

## **INSEE's relations with the press**

INSEE's communication with the media is based on the clear, transparent principles described below. The related operational rules implemented by the INSEE press office specify how relations are organised between INSEE experts and journalists.

### ***I - THE PRINCIPLES***

The dissemination of INSEE publications and information to journalists and its experts' communications about these publications, but also about operations such as the census, obey very strict principles and standards. These are aimed at ensuring the **credibility** of the information produced by INSEE in the eyes of the users of official statistics. The Institute's **independence** and **transparency** in compiling, commenting on and disseminating statistical data constitute the bedrock of the trust that users place in official statistics: they are the guarantee of our reputation for expertise and impartiality. These principles and standards are not specific to INSEE: they are inspired largely by international standards such as the Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS) established by the IMF, to which France agreed to adhere in 1996 and which governs the dissemination of data on the economic climate. There is a reminder of these principles in the European Statistics Code of Practice promulgated by the Commission on 25 May 2005.

The terms and conditions for the dissemination of information follow three key principles:

- Neutrality;
- Equal treatment of users during dissemination;
- The free provision of publications for journalists.

#### **I.1 - Neutrality**

- INSEE disseminates and comments on the results of its published work. Except in special circumstances, it does not comment on results of work in progress or on preliminary publications (such as working documents).
- INSEE does not take part in political debates. In particular, it does not make any comments about the appropriateness of government measures. INSEE aims to be a reference, not an arbiter.
- The Institute is bound by the content and form of any comments or remarks made by each expert. The expert from whom comments are sought does not speak on their own behalf but on behalf of the Institute. Consequently, the press office acts as the interface between journalists and experts, according to strictly defined procedures.

#### **I.2 - Equal treatment of media**

- This principle is based on the announcement of release dates in advance in the weekly and monthly programmes produced by the press office and on the embargo procedure.
- The press office distributes the information to all journalists simultaneously.

### **I.3 - Free provision**

All INSEE publications are provided free of charge to all journalists. Specific small pieces of work may be produced on request. The press office is responsible for investigating these requests in liaison with the Director General's office.

These principles are expressed in the rules of operation implemented at INSEE. The press office ensures they are applied in conjunction with the departments and offices concerned.

## **II - RULES ON PROVIDING INFORMATION**

### **II.1– Embargo**

The embargo system guarantees the equal treatment of users. The media benefit from the dissemination of INSEE's main publications under embargo<sup>1</sup>, i.e. press agencies and other journalists are notified of them several minutes, hours or days before the time and day when they are made available to the public as a whole, to allow them to prepare articles and reports and to ensure a high standard of reporting of information.

The embargo procedure applies in the same way to the written press, broadcast media and online press. Journalists are obliged not to report the information before the time the embargo is lifted.

The richer and more complex the information being disseminated, the greater the importance of the time lapse between conveying the data to journalists and lifting the embargo, thus allowing editorial offices sufficient time to write their articles. This period can be used by the media to obtain the necessary clarifications from the relevant experts through the press office.

If a media outlet breaches an embargo (a rare occurrence), all other media outlets are, insofar as possible, immediately alerted of the early lifting of the embargo. Equal treatment is thus re-established.

When the embargo is lifted, all these publications are available on the [insee.fr](http://www.insee.fr) website.

### **II.2 - Calendars**

The provision of written information is subject to a prior announcement in the publication programme: [http://www.insee.fr/fr/agenda/agenda\\_indic.asp](http://www.insee.fr/fr/agenda/agenda_indic.asp). The press office draws up an indicative schedule each month for the dissemination of the main short-term economic indicators (decision by the Prime Minister's office of 30 September 1993) and the economic outlook notes and reports for the next four months. The dates announced in the four-month programme are definite for the coming month and indicative for the following three months. This four-month programme is distributed to the press on the 25th of the month and put online on the 31st.

In addition, the press office draws up a release schedule for the following two weeks and issues it to journalists every Friday for all INSEE publications (the Informations Rapides collection, Insee Conjoncture economic outlook notes and reports, Insee Première and Insee Focus summaries, Insee Analyse abstracts, the Insee Références collection and the Economics and Statistics journal). The dates for the next week are definite and, in practice, are never changed. Once announced in the weekly programme, publication embargo dates become official.

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<sup>1</sup> Except for short-term economic indicators, disseminated in the Informations Rapides collection, which are only communicated under embargo to press agencies, and the INSEE Focus publication, which is distributed without embargo.

This rule guarantees the transparency of the release system and demonstrates INSEE's independence in relation to current political events: it is applied rigorously.

### ***III - RULES ON COMMUNICATING WITH THE MEDIA***

All INSEE's national publications are provided free of charge to the press. INSEE communicates with the press based on public information; a result that has not yet been made public is not passed on.

In order to guarantee the best possible response, the conveying of any information to a journalist must go via the press office, whether it concerns a request for a comment, an interview or a special collation of data.

Responses to journalists' questions and requests must be given through a "spokesperson" explicitly appointed by INSEE; depending on the nature of the question or request, the authors of the study are not necessarily the spokespeople.

Experts making comments speak on behalf of the Institute and not on their own behalf.