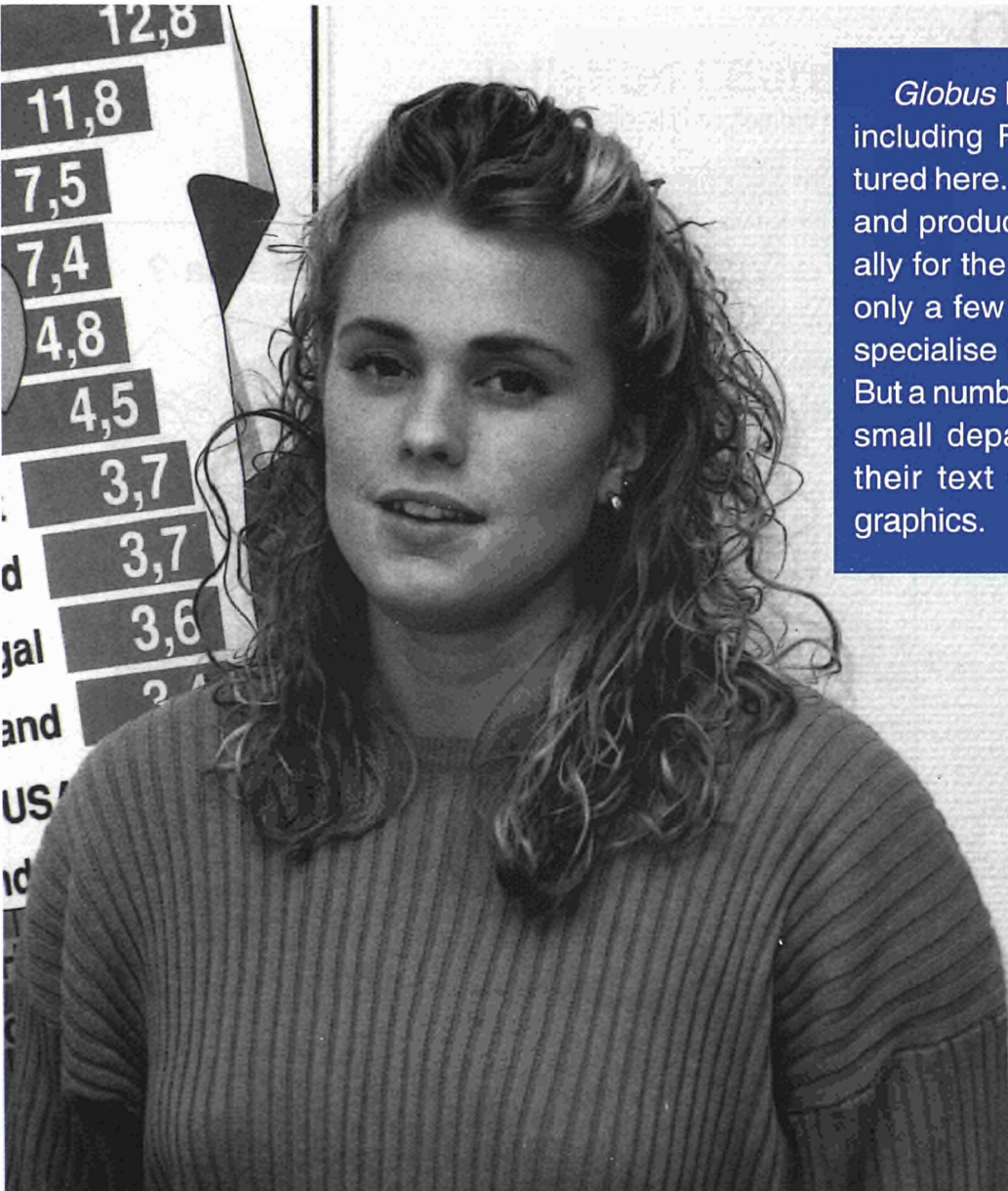
The information must not be drowned by the illustration. The aim of the picture is to display and accentuate a piece of information not to present pretty pictures. Consequently the graphic design must always take second place to the information itself.

## **5. Presenting figures**

The picture should depict trends and developments. The graphic presentation should convey quantities. But the specifics should always be included. The reader wants to understand the trend and learn the essential figures - for example: *Inflation in the EU is falling. We are now down to 3%.*

## **6. The picture must not present too much information**

If the picture is badly arranged, cluttered and abstruse



*Globus* has a young staff of five, including Franciska Bonthron, pictured here. It is totally computerized and produces 2,500 pictures annually for the news media. It is one of only a few European agencies that specialise totally in news graphics. But a number of news agencies have small departments to supplement their text output with charts and graphics.

we might just as well have been "deluged" with the original report. Two dimensions are best - for example, a curve showing development over the last ten years together with a detailed diagram revealing how this was distributed over the ten-year period.

Three dimensions are possible but this is an absolute upper limit. It is also a question of not having too many figures alongside a diagram. If we are showing the trend in GNP since 1957 we cannot enter an exact figure for each individual

year. Presenting the peaks and troughs is a satisfactory alternative. However, the initial and final figures in a series must always be shown. The reader wants to know when it all began and what the position is today.

**7. Always give the source**

Pictures are a doorway to more sophisticated information and there are always readers who want to know more. They must be told where this information can be found.

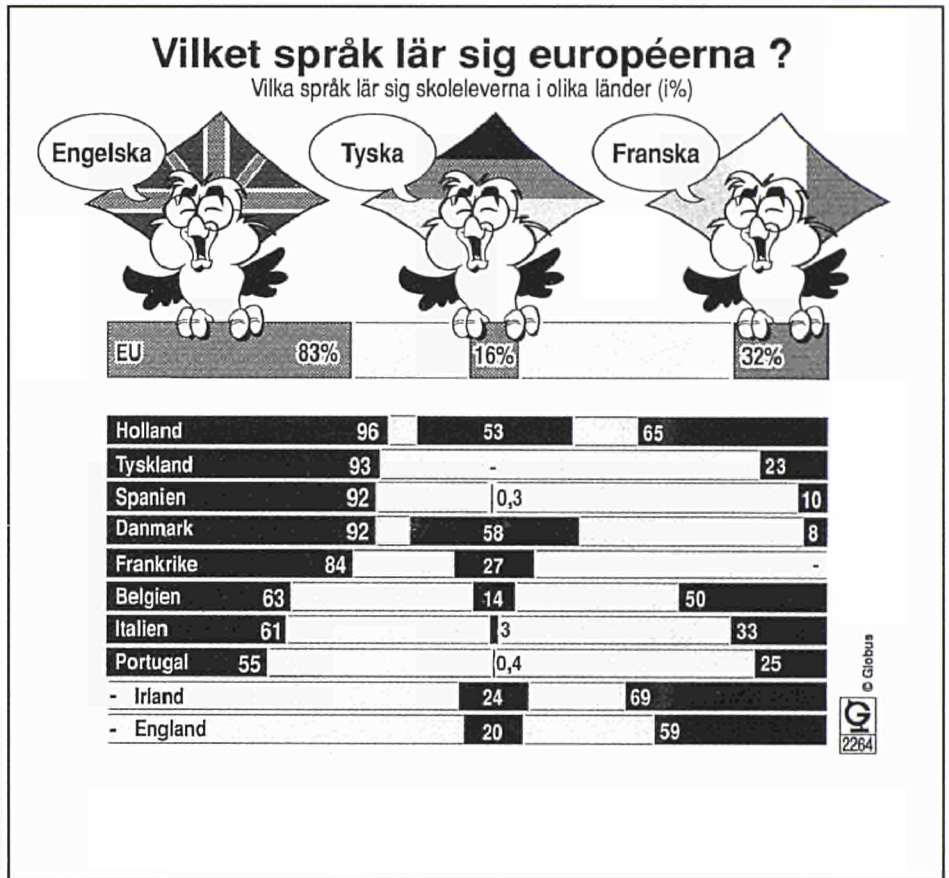
But it is also a question of respect and acknowledgement for the organisation providing the information.


In a year *Globus* produces 2,500 pictures. Each week the office in Helsingborg in southern Sweden issues between 50 and 60 graphics continuously by fax, over computer networks and by post to newspaper offices throughout Sweden. As of next year we shall be merging with the Swedish national news agency, TT, and transmitting pictures by satellite.

# GLOBUS AND EUROSTAT

Eurostat faxes its regular news releases directly to Globus in Sweden. Two examples of the resulting graphics, which are sent to the Swedish news media, are shown here, together with the original releases from Luxembourg. Eurostat works on the basis that simple news releases increase the chances of the news media interpreting the data accurately. In other words, we apply much of the simplification at source.

A list of our latest releases appears on the back cover.





## news release

EN

No 45/94  
26 September 1994

### ENGLISH MOST WIDELY-TAUGHT EU LANGUAGE

A survey\* out today from EUROSTAT - the EC statistical office in Luxembourg - shows that of pupils in general secondary education\*\* in the EU...

83% are learning English as a foreign language  
32% French  
16% German

However, native English speakers are bottom of the class when it comes to learning other languages. They also get below EU average marks for staying in education after 16.

Latest data\*\*\* indicate that:

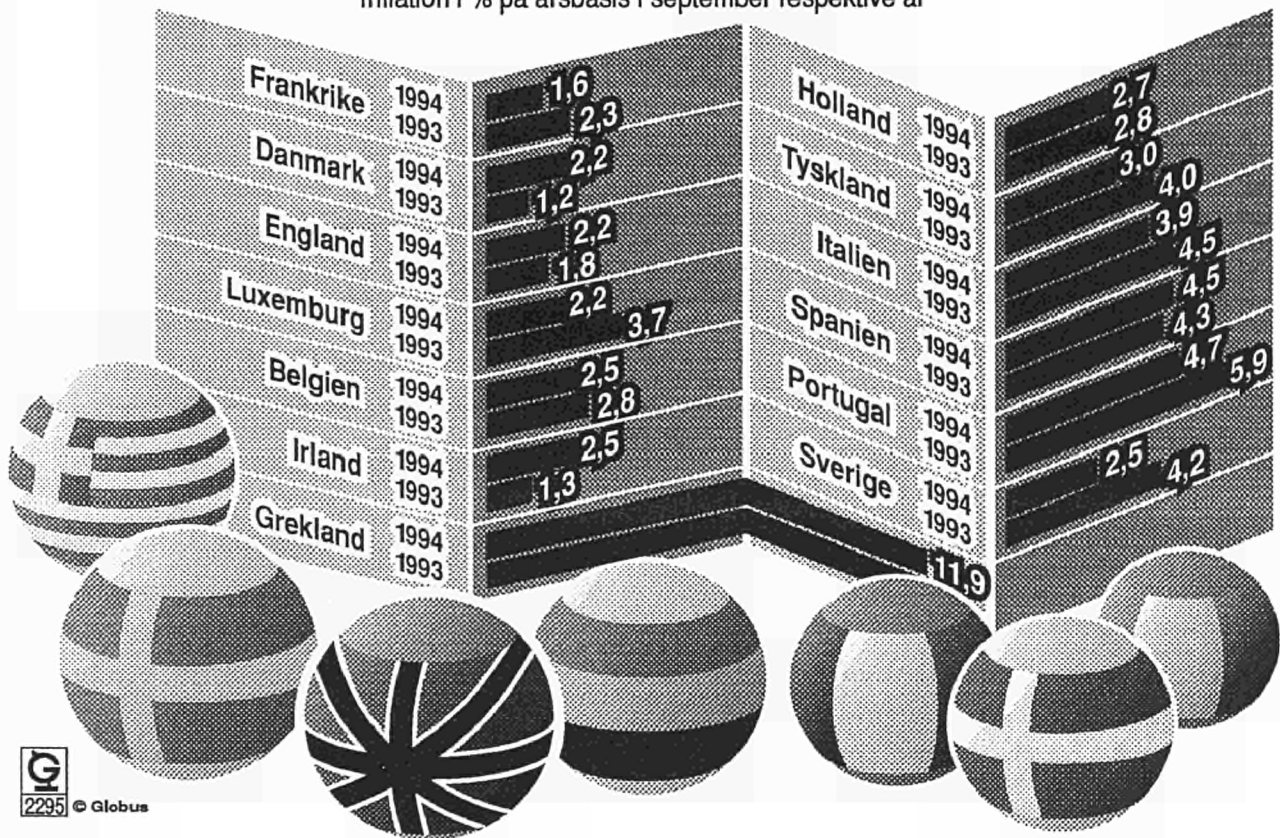
- English is the most widely-taught modern foreign language in all EU countries, except among BELGIUM's Flemish community where 58% learn French and 68% English.
- Highest percentage is in the NETHERLANDS (96%), followed by GERMANY (93%), DENMARK and SPAIN (both 92%).
- Even in PORTUGAL, which has the lowest percentage, 55% still learn English.
- In FRANCE it's 84%, although only 59% of British pupils learn French.
- French is by far the most widely-taught foreign language in the UNITED KINGDOM (59%) and IRELAND (69%).
- Otherwise, the NETHERLANDS (65%) is the only other EU country with more than a third learning French (except the BELGIAN Flemish).
- In GERMANY 23% learn French. In FRANCE 27% learn German.
- Lowest figures for French are in SPAIN (1%) and DENMARK (8%).

\* EUROSTAT Rapid Report Population and social conditions No 6/94 Education across the European Union 1991/92.  
\*\* Compulsory & post-compulsory  
\*\*\* 1991/92

*Caption:* Within the EU, language is a sensitive question. As a result there are several official languages. In fact there is already one more or less "official" EU language - English. Most mainland Europeans find English the easiest language to understand after their own. And now figures from Eurostat show English is well on the way to taking over fully: 83% of all schoolchildren within the EU are studying it. Only 32% study French and 16% German. The survey has resulted in an outcry in France. There is now a demand to protect other EU languages from the spread of English. *Source: Eurostat.*

# Inflation i Europa

Inflation i % på årsbasis i september respektive år



**EU news release**  
eurostat EN

No 49/94  
20 October 1994

## EU ANNUAL INFLATION LOWEST FOR OVER 7 YEARS

EU annual inflation - as measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) - fell to 3% in September, lowest for seven-and-a-half years. It was 3.1% in August and July (revised) after remaining at 3.2% from March to June.

The rate was last at this level in March 1987. In between it peaked at 6.3% in October 1990 during the Gulf crisis. Last September inflation stood at 3.4%. Since then there have been months when it has been the same (December/January) but no higher.

Today's figures from EUROSTAT - the EC statistical office in Luxembourg - show FRANCE still with the lowest rate, a provisional 1.6%. Only ITALY, SPAIN, PORTUGAL and GREECE are above the EU average.

Latest rates in Member States, in ascending order of inflation, with corresponding figures for a year earlier, are:

ANNUAL INFLATION IN MEMBER STATES					
	Sept 94 Sept 93	Sept 93 Sept 92	Sept 94 Sept 93	Sept 93 Sept 92	
FRANCE	1.6% P	2.3%	NETHERLANDS	2.7%	2.8%
DENMARK	2.2% E	1.2%	GERMANY**	3.0%	4.0%
UNITED KINGDOM	2.2%	1.8%	ITALY	3.9% P	4.5%
LUXEMBOURG	2.2%	3.7%	SPAIN	4.3%	4.3%
BELGIUM	2.5%	2.8%	PORTUGAL	4.7%	5.9%
IRELAND*	2.5%	1.3%	GREECE	11.9%	12.8%
EU	3.0% P				

\* August 94/August 93 and August 93/August 92  
\*\* The CPI for Germany continues to reflect the geographical borders prior to 3 October 1990  
P Provisional  
E EUROSTAT estimate

Corresponding rates for applicant Member States are: NORWAY 1.8% (2.2%), FINLAND 1.9% (1.7%), SWEDEN 2.5% (4.2%) and AUSTRIA (August) 3.2% (3.4%).

Annual rates in some other non EU countries were: UNITED STATES 3.0% - same as the EU - (2.7%), JAPAN 0.1% (provisional) (1.5%), CANADA (August) 0.2% (1.7%) and SWITZERLAND 0.6% (3.4%).

*Caption:* Eurostat reports that EU inflation has reached its lowest level in seven years. In September it was 3% on a yearly basis. The highest level - 6.3% - in those seven years was reached in October 1990 during the Gulf crisis. Lowest inflation is still in France with 1.6%. Italy, Spain, Portugal and Greece are all above the EU average. Sweden is managing rather well at 2.5%, well under the EU average.

*Source:* Eurostat.

## European Elections ...

# A LONG NIGHT FOR EUROSTAT

The European Elections last June were an opportunity to offer citizens and journalists from the 12 Member States a multi-media demonstration of statistical communication, with Eurostat playing a key role.

During the long night a giant image machine and dozens of TV screens installed in the Brussels and Strasbourg Parliament buildings displayed graphs illustrating the most up-to-date estimates of the results and the state of the parties and political groups.

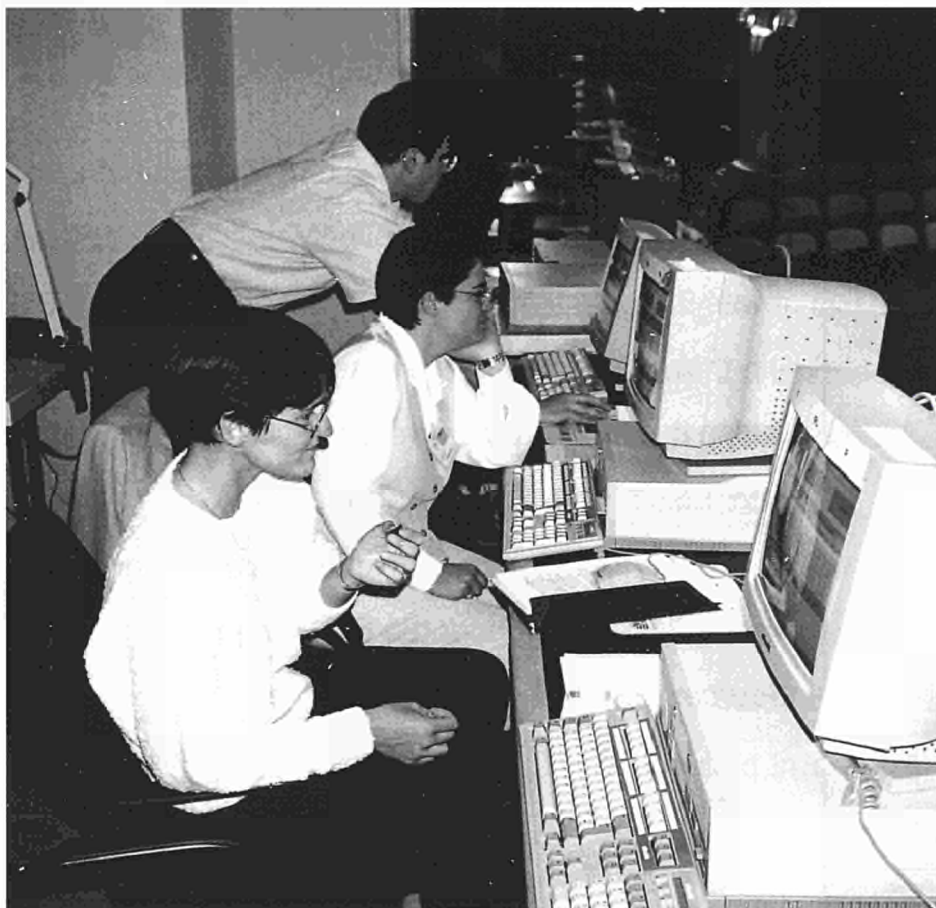
This exercise required a high degree of expertise as the challenge was continuously to translate national results into European results, calculate voting levels and aggregate results to produce graphs in order to visualise the overall picture.

Eurostat, in its role as the statistical office of the EC, was responsible for compiling, verifying and preparing the data for calculating the European results. This was instantly transformed into graphs and tables

for distribution to journalists covering the event. All this was transmitted simultaneously to EDS, the firm responsible for the graphic animation, who sent the images to the TV screens. Data were also put into a database accessible to all media that had applied for it.

In this way, the results, as released by each Member State, were presented directly and simultaneously on the Strasbourg and Brussels screens and relayed to the whole world.

The exercise enabled Eurostat to demonstrate an unusual and dynamic image of statistics and statisticians in action.



*The Eurostat team watch EU-wide TV to follow, minute by minute, the count of the votes.*

## FREE VIDEO

A free video co-produced by EDS and the European Parliament will let you appreciate the amount of effort involved. The tape, eight minutes long and available in all standards, can be obtained on request from the Eurostat information office, Directorate A2, Jean Monnet Building, L-2920 Luxembourg (tel 352-4301 34567 - fax 352 436404)

# A more independent Eurostat

## CHRISTOPHERSEN'S FAREWELL PLEA...



**Above:** Mr Christophersen shares a joke with fellow Danes Lene Mejer and Per Nymand-Andersen after his farewell speech to Eurostat. Lene is an official working on household budgets, and Per is an expert involved in the Community innovation survey.

*A more independent role for Eurostat in the enlarged European Union was envisaged by Commission Vice-President Henning Christophersen when he paid Eurostat a farewell visit on 18 November.*

Mr Christophersen was leaving the Commission in January after ten years - six as Commissioner responsible for Eurostat. New Commissioner Yves-Thibault de Silguy is due to take over the Eurostat brief.

Speaking in English to a large gathering of Eurostat staff in Jean Monnet Building, Luxembourg, Mr Christophersen said Eurostat had played a key role in many of the huge Community developments of the last ten years...

**The single market** - only possible because the Commission had provided national authorities with instruments necessary to measure it - for example, Intrastat.

**The whole area of economic and social cohesion** - this had no meaning unless there was a clear picture of the situation in Member States. "Eurostat was asked to provide the necessary instruments and we have been doing so."

**EMU** - where convergence criteria had to be met and many common statistical instruments were needed. "None of these things could have been done without good and professional work by the Statistical Office."

## "INDEPENDENT STATISTICAL SERVICE"

Mr Christophersen spoke of huge and fundamental challenges ahead in integrating Central and Eastern European into the Union - much more difficult than integration of EFTA countries.

"We shall also see how we can build up a genuine European statistical system and shall have to see what that means for the position of Eurostat.

*"I think that the best and most coherent solution is to see how we can establish an independent statistical service for the EU - with its own resources and its independence guaranteed by Community legislation and by working with independent national statistical offices."*

Mr Christophersen suggested Eurostat might be modelled on the European Monetary Institute, of which he is a board member.

He said it would be good for the credibility of the EU and Commission proposals (and also for monitoring and implementing Community policies) if Member States knew that statistical information came from a completely independent body taking its own decisions and not influenced by "more politicised considerations"; and with a genuinely strong economic foundation.

Mr Christophersen added that he had always been impressed by Eurostat's professionalism and reputation - not only within the EC but in Member States and beyond. It was making a "very substantial contribution" to modernising statistical systems in Central and Eastern Europe, and also beginning to serve as a model for developments on a more global scale.

He had also been impressed by the skill by which Eurostat was administered - much of this due, of course, to Director-General Yves Franchet. "I appreciate the very good working relationship we have had."

But none of this could have been accomplished without a "very dedicated staff" in Eurostat: people who saw it much more than a job - as a personal contribution to European union.

"Thank you all for this. It has been a great pleasure for me. I have had very few difficulties with the Statistical Office. I think we have achieved a lot together."

## FRANCHET'S REPLY

In reply Mr Franchet said Mr Christophersen had brought four essential dimensions to his relationship with Eurostat:

1. A full understanding of the importance of statistics in democratic market societies and the process of European integration.

2. Political support in the Commission on the rare occasions when needed.

3. By his visits to Luxembourg, showing not only his concern for statistics but also for the staff of Eurostat and their location; and

4. Full delegation to Eurostat of the task of implementing a well-defined and well-discussed mandate.

Mr Franchet added "one personal dimension which we share and with which you have helped me very much in spite of a poorly-supporting environment - which is management". Mr Franchet said there was a lot to do in the Commission yet but thanks to Mr Christophersen's full support - and that of the staff - Eurostat had been able to make some progress.

In answer to a question from Mr Photis Nanopoulos, a Eurostat Director, about whether statistics were a policy or a support to other policies, Mr Christophersen said a good, stable, objective statistical environment was essential to policy implementation - in that respect statistics were an important policy. Members of the Commission *must* be prepared to show their respect for the integrity of the Statistical Office. "None of you", he said, "should have the feeling of doing something just to please Members of the Commission."





# A yearbook for Europe

Eurostat is a young statistical office. It has not yet published (as most national offices have, sometimes for more than 100 years) its own Yearbook. This is a gap soon to be filled.

*Sigma's* **Jean Drappier** talked to **Inge Feldbaek**, a senior member of the Danish statistical service seconded to Luxembourg to mastermind the project.

"Statisticians have to start thinking less as producers and more as users", explains Inge Feldbaek.

"We need to concentrate on a limited number of publications that really answer people's questions. Many people have simple questions. But we statisticians tend to answer with miles of figures, pages of explanations. All that must be simplified.

"This Yearbook must be a 'gateway to statistics' - through which users can find their way to whatever statistics interest them. Even the 'ordinary citizen' must be able to find his or her way!

"Eurostat collects a lot of statistics from Member States and makes a special effort to harmonize them, either by issuing general guidelines and definitions, or by harmonizing statistics already produced. Harmonized international statistics are just what people want - and need - to compare their own country with other countries. So Eurostat has an obligation to make its statistics known also to 'ordinary people'."

But how can statisticians (often remote from the 'real world')

anticipate users' questions? "Very simple", says Mrs Feldbaek. "Just open the newspapers and you will see immediately what does interest people: unemployment, prices,

Inge Feldbaek graduated in economics from Copenhagen University. Subsequently she taught economics there. In 1968 she joined Statistics Denmark where - after working with statistics on retail trade, national accounts and accounting - she specialised in dissemination and promotion of statistics: from 1977 to 1987 on tailor-made statistics and from 1987 to 1993 as head of the information office. She joined Eurostat in 1993 on a three-year secondment to produce the Eurostat Yearbook.

She was Danish representative on the Nordic countries' working group on dissemination from 1983 to 1993 and on the Eurostat working group on dissemination of statistics from 1985 to 1993. From 1983 to 1989 she was on the board of the Danish Statistical Society and chairman from 1986. In 1990 she joined a team of Swedish statisticians on a short-term mission to the Bureau of Statistics in Lesotho. She presented papers on price policy in disseminating statistical output at the Training of European Statisticians seminar on dissemination policy for NSI output at Wiesbaden in 1992, and on dissemination and marketing at the Statistics Users' Council annual conference in London in 1992.

social security, retirement etc. During a survey that I conducted in advance of the Yearbook, a Danish Parliamentarian commented, 'Very good idea, but limit yourself: 500 pages maximum, simply compiled, a lot of graphs and very little text, please!'

## ANSWERING QUESTIONS

"I do not want to teach people; I just want to answer their questions", insists Feldbaek.

"To do that, I must give added value to the raw data. I am not always aiming for exact figures: I don't always really need to compare up to the fifth digit. There are things you can't compare from country to country if you want to do it with that amount of precision.

"This Yearbook must be more than a national yearbook: it must enable anybody in the Member States to make the calculations and comparisons they want, based on published data. The major difference from national yearbooks is that they do not have the same problem of comparability that we have with ours."

Mrs Feldbaek continues: "We have aimed at a very rigid page layout to which make it possible for the readers to find immediately what they are looking for. When familiarised with this layout, the reader will jump easily from one subject to another without wasting time.



## THE CHALLENGE

As a senior practitioner of the statistical art, Inge Feldbaek was well prepared for the challenge of producing Eurostat's first Yearbook. But even she admits that it is a formidable undertaking.

"I came here with ingrained habits in many areas after working with statistics for 25 years and being head of information in Statistics Denmark before joining Eurostat. I must admit that the biggest challenge was the change of culture - language, working methods, equipment standards, staff.

"And although I did prepare myself for a change, the change was different from what I expected. But what I really enjoy is to cooperate with very qualified statisticians of all the countries of Europe. I am agreeably surprised by the goodwill and confidence shown to me.

"This project has been a marvellous learning process. I think it has been excellent in terms of cooperation with the national institutes. We in the national institutes believe that we tend to do things in the best way, that others don't do it as well.

"Living in this information age my biggest concern is to turn statistics into information - not mass information, but information targeted at specific user-groups. Some need statistics that are very detailed and accurate, others need them aggregated in a down-to-earth way. And it is my hope that statisticians continue to work not just on creating relevant statistics of good quality but also on disseminating them according to the needs of the users."

"At Eurostat, I've got the impression that the European statisticians in turn were convinced that they were working better than the national statisticians. Neither is totally right.

"The exchange of statisticians between national institutes and Eurostat is an excellent initiative. We shall work much more efficiently together in future: each will have gained from this cooperation.

"My aim is to make this Yearbook the 'flagship' - the 'signature' - of Eurostat; to make Eurostat known as THE producer of European statistics."

Inge Feldbaek admits no lack of ambition for her "baby". It is fuelled by something quite basic and simple. "I love statistics", she says, and clearly she means it.

Whatever recognition lies ahead for the way in which she has pushed the project ahead, she has already been honoured in her own country for her dedication to statistics. Last March she received from the Queen of Denmark a *Ridderkors*, an award for those who have made a significant contribution to public life in Denmark.

This makes her the Danish equivalent of a British "dame".

# EUROSTAT YEARBOOK - 13 KEY POINTS



## 1. Target

Mainly European policy-makers, local government, libraries and journalists. But it should certainly appeal to other people also.

## 2. Aim

Figures that people want, published as up-to-date and easy to understand as possible.

## 3. Publication

Annual; first issue in spring this year, in about 70,000 copies. A prototype was ready in April 1994.

## 4. Place in Eurostat's publication line-up

Book of reference to *Basic Statistics*, the *General CD-ROM* and *Europe in Figures* etc. Book of completion to publications on short-term time series and "gateway" to detailed statistics on Europe and the EU within Europe.

## 5. Contents

Statistics organised in four chapters: *The People*, *The Land*, *The Economy* and *The Union*. Explanatory table of contents, information on Eurostat and EU, political and

economic calendar of EU, explanation of statistical expressions, subject index and order form for Eurostat publications.

## 6. Presentation

Text, tables, graphs and maps. Every "opening" ie double page will be self-contained with its own topic. Tables will be simple and the number of different page layouts limited.

## 7. Text

Very short, just enough to avoid wrong interpretation of the tables, maximum six lines per double page. Not all double pages will have text.

## 8. Tables

Mostly time series of 11 years in rows and countries in columns. They will include suggestions on further reading.

## 9. Illustrations

Mainly maps but also graphs, bar and pie charts.

## 10. Countries

EU and also where possible EFTA countries, USA, Japan and Canada compared to EU and EEA.

## 11. Technical note

Data extracted from various data-banks and other sources; put together into tables, graphs and maps; text and pagination added; the complete manuscript sent camera-ready, colour-separated, on an EDP medium to the printer.

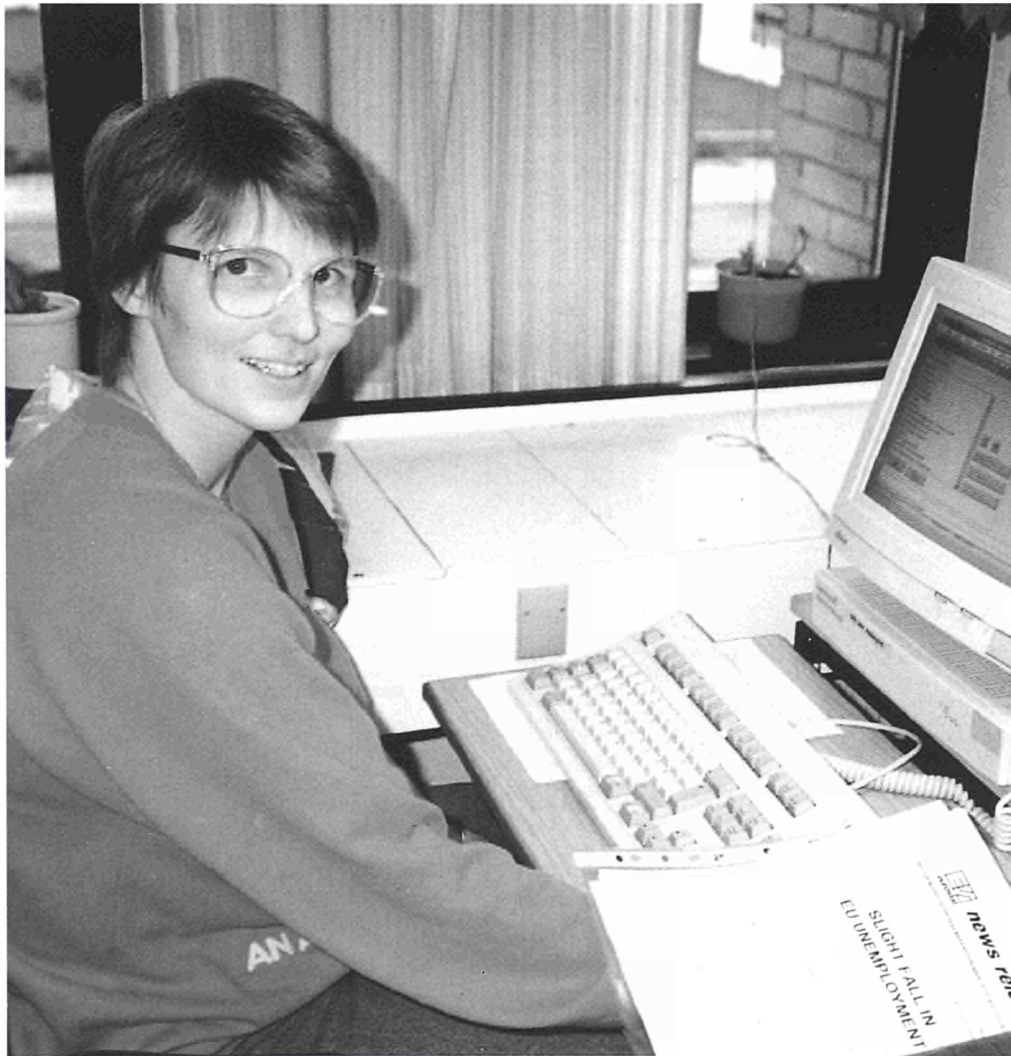
## 12. Languages, format etc

Nine languages in nine volumes; format A4, maximum 500 pages; in black plus one colour per chapter.

## 13. Price

Around 30 ECU. Weight - if possible - less than one kilogramme, to make it easy for Europe's postal services!

# Great Danes



This is Marianne Soerensen, Eurostat's "voice" in Denmark. Eurostat's news releases go to national statistical offices in advance. In Copenhagen Marianne prepares them for the Danish press. At our 12 noon release time she faxes them to the main news media in Denmark. The result: a lot of publicity for Eurostat. An excellent example of cooperation between Eurostat and a national office aimed at raising the profile of European statistics. Some other national offices help in similar ways. But the Danes are particularly good - an example we hope will be followed more and more.

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# Eurostat talks to the world - simply

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In a fairly short time the news releases have done a great deal to raise the international profile of Eurostat. The most recent are listed below. Copies from Eurostat press office (tel Luxembourg 353 4301 33012/34654).

1994

October

- 6** *EU/Japan trade gap narrows in '93* - to 25.1 billion ECU from 31 billion in '92
- and** *EU unemployment down again* - to 10.7% (17.2 million people) in August
- 20** *EU annual inflation lowest for over 7 years* - down to 3% in September
- 25** *EU industrial production still rising* - by 5.4% between July 93 & July 94
- 26** *EEA has 10.4 million non-EEA citizens. But 96% of all people in EEA live "at home"*

November

- 9** *EU GDP - faster growth in '94*
- 14** *Big boost in EU trade with Central and Eastern Europe* - from 2.5 to 5.6 billion ECU 92/93
- 16** *EU industrial production up again* - to +6.5% Aug 93/Aug 94
- 21** *EU unemployment - 10.7% in September*
- 22** *EU annual inflation - 3% in October*
- 24** *Agricultural prices - almost stable:* in Q2 94 - first time since '89

December

- 1** *EU spending on eating, drinking, smoking & "fun"* - household consumption data
- 8** *EU unemployment - 10.7% in October*
- 13** *When EU 12 becomes EU 15* - Key data, including GDP per head comparison



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