
Chair of the UK Statistics Authority, Sir Andrew Dilnot CBE

Bernard Jenkin MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

9 June 2016

Dear Bernard,

Thank you for your letter of 24 May 2016 about the extent to which the Office for National Statistics (ONS) was involved in the production of estimates of the number of jobs in different sectors and other statistics in the Government's leaflet entitled *'Why the Government believes that voting to remain in the European Union is the best decision for the UK'* published¹ on 6 April.

I have addressed each of your questions in turn. The ONS has informed me that they were not involved in the production of the leaflet, or in any quality assurance before its publication. Following publication of the leaflet ONS has noted, from footnote 13 of the source list², and established, from contact with officials at the Cabinet Office and at the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), that published data from ONS (for Trade in Services and jobs) and HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) (for Trade in Goods) were used to produce the table 'UK industry and the EU' on page 4 of the leaflet. ONS did not produce this table for the Government.

The figures in the table 'UK industry and the EU' and other figures in the leaflet could be derived by a member of the public as these are taken from published data and their respective accompanying commentaries. While the list of sources for the document is to be welcomed, the sources given for this table were incomplete, and so general as to be of limited use³.

Consistent with my understanding that the figures in the leaflet are publicly available, we have not found significant breaches of the general principles of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, in particular, equality of access or of open data.

However, in the course of reviewing the 'UK industry and the EU' table, we have identified a number of anomalies and inconsistencies. These include:

- The number of jobs listed in the table are based on employee jobs totals in some cases and on workforce jobs totals in others, without explanation.

¹ <https://www.eureferendum.gov.uk/why-the-government-believes-we-should-remain/eu-referendum-leaflet/>

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/why-the-government-believes-that-voting-to-remain-in-the-european-union-is-the-best-decision-for-the-uk/why-the-government-believes-that-voting-to-remain-in-the-european-union-is-the-best-decision-for-the-uk#a-stronger-economy>

³ See footnote 2

- Data for Quarter 4 2014 to Quarter 3 2015 are used for all industries except the Aerospace sector which uses 2014 data only. This difference in time period is not clearly identified.
- The list of sources does not include all of the sources used, for example the Annual Business Survey which was used to compile the Aerospace jobs figure is missing from the list⁴. In addition, where source information is given it does not provide sufficient detail for users seeking to replicate the figures to identify which specific data items have been used.
- Under the row entitled Transport, the share of exports to the EU was rounded down from 44.53 to 44 rather than up to 45.

In a document of this importance, very high standards of quality assurance might reasonably be expected. Nevertheless, these are not in our view major errors, and their correction would not change significantly the interpretation of the table.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew Dilnot". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Sir Andrew Dilnot CBE

⁴ See footnote 2