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**Chair of the UK Statistics Authority, Sir David Norgrove**

Richard Holden MP  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

17 June 2020

Dear Mr Holden,

Thank you for your letter of 4 June about a comparison made on *Newsnight* between UK daily death figures and the total for the EU.

You raise an important point about the difficulties of international comparisons, which are, as you say, subject to significant differences between countries in definitions and recording practices. We and others have been clear about this<sup>1</sup>, and the BBC programme *More or Less* on 10 June indeed discussed the claim made on *Newsnight*.

We do not however consider it is appropriate to comment further on this use of statistics in the media. The media every day generate and use immense quantities of statistics, and we cannot take on the task of directly regulating their quality.

More fundamentally, as a public body it is questionable whether we should intervene directly in the media's use of statistics, save perhaps when the media's use itself causes a significant risk to public understanding. Parliament, in Ofcom, has specifically created a regulator for the broadcast media. Print journalism is overseen by separate independent bodies including IPSO. In making public interventions on the use of statistics, we are guided by a series of long-standing principles set out in our published policy<sup>2</sup>.

I am sorry we are unable to help you further.

Yours sincerely,



**Sir David Norgrove**

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<sup>1</sup> For example, [questions 36 to 40 of the oral evidence](#) given by the National Statistician and Director General for Regulation to the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee on 13 May.

<sup>2</sup> [statisticsauthority.gov.uk/the-authoritys-role-in-making-public-interventions-on-the-use-of-statistics/](http://statisticsauthority.gov.uk/the-authoritys-role-in-making-public-interventions-on-the-use-of-statistics/)