

Report of a breach of the Code of Practice for Statistics

Core Information

Information needed	Response
Title and link to statistical output	Monthly statistics: Patents, trade marks, and designs: August 2020 Monthly statistics: Patents, trade marks, and designs: Aug 2020
Name of producer organisation	Intellectual Property Office
Name and contact details of person dealing with report	Pauline Beck, Pauline.beck@ipo.gov.uk
Name and contact details of Head of Profession for Statistics or Lead Official	Pauline.beck@ipo.gov.uk (lead official) Frances.Pottier@beis.gov.uk (Head of Profession)
Link to published statement about the breach (if relevant)	
Date of breach report	30/10/2020

Circumstances of breach

Information needed	Response
Relevant principle(s) and practice(s)	T3.6: Orderly release – statistics not released at scheduled time of 09:30am (early or delayed publication)
Date of occurrence of breach	30/10/2020

Please give an account of what happened including roles of persons involved, dates and times:

Our release of monthly official statistics online was delayed by approximately 2 hours and 30 minutes. The publication had been pre-announced for a 9:30 release, but not published until 12:00. This was due to a lack of resources among the web publishing team and statistical team, which resulted in the scheduled release for the appropriate time of 9:30 publication not happening.

Impact of the breach

Provide details of the impact of the breach both inside the producer body and externally:

None – no negative consequences (no contact from users) have been reported this far.

Corrective actions (taken or planned) to prevent re-occurrence

Describe the short-term actions made to redress the situation and the longer-term changes to procedures:

A request had been made 7 days in advance to automatically upload the publication. A contributing factor to the breach was the fact that the web-publishing team were all working from home due to coronavirus restrictions, with some staff experiencing a set of extenuating circumstances outside of their control rendering them unable to work, which led to very diminished resources on their team.

For background, there are currently 4 posts in IPO for managing and uploading all of IPO's digital content on the gov.uk website: in the run-up to publication, only one inexperienced member of staff was available. The web publishing team is also very new to publishing monthly statistics, as IPO has recently introduced monthly statistics, and this was only the third iteration. For all publications,

their team would usually notify us when they are live. The dataset would normally be uploaded in advance and scheduled for publication on the day at 9:30. This time the release was not uploaded nor set for scheduling, due to the lack of resources and high volume of workload on the web-publishing team (the page was being worked on the day prior, but not finalised nor made live).

The lead official checked the status of the publication at approximately 09:45am, reloading the landing page. The statistics were not live, and she unfortunately assumed that this was due to it being a cached version, that, coupled with her IT kit not working well recently – she did not feel it was a cause for major concern right away. She did check Skype to contact the web-publishing team but did not get hold of them as they appeared unavailable. She also did not know at the time that they had hired someone that same week, who might have been able to help right away. She could not have delegated it to anyone on her team either, as many colleagues were on half-term leave while the person that reports to her had recently been hired 2 weeks prior and not yet brought up to speed. Since she had a series of important meetings with external stakeholders to attend in the morning, she wrongly put her trust in the system at that time.

But at 11am, having not been notified and the link still seemingly not being live, the lead official attempted to contact again the web publishing team multiple times, but with no success until 11:40am. When contact was made at that time, the webmaster team corrected the situation, albeit not as fast as the member of staff was unfamiliar with the process. Confirmation that the publication was live was made at approximately 12:05.

The Lead official contacted the Head of Profession at approximately 12:15 to inform them of the breach.

Changes in procedures to be made for future release:

- Within the statistical team, the lead official will make sure her new member of staff, a Research and Statistics manager is brought up to speed with the process.
- The next 12 months of publication dates will be set for the publishing team in advance, to allow them to prioritise their workload more effectively.
- The IPO has only recently started publishing monthly statistics per se and so is still getting used to the process. In the next few months, we will be conducting a series of talks in IPO with the aim to educate our staff on the code of practice and the importance of official statistics, as it is clear that while it is evident for the statistical team, it is not understood clearly across the office.
- The Statistical team will also be taking web publishing training as an additional safeguard to allow them to double-check the publication is appropriately scheduled.
- A series of automated reminder emails will also be set for said publications to ensure that someone from the Statistical team also checks publication, in addition to the lead official, without relying on the Web team.
- In addition, web publishing staff will be more readily available at time of the release to deal with any upload issues. The Web publishing team is also due to backfill their many vacancies, which should support future publications.