

HARRIETT BALDWIN MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Andrew Dilnot CBE
Chair, UK Statistics Authority
1 Drummond Gate
London
SW1V 2QQ

31 January 2013

Dear Andrew,

I am sure you will agree that it is vital that public debate is informed by accurate use of statistics.

In an editorial piece for The Sun newspaper today, the Leader of the Opposition, Ed Miliband, claimed that:

'Only crisis-hit Spain has higher numbers of young unemployed than the UK.'

As you will be aware, according to ONS figures for the period between September and November 2012, the UK rate of youth unemployment was 20.5 per cent. By contrast, according to Eurostat youth unemployment in Spain in November 2012 stood at 56.5 per cent, at 38.7 per cent in Portugal, at 37.1 per cent in Italy, at 29.7 per cent in Ireland and at 27 per cent in France, to name but a few examples.

In fact, on a list of European countries by youth unemployment rate, 11 countries suffer from higher youth unemployment than the UK, and UK youth unemployment remains lower than the EU average of 24.4 per cent.

It appears that the Leader of the Opposition has deliberately avoided expressing youth unemployment as percentage, in order to offer a more damning comparison than is actually the case. The standard practice for comparing countries, used by both Eurostat and the International Labour Organisation, is to present the percentage of people unemployed, to account for the significant difference in population between different countries.

I would be grateful if you could advise on how we can ensure that the debate over youth unemployment is not influenced by the inappropriate manipulation of statistics.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "H Baldwin".

Harriett Baldwin MP
Member of Parliament for West Worcestershire