

## INFORMATION CIRCULAR 043

To: All Staff of ECA

From: Steve Glovinsky, Director  
Public Information and Knowledge Management Division

Subject: **Publications and Documentation Guidelines at ECA**

The purpose of the present circular is to inform staff members of the basic tenets governing publishing at the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). The impetus for these publication guidelines are underpinned by the work of and core recommendations made by the Task Force on the "*Rules of Engagement for ECA Key Initiatives (Delivering on major conferences and publications: a collective effort)*" that were subsequently endorsed by the Executive Secretary at a Town hall meeting on 5 August 2013. These recommendations aimed at ensuring that ECA's publications programme is cohesive and of the highest quality possible, delivered and marketed in a timely manner in formats that meet the demands of today's and future ECA audience.

This circular is therefore meant to ground the recently concluded reprofiling process of ECA and it will be further sharpened upon completion of the upcoming branding exercise of ECA as a premier policy think-tank of the continent. It also takes account of the intention to establish an ECA Internal Publishing House of world-class calibre, to reflect increased standardization and professionalism in the production of ECA products. And it conforms to the rules laid out in United Nations ST/AIs and amendments and guidelines on publishing in the United Nations as set by the United Nations Publications Board.

These rules reflect publications of ECA – e.g., those issued under an ECA logo. For material authored by ECA staff issued by other publishers, refer to the appropriate UN Administrative Instructions.

### A. Classification and Categorization

In order to engage not only the policy community, but also civil society, business and research communities including electronic issue-based networks, ECA will henceforth be producing the following category of material (in addition to parliamentary documentation).

1. **Press releases**, consisting of a page or less containing key messages and points from ECA publications
2. **Summaries**, for example a short summaries (less than 8500 words) of flagship publications, headline publications, or thematic reports.

3. *Policy briefs*, which are essentially summaries covering policy issues and options and specifically targeting those interested in government policies
4. *Flagship publications*: the most in-depth and analytical publication of ECA (on average around 240 pages for readability), to communicate ECA's strategic thinking and voice on key development issues, and to be ECA's signature think piece that audiences most closely associate with the organization;
5. *Geographic headline publications*: examples include country profiles produced by ECA's sub-regional offices (SROs) to report latest developments and first-hand experiences on the ground as well as regional profiles;
6. *Thematic headline publications*: key publications managed by sub-programme divisions to focus on key issues of their specific thematic areas and address mandates of regular situation/progress updates in certain areas;
7. *Policy newsletters*: reader friendly summaries of ECA-wide activities in a single periodic edition;
8. *ECA journal*: double-blind peer-reviewed research journal, with an independent board, which specializes in publishing original studies on Africa's social, economic, institutional and environmental transformation;
9. *Special thematic reports*: stand-alone report to systematically discuss a specific topic which must be directly supported by at least three (3) ECA working papers;
10. *Case studies, research papers and working papers*: original studies on specific topics which any staff member can initiate (internally peer-reviewed and represent the opinions of the authors rather than ECA).

**Annex 1**, below, taken from the report of the Task Force, spells out the specific details of each of these categories, including their objectives, main features and expected benefits.

## **B. Implementing the Guidelines**

In order to ensure that ECA produces first-class research publications that gain in recognizability, credibility and influence, the following decisions are to go into effect from **1 January 2014**:

1. **Only one branded flagship publication will be produced in a year.** Preparation of this report will be under the leadership of a Flagship Coordinator, but it will be jointly prepared and delivered through the cooperation of all departments and bodies in the house. It will be commonly delivered and commonly owned, with every staff member having a stake in its successful launch and subsequent impact.<sup>1</sup>
2. **The annual geographic headline publications of the Sub-Regional Offices will have the same theme as the ECA flagship**, the difference being that the former will give a sub-regional focus, whilst the latter will focus on Africa as a whole.
3. **Given their role as ECA data centres, SRO geographic headline publications will also include Country Profiles** – quarterly fact/story-based reports, highlighting new

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<sup>1</sup> Guidelines for formulating an ECA flagship publication are suggested in Annex 2 of the Task Force report.

developments and emerging issues in their sub-regions, supported by country data. These Country Profiles will be supporting references for the flagship publication and integral to its preparation process.

4. **The number and subjects of thematic headline publications will be rationalized through an annual consultative process directed by the SMT**, according to ECA's thematic priorities and mandates and with less periodicity than the flagship (i.e. every 2 to 3 years). These publications will be produced as books rather than reports.
5. **ECA headline publications will address key aspects of Africa's transformative development agenda and be empirically based.** Publications should refer to relevant African Development Goals, and should include analysis of data from the ECA Databank and Country Profiles regarding progress towards these goals, along with issues, options and projections on taking forward Africa's transformation.
6. **ECA will normally be the sole owner of flagship and other reports.** A decision to enter into partnerships for producing publications will be made on a case-by-case basis and depending on the theme. Co-publishing rules, procedures and regulations pertaining to copyright, distribution, sales, royalties will be covered in co-publishing contracts, which will be reviewed by the Secretary to the Commission and follow the procedures established by the Publications Board at UN Headquarters.
7. **A pre-defined workflow and quality control mechanism will be established for producing ECA publications**, whether in hard copy or e-published. Details of this mechanism are contained in **Annex 2**, below. This relates to the flagship and headline publications, special thematic reports, case studies/research/working papers, and material for the ECA journal. The other publication categories (press releases and summaries), will be incorporated into the workflows of the publications they relate to.

In order to incentivize the inclusive nature of production of the knowledge products of the ECA, the Executive Secretary will initiate a process to define a mechanism that links staff performance evaluation to their contributions to the different publications. The outcome of this process will be communicated in due course.

This present circular supersedes all prior publishing arrangements in place at the ECA. The guidelines will be subject to initial review after a year, but may be updated earlier at the discretion of the Executive Management to reflect adjustments in related business processes.

For any questions or clarifications on this circular or on the decisions contained therein, refer to the **Chief, Publications and Documentation Section**.

## Annex 1: Types of ECA Publications – Objectives, Main Features, Expected Benefits

Objectives	Main features	Expected benefits
<b>Press releases</b>		
A page or less of text containing key messages and points from ECA publications. Press releases may also be accompanied by a photo or info-graphic.		
Press releases are designed to distill the most important message(s) from other ECA publications, events and activities, so that this information can be picked up by other media and disseminated widely across all types of audiences.	<b>Getting the message to all types of people</b> While ECA research addresses many issue and questions, press releases focus on the only the most important messages to come out of ECA's work. Press releases require interaction between the communications officers and the divisions and SROs of ECA. To reach a wide audience, use of info-graphics to present situations and data should be considered, in addition to providing text that journalists may use.	Wide coverage of ECA's knowledge products; Outreach to decision makers from across policy, practice and research communities;
<b>Summaries</b>		
Concise documents (less than 8500 words) summarizing flagship publications, headline publications or other thematic reports.		
The summaries and present key messages and recommendations from ECA's flagship, and headline publications and thematic reports, and communicate these messages to a wide audience.	<b>Credibility and eloquence</b> The summaries are derived from ECA research related reports, which will be rigorous and well-supported by facts and data and of course include new insights not previously in the literature or widely known by the practitioners. For any ECA research piece to become the source of a summary.	The use of summaries will make the findings of ECA research available to a wide audience; Users will expect concise summaries and this in turn will create further demand for ECA knowledge products.
<b>Policy briefs</b>		
Concise documents summarizing policy issues and options and specifically targeting those interested in government policies.		
The policy briefs serve as a channel to distill key messages and recommendations from ECA's research pieces of highest quality and, more importantly, communicate them to the stakeholders and the general public. They are, at the same time, tools to market ECA's research.	<b>Credibility and eloquence</b> The policy briefs are only derived from the best ECA research and should not only be evidence based but also present new insights that were not in the existing literature or widely known by the practitioners. For any ECA research piece to become the source of a policy brief, it should pass a commensurate peer review process, preferably involving external experts and the internal screening mechanism to ensure the messaging is in line with ECA's strategic thinking. This is to guarantee that the messages and recommendations coming out of the summaries or policy briefs are highly reliable and provide new information. So when ECA speaks through these policy briefs, it will speak eloquently. <b>Research marketing</b> The policy briefs are design to be marketing tools for ECA's research and ideas. The communication team is responsible to polish them so that they are able to engage the readers and generate further interest and discussion. They can also form the body of an ECA research blog potentially.	Effective marketing of ECA's best research and ideas;
<b>Flagship publications</b>		
The most in-depth and analytical publication of ECA on strategic issues to shape and communicate ECA ideology in development thinking, and will be the business card of ECA published annually.		
This flagship publication serves as ECA's signature think piece. It focuses on analytical studies of ECA's strategic research priorities and represents the greatest depth of ECA's thinking in these areas. It also defines the ECA ideology of development	<b>Exclusive ownership by ECA</b> The flagship communicates ECA's strategic thinking and voice on key development issues, and exclusively owned and managed by ECA. <b>Rigorousness, depth and usefulness</b> The ECA flagship publication is prepared on a rolling basis, meaning that the preparation for the next issue	Provide credible and in-depth analysis of Africa's development and provide prudent strategic recommendations that can pass the test of history;

Objectives	Main features	Expected benefits
thinking through its themes, discussions, conclusions and recommendations.	<p>will begin even before the current issue is finalized. It allows the team two years to conduct thorough background studies and develop useful insights and recommendations adequately supported by data and facts. In this case, the rigorousness, depth and usefulness of the flagship are expected to represent the highest standards in and outside ECA and the key messages delivered by it will be of great credibility and influence in Africa.</p> <p><b>Joint delivery</b> The ECA flagship publication is jointly prepared and delivered through the cooperation of all departments and bodies in the house. This is guaranteed through three mechanisms. First, all teams/individuals can make proposals for the theme of the flagship at the beginning. Second, a technical team, comprising experts from different functions and bodies, will be formed to oversee the preparation of the flagship. Third, all teams/individuals are able to compete for the opportunity to draft background technical papers for the flagship.</p>	<p>Deliver a concerted and strong voice of ECA, build up the reputation of ECA as a primary think tank in the continent and help ECA establish its own recognizable identity;</p> <p>Foster greater solidarity and pride inside ECA;</p> <p>Showcase the greatest accomplishment and ability of ECA.</p>
<b>Geographic headline publications</b>		
Examples will include country profiles produced by SROs to report latest developments and first-hand experiences on the ground as well as regional profiles;		
Country profiles (i.e. headline publications by SROs) focus on different geographical areas. They aim to summarize the most updated developments in different countries as well as regions, provide first-hand information of progresses on the ground and tell concrete development stories to engage wider audience.	<p><b>Timeliness and fact/data intensive</b> The region/country profiles build on the statistical strength of SROs and monitor the very short-term economic/social fluctuations at close distance. They are expected to provide large quantities of accurate and detailed data in a timely and organized manner which can serve as basis for short-term decision making and policy analysis. They can also inform long-term studies as the time series extend.</p> <p><b>First-hand Information</b> The region/country profiles are the foremost source of the first-hand information on economic, especially policy developments on the ground. They will inform other ECA studies of the latest progresses.</p> <p><b>Engagement with broader audience</b> While other ECA research publications usually target "experts" (policy makers, researchers, practitioners), the region/country profiles will target a much broader audience by telling concrete development stories that are happening around ordinary people. It enables the region/country profiles to engage with the general public who can not understand technical issues but interested in the development experience of Africa.</p>	<p>Geographical specificity of ECA's research;</p> <p>Timely updates of first-hand data and facts;</p> <p>Ability to engage broader audience and increase publicity of ECA's work;</p> <p>Inform other ECA research publications</p>
<b>Thematic headline publications</b>		
Key publications managed by divisions to focus on key issues of their specific thematic areas and address mandates of regular situation/progress updates in certain areas;		
The headline publications by thematic areas are the periodic publications organized according to the different functions of ECA divisions and SROs. They serve to fulfill ECA's statutory research mandates in different areas.	<p><b>Mandate-driven</b> Compared to the purely research-driven flagship, the headline publications by thematic areas are to a large extent mandate-driven. They will be responsible for tasks like updating developments/progresses in a specific area in Africa and free the flagship from such burdens. However, they can also touch on thematic issues in their own areas.</p> <p><b>Limited joint delivery</b> The headline publications by thematic areas are not expected to be jointly prepared by the whole house. Instead, a division will normally lead in the process with contribution from the others, for example data from the African Centre for Statistics and the Sub-Regional Offices as well as information and analysis from</p>	<p>Fulfill statutory mandates;</p> <p>Deliver ECA's voice in specialized areas;</p> <p>Provide a channel for the continuity and recalibration of the various current "flagships";</p>

Objectives	Main features	Expected benefits
	<p>other substantive divisions.</p> <p><b>Timeliness</b> Compared to the ECA flagship, the headline publications by thematic areas can have shorter production cycles and may analyze some cases median or short term issues. However, given the resources required to publish headline publications, each division will typically produce headline publications every 3 or so years and will draw upon bodies of evidence built through working papers as well as peer reviewed literature and when necessary, relevant grey literature, for example coming from government agencies.</p>	
<b>Policy newsletters</b>		
Reader friendly summaries of ECA-wide activities in a single periodic edition		
Policy newsletters help ECA's stakeholders and partners keep track of not only ECA's activities but also latest research and upcoming events.	Policy newsletters are a vehicle for engaging various ECA stakeholder and partner communities. Key findings and research are an essential part of such newsletters along with upcoming events and publications. Through the policy newsletter, stakeholders from policy, practice and research communities can react to ECA activities and engage with stated ECA focal points, allowing wider cooperation with other African institutions and individuals.	Allows stakeholders to stay up to date with ECA activities; Opens an avenue for stakeholder to respond to ECA focal points; Key messages and research findings can be disseminated.
<b>ECA Journal</b>		
Double-blind peer-reviewed research journal, with an independent board, which specializes in publishing original studies on Africa's social, economic, institutional and environmental transformation;		
The ECA journal provides a platform for the publication of scholarly papers on ECA's priority areas, say Africa's economic transformation. It is meant for contributing authors from both within and outside of ECA.	<p><b>Close partnership with leading think tanks in Africa</b> The ECA journal will be supported financially by ECA, but will have an independent editorial board made up of prominent African academics who are leaders in thought on African development and transformation. This will ensure that the journal will attract the best researchers and be populated with high-quality papers, but most importantly will have a uniquely African perspective dealing with African realities. It will also help alleviate the issue of conflict of interest when ECA is supporting the journal while its own staff members are submitting papers to it.</p> <p><b>Meeting the standards of academic journals</b> For the ECA journal to establish its reputation, it must meet the high standards of academic journals. More specifically, its papers should be selected through a double-blinded peer-review process and its editorial board should comprise renowned scholars.</p>	Further establish reputation as a primary think tank in Africa; Help ECA interact with the academia in its priority areas; Broaden the channel for ECA staff to publish papers and build up their academic reputation.
<b>Special thematic reports</b>		
Stand-alone report to systematically discuss a specific topic which must be directly supported by at least 3 ECA working papers;		
The special thematic reports aim to offer systematic discussion and analysis of a specific topic. They directly build on the knowledge and original ideas developed in the working papers and represents the depth of ECA's thinking on the specific issue.	<p><b>A natural result of knowledge/research accumulation rather than rushed products</b> The special thematic reports should only be produced when ECA has accumulated sufficient knowledge and original research on a topic, more specifically will typically build on 3 or more ECA working papers directly addressing the topic. The logic behind this requirement is that ECA should only write and speak when it has really good understanding of an issue and insightful messages to deliver. By sticking to this principle, the special thematic reports won't be felt rushed or shallow.</p> <p><b>Systematic but specialized</b> The special thematic reports fill the gap between the ECA flagship and the working papers in terms of</p>	Complement the flagship publication and the working papers in terms of analytical research; Shift ECA's culture of report production from quantity-driven to quality-driven; Can potentially be the building blocks of the ECA flagship if the theme is



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	analytical research. They address specific issues more systematically but will not touch cross-cutting issues. For example, the flagship may discuss industrialization in general, while a special report may focus on the agro-processing sector, and a working paper may highlight a specific issue or aspect of the agro-processing sector, say how it contributes to local employment.	relevant.
<p align="center"><b>Case studies, research papers and working papers</b></p> <p>Original studies on specific topics which any staff member can initiate, and are then internally peer-reviewed and represent the opinions of the authors rather than ECA.</p>		
<p>The ECA working papers aim to partially replace the current non-recurrent publications as the main channel for studies on specific topics. They will focus on delivering original and diversified studies and are expected to serve as a knowledge base for more systematic ECA studies. They are also the main channel for staff members to take initiatives in suggesting and conducting research. Furthermore they will contribute to building a body of evidence on Africa's transformation issues and options.</p>	<p><b>Originality</b> The major feature differentiating ECA working papers from the current non-recurrent publications is that they deliver original research rather than summary or repackaging of existing knowledge. An ECA working paper will only be accepted if it provides new empirical facts, new insights or new theoretical explanations. They, together with the original background studies conducted for major ECA publications, form the basis for the originality of ECA's research.</p> <p><b>Promoting research diversity and encouraging initiatives of staff members</b> Unlike the current non-recurrent publications for which the theme had been defined years back in the work program, the ECA working papers will only be restricted by the minimum number to be produced in a planning cycle. The themes can be chosen based on the latest requests and thinking, and the staff members are allowed to submit research proposals based on their expertise and interest and the relevance to ECA's research priorities. This mechanism will encourage the initiatives of staff in doing research and simultaneously improve the diversity of ECA's research since ideas now come from many rather than only a handful of minds.</p> <p><b>Representing opinions of individuals</b> As the major objective of the ECA working papers is to promote original and diversified research and engage staff members, they should be granted high freedom. Therefore, they are considered as representing the thinking of the authors rather than ECA and are not required to be consistent with existing ECA research results or conclusions.</p> <p><b>Internally peer-reviewed</b> Since the ECA working papers represent only the authors themselves rather than ECA, they only need to be validated through internal quality control and internal peer-review. As a result, a considerable number of current workshops/EGMs to validate non-recurrent publications will become unnecessary.</p>	<p>Improve the originality and diversify of ECA's research; Provide an effective channel for knowledge accumulation and a solid base for more systematic studies; Encourage initiatives of staff member in doing research; Decrease the number of workshops/EGMs to validate non-recurrent publications;</p>

## **Annex 2: Workflows and Quality Control Mechanisms for Producing ECA Publications.**

**1. Application.** The following publication types will be subject to pre-established workflows and quality control mechanisms:

- Policy briefs,
- Flagship publications,
- Geographic and thematic headline publications,
- Policy newsletters,
- ECA Journal and Journal articles,
- Special thematic reports,
- Case studies, research papers and working papers

Press Releases and Summaries will have separately established workflow and quality control mechanisms that will be incorporated into the workflows of publications they relate to.

**2. Structures.** The pre-defined process for each publication type will include the following structures. Depending on the type, the structures will range from involving multiple actors to single authors and small review teams.

- A decision-making committee to review and approve the publication
- A Main Author or Coordinator to lead the drafting team
- A Review body (or bodies) to vet or peer review the publication.
- A Production team, including graphic designers, to support the production and dissemination of the publication in hard copy and/or electronic versions.

**Table 1** indicates the particular structure for each publication type

**3. Production process.** Producing each publication type will include the following processes, led by the main author or Coordinator, under the direction of his/her Division Director. Depending on the type, the timeline will vary.

1. Identify the proposed topic, publication date, number of copies produced in each language, and resource and budget requirements
2. Prepare an abstract for review by the decision-making committee, including how the topic meets the criteria, plus the work plan and production timetable with progress benchmarks and success indicators
3. Obtain the approval of the decision-making committee
4. Drafting; fact-checking
5. Vetting/peer review
6. Editing/proofing and finalization
7. Communications and messaging
8. Translation
9. Production
10. Launching/issuing event
11. Dissemination
12. Deposition to the Library for cataloguing
13. Tracking feedback, popularity/readership, and influence on policies or programmes



**4. Document management.** For those publication types required to be retained and archived, the following rules apply:

- **Naming conventions** – Naming conventions will use shortened names to limit length, but not too abbreviated to be easily understood by any user:  
**PUB / [publication type (short form)] / [publication name (abbreviated)] – [month-year of issue (mon-yy)] / [sub-folder (as below)] / file name (abbreviated)**
- **Filing conventions** – Physical and virtual sub-folders will be organized and retained for
  1. **Project** – Project management documentation, including the proposal/concept note; work plan and time line, budgets, contracts etc.
  2. **Publication** – The document itself and versions of individual chapters, executive summary, acknowledgements etc. (versions should be specified; and metadata summary page should capture preparation workflow and dates – author, editor, reviewer, etc.)
  3. **Papers** – Background papers, including supporting research
  4. **Press** – Communications, including press material and reports on roll outs etc.
  5. **Performance** – Reports and monitoring, including feedback, references, citations, influence indicators, evaluation
- **Cataloguing and indexing** – Virtual copies of every publication will be stored in the ECA Institutional Repository (IR) and have a required set of metadata. The Library will issue a metadata summary page template for each publication type, to be completed by the Main Author/Coordinator, with the indexing keywords and other metadata, following international standards for creating online bibliographic information
- **Archiving hard copies** – Two copies of each publication in each language published will be maintained for the physical library and for circulation. The Library will assign a class number following the International Classification Scheme to facilitate shelving and retrieval.

**5. Quality assurance/control.** The quality of ECA publications should be judged on the extent of their impact on African development. Furthermore, a virtuous feedback loop is needed for ECA to gather lessons learned for continual improvement and maximizing of publication value. To this end, monitoring and evaluation of ECA publications will follow the new Programme Accountability Framework being introduced by the Strategic Planning and Operational Quality Division (SPOQD), as follows:

- **Tracking progress and performance** – Work plans and timetables will be established for producing and rolling out ECA publications, which will include both benchmarks for measuring progress as well as indicators defining a successful outcome.
- **Measuring and learning from impact** – The Programme Accountability Framework will include a parameter for assessing publications in terms of timeliness, relevance, policy influence, impact and other variables. Results will feed into the organizational learning processes included under this Framework.

**Annex 2 Table 1: Summary of Structures According to Publication Type**

Publication Type	file name (short form)	Periodicity	Approval body	Authorship	Review body	Production team
Policy briefs	Brief	Ad hoc	Division/Centre	Main Author	Internal & external peer reviewers	ECMRS; PDS
Flagship publications	Flagship	Yearly	SMT	Drafting Team	Internal & external peer reviewers	ECMRS; PDS
Geographic headline publications	GeoHeadline	Quarterly products Yearly report	SRO	Main Author	Internal peer reviewers	SRO; PDS
Thematic headline publications	ThemHeadline	Every 2 to 3 years	Division/Centre	Main Author or Drafting Team	Internal & external peer reviewers	ECMRS; PDS
Policy newsletters	Newsletter	Monthly	ECMRS	Main Author	Division/Centre	ECMRS; PDS
ECA journal articles	Journal	To be determined	Journal Board	Main Author	Double-blind external peer reviewers	ECMRS; PDS
Special thematic reports	ThemReport	Ad hoc	Division/Centre	Main Author	Internal peer reviewers	ECMRS; PDS
Case studies, research papers and working papers	Paper	Fixed by Unit	Division/Centre/ SRO	Main Author	Internal peer reviewers	Author; PDS