

BREACH OF THE CODE OF PRACTICE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

This document reports a breach of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, or the relevant Pre-release Access to Official Statistics Orders, to which the Code applies as if it included these orders.

1. Background information

Name of Statistical Output (including weblink to the relevant output or 'landing page')

International Comparisons of Productivity (ICP), first estimates: 2014
To be published 18 September.

Name of Producer Organisation

Office for National Statistics (ONS)

Name and contact details of the statistical Head of Profession (Lead Official in an Arm's Length Body) submitting this report, and date of report

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2. Circumstances of breach

Relevant Principle/Protocol and Practice

Protocol 2, practice 8:
Ensure that no indication of the substance of a statistical report is made public, or given to the media or any other party not recorded as eligible for access before publication. Report to the National Statistician immediately any accidental or wrongful release, and investigate the circumstances.

Date of occurrence

17 September 2015

Nature of breach (including links with previous breaches, if any)

A small number of BIS officials have pre-release access (PRA) to International Comparisons of Productivity in order to provide briefing at the time of publication.

A member of the briefing team accidentally sent the briefing to a press officer and a member of Private Office, mistakenly believing them to be pre-release recipients as they are for other ONS releases.

BIS notified ONS of the breach immediately and it was reported to the GSS Professional Support Team.

Reasons for breach

Human error.

Before sending PRA, ONS and BIS do confirm PRA lists but different BIS officials receive PRA to a variety of releases, and the briefing official mistakenly thought the press officer and private secretary were on the list for the International Comparisons of Productivity.

3. Reactions and impact (both within the producer body and outside)

None. Both recipients were contacted before they had shared the briefing any further.

4. Corrective actions taken to prevent reoccurrence of such a breach (include short-term actions, and long-term changes made to procedures)

At the time of the incident both incorrect recipients were told to delete the briefing and not to discuss the contents.

For the future, the briefing official in BIS has been reminded to check the latest list of recipients on every occasion before sending. A new BIS document storage system is being introduced this month which will make it easier to update and share the master list of recipients for all ONS releases.

In addition, the central ONS PRA team and the BIS Head of Profession's office will be in regular contact confirming PRA lists and ensuring that this information is disseminated to the ONS output teams when required.

Going forward when PRA is sent, ONS will be clearer and state on the e-mail the individuals approved to receive PRA.