

EUROPEAN STATISTICS CODE OF PRACTICE

FOR THE NATIONAL
AND COMMUNITY
STATISTICAL AUTHORITIES

Adopted by the
European Statistical System Committee

28th September 2011



EUROPEAN
STATISTICAL
SYSTEM

Preamble

The vision of the European Statistical System¹

“The European Statistical System will be a world leader in statistical information services and the most important information provider for the European Union and its Member States. Based on scientific principles and methods, the European Statistical System will offer and continuously improve a programme of harmonised European statistics that constitutes an essential basis for democratic processes and progress in society.”

The mission of the European Statistical System

“We provide the European Union, the world and the public with independent high quality information on the economy and society on European, national and regional levels and make the information available to everyone for decision-making purposes, research and debate.”

To realize this mission and vision, the members of the European Statistical System strive for joint cooperation and continuous interaction with users according to the Principles of the European Statistics Code of Practice and general quality management principles including commitment of leadership, partnership, staff satisfaction and continuous improvement, in addition to integration and harmonization.

The European Statistics Code of Practice

The European Statistics Code of Practice is based on 15 Principles covering the institutional environment, the statistical production processes and the output of statistics. A set of indicators of good practice for each of the Principles provides a reference for reviewing the implementation of the Code. The quality criteria for European Statistics are defined in European Statistical Law².

Statistical authorities³, comprising the Commission (Eurostat), National Statistical Institutes and other national authorities responsible for the development, production and dissemination of European Statistics⁴, together with governments, ministries and the European Council, commit themselves to adhere to the Code.

The Principles of the Code of Practice together with the general quality management principles represent a common quality framework in the European Statistical System.

1. Regulation (EC) 223/2009, Article 4

2. Regulation (EC) 223/2009, Article 12

3. Regulation (EC) 223/2009, Articles 4 and 5

4. Regulation (EC) 223/2009, Article 1. In the Code of Practice, «other national authorities responsible for the development, production and dissemination of European Statistics» are referred to as «other statistical authorities».

Institutional Environment

Institutional and organisational factors have a significant influence on the effectiveness and credibility of a statistical authority developing, producing and disseminating European Statistics. The relevant issues are professional independence, mandate for data collection, adequacy of resources, quality commitment, statistical confidentiality, impartiality and objectivity.

PRINCIPLE 1

PROFESSIONAL INDEPENDENCE

Professional independence of statistical authorities from other policy, regulatory or administrative departments and bodies, as well as from private sector operators, ensures the credibility of European Statistics.

INDICATORS

1.1: The independence of the National Statistical Institutes and Eurostat from political and other external interference in developing, producing and disseminating statistics is specified in law and assured for other statistical authorities.

1.2: The heads of the National Statistical Institutes and of Eurostat and, where appropriate, the heads of other statistical authorities have sufficiently high hierarchical standing to ensure senior level access to policy authorities and administrative public bodies. They are of the highest professional calibre.

1.3: The heads of the National Statistical Institutes and of Eurostat and, where appropriate, the heads of other statistical authorities have responsibility for ensuring that statistics are developed, produced and disseminated in an independent manner.

1.4: The heads of the National Statistical Institutes and of Eurostat and, where appropriate, the heads of other statistical authorities have the sole responsibility for deciding on statistical methods, standards and procedures, and on the content and timing of statistical releases.

1.5: The statistical work programmes are published and periodic reports describe progress made.

1.6: Statistical releases are clearly distinguished and issued separately from political/policy statements.

1.7: The National Statistical Institute and Eurostat and, where appropriate, other statistical authorities, comment publicly on statistical issues, including criticisms and misuses of statistics as far as considered suitable.

1.8: The appointment of the heads of the National Statistical Institutes and Eurostat and, where appropriate, of other statistical authorities, is based on professional competence only. The reasons on the basis of which the incumbency can be terminated are specified in the legal framework. These cannot include reasons compromising professional or scientific independence.

PRINCIPLE 2

MANDATE FOR DATA COLLECTION

Statistical authorities have a clear legal mandate to collect information for European statistical purposes. Administrations, enterprises and households, and the public at large may be compelled by law to allow access to or deliver data for European statistical purposes at the request of statistical authorities.

INDICATORS

2.1: The mandate of the statistical authorities to collect information for the development, production and dissemination of European Statistics is specified in law.

2.2: The statistical authorities are allowed by law to use administrative data for statistical purposes.

2.3: On the basis of a legal act, the statistical authorities may compel response to statistical surveys.

PRINCIPLE
3

ADEQUACY OF RESOURCES

The resources available to statistical authorities are sufficient to meet European Statistics requirements.

INDICATORS

- 3.1: Staff, financial, and computing resources, adequate both in magnitude and in quality, are available to meet current statistical needs.
- 3.2: The scope, detail and cost of statistics are commensurate with needs.
- 3.3: Procedures exist to assess and justify demands for new statistics against their cost.
- 3.4: Procedures exist to assess the continuing need for all statistics, to see if any can be discontinued or curtailed to free up resources.

PRINCIPLE
4

COMMITMENT TO QUALITY

Statistical authorities are committed to quality. They systematically and regularly identify strengths and weaknesses to continuously improve process and product quality.

INDICATORS

- 4.1: Quality policy is defined and made available to the public. An organizational structure and tools are in place to deal with quality management.
- 4.2: Procedures are in place to plan and monitor the quality of the statistical production process.
- 4.3: Product quality is regularly monitored, assessed with regard to possible trade-offs, and reported according to the quality criteria for European Statistics.
- 4.4: There is a regular and thorough review of the key statistical outputs using also external experts where appropriate.

PRINCIPLE
5

STATISTICAL CONFIDENTIALITY

The privacy of data providers (households, enterprises, administrations and other respondents), the confidentiality of the information they provide and its use only for statistical purposes are absolutely guaranteed.

INDICATORS

- 5.1: Statistical confidentiality is guaranteed in law.
- 5.2: Staff sign legal confidentiality commitments on appointment.
- 5.3: Penalties are prescribed for any wilful breaches of statistical confidentiality.
- 5.4: Guidelines and instructions are provided to staff on the protection of statistical confidentiality in the production and dissemination processes. The confidentiality policy is made known to the public.
- 5.5: Physical, technological and organisational provisions are in place to protect the security and integrity of statistical databases.
- 5.6: Strict protocols apply to external users accessing statistical microdata for research purposes.

PRINCIPLE 6

IMPARTIALITY AND OBJECTIVITY

Statistical authorities develop, produce and disseminate European Statistics respecting scientific independence and in an objective, professional and transparent manner in which all users are treated equitably.

INDICATORS

- 6.1: Statistics are compiled on an objective basis determined by statistical considerations.
- 6.2: Choices of sources and statistical methods as well as decisions about the dissemination of statistics are informed by statistical considerations.
- 6.3: Errors discovered in published statistics are corrected at the earliest possible date and publicised.
- 6.4: Information on the methods and procedures used is publicly available.
- 6.5: Statistical release dates and times are pre-announced.
- 6.6: Advance notice is given on major revisions or changes in methodologies.
- 6.7: All users have equal access to statistical releases at the same time. Any privileged pre-release access to any outside user is limited, controlled and publicised. In the event that leaks occur, pre-release arrangements are revised so as to ensure impartiality.
- 6.8: Statistical releases and statements made in press conferences are objective and non-partisan.

Statistical Processes

European and other international standards, guidelines and good practices are fully observed in the processes used by the statistical authorities to organise, collect, process and disseminate European Statistics. The credibility of the statistics is enhanced by a reputation for good management and efficiency. The relevant aspects are sound methodology, appropriate statistical procedures, non-excessive burden on respondents and cost effectiveness.

PRINCIPLE 7

SOUND METHODOLOGY

Sound methodology underpins quality statistics. This requires adequate tools, procedures and expertise.

INDICATORS

- 7.1: The overall methodological framework used for European Statistics follows European and other international standards, guidelines, and good practices.
- 7.2: Procedures are in place to ensure that standard concepts, definitions and classifications are consistently applied throughout the statistical authority.
- 7.3: The business register and the frame for population surveys are regularly evaluated and adjusted if necessary in order to ensure high quality.
- 7.4: Detailed concordance exists between national classifications systems and the corresponding European systems.
- 7.5: Graduates in the relevant academic disciplines are recruited.
- 7.6: Statistical authorities implement a policy of continuous vocational training for their staff.
- 7.7: Co-operation with the scientific community is organised to improve methodology, the effectiveness of the methods implemented and to promote better tools when feasible.

PRINCIPLE 8

APPROPRIATE STATISTICAL PROCEDURES

Appropriate statistical procedures, implemented from data collection to data validation, underpin quality statistics.

INDICATORS

- 8.1: When European Statistics are based on administrative data, the definitions and concepts used for administrative purposes are a good approximation to those required for statistical purposes.
- 8.2: In the case of statistical surveys, questionnaires are systematically tested prior to the data collection.
- 8.3: Survey designs, sample selections and estimation methods are well based and regularly reviewed and revised as required.
- 8.4: Data collection, data entry, and coding are routinely monitored and revised as required.
- 8.5: Appropriate editing and imputation methods are used and regularly reviewed, revised or updated as required.
- 8.6: Revisions follow standard, well-established and transparent procedures.
- 8.7: Statistical authorities are involved in the design of administrative data in order to make administrative data more suitable for statistical purposes.
- 8.8: Agreements are made with owners of administrative data which set out their shared commitment to the use of these data for statistical purposes.
- 8.9: Statistical authorities co-operate with owners of administrative data in assuring data quality.

PRINCIPLE 9

NON-EXCESSIVE BURDEN ON RESPONDENTS

The reporting burden is proportionate to the needs of the users and is not excessive for respondents. The statistical authorities monitor the response burden and set targets for its reduction over time.

INDICATORS

- 9.1: The range and detail of European Statistics demands is limited to what is absolutely necessary.
- 9.2: The reporting burden is spread as widely as possible over survey populations.
- 9.3: The information sought from businesses is, as far as possible, readily available from their accounts and electronic means are used where possible to facilitate its return.
- 9.4: Administrative sources are used whenever possible to avoid duplicating requests for information.
- 9.5: Data sharing within statistical authorities is generalised in order to avoid multiplication of surveys.
- 9.6: Statistical authorities promote measures that enable the linking of data sources in order to reduce reporting burden.

PRINCIPLE 10

COST EFFECTIVENESS

Resources are used effectively.

INDICATORS

- 10.1: Internal and independent external measures monitor the statistical authority's use of resources.
- 10.2: The productivity potential of information and communications technology is being optimised for data collection, processing and dissemination.
- 10.3: Proactive efforts are made to improve the statistical potential of administrative data and to limit recourse to direct surveys.
- 10.4: Statistical authorities promote and implement standardized solutions that increase effectiveness and efficiency.

Statistical Output

Available statistics meet users' needs. Statistics comply with the European quality standards and serve the needs of European institutions, governments, research institutions, business concerns and the public generally. The important issues concern the extent to which the statistics are relevant, accurate and reliable, timely, coherent, comparable across regions and countries, and readily accessible by users.

PRINCIPLE 11

RELEVANCE

European Statistics meet the needs of users.

INDICATORS

- 11.1: Processes are in place to consult users, monitor the relevance and utility of existing statistics in meeting their needs, and consider their emerging needs and priorities.
- 11.2: Priority needs are being met and reflected in the work programme.
- 11.3: User satisfaction is monitored on a regular basis and is systematically followed up.

PRINCIPLE 12

ACCURACY AND RELIABILITY

European Statistics accurately and reliably portray reality.

INDICATORS

- 12.1: Source data, intermediate results and statistical outputs are regularly assessed and validated.
- 12.2: Sampling errors and non-sampling errors are measured and systematically documented according to the European standards.
- 12.3: Revisions are regularly analysed in order to improve statistical processes.

PRINCIPLE 13

TIMELINESS AND PUNCTUALITY

European Statistics are released in a timely and punctual manner.

INDICATORS

- 13.1: Timeliness meets European and other international release standards.
- 13.2: A standard daily time for the release of statistics is made public.
- 13.3: The periodicity of statistics takes into account user requirements as much as possible.
- 13.4: Divergence from the dissemination time schedule is publicised in advance, explained and a new release date set.
- 13.5: Preliminary results of acceptable aggregate accuracy can be released when considered useful.

PRINCIPLE 14

COHERENCE AND COMPARABILITY

European Statistics are consistent internally, over time and comparable between regions and countries; it is possible to combine and make joint use of related data from different sources.

INDICATORS

- 14.1: Statistics are internally coherent and consistent (i.e. arithmetic and accounting identities observed).
- 14.2: Statistics are comparable over a reasonable period of time.
- 14.3: Statistics are compiled on the basis of common standards with respect to scope, definitions, units and classifications in the different surveys and sources.
- 14.4: Statistics from the different sources and of different periodicity are compared and reconciled.
- 14.5: Cross-national comparability of the data is ensured within the European Statistical System through periodical exchanges between the European Statistical System and other statistical systems. Methodological studies are carried out in close co-operation between the Member States and Eurostat.

PRINCIPLE 15

ACCESSIBILITY AND CLARITY

European Statistics are presented in a clear and understandable form, released in a suitable and convenient manner, available and accessible on an impartial basis with supporting metadata and guidance.

INDICATORS

- 15.1: Statistics and the corresponding metadata are presented, and archived, in a form that facilitates proper interpretation and meaningful comparisons.
- 15.2: Dissemination services use modern information and communication technology and, if appropriate, traditional hard copy.
- 15.3: Custom-designed analyses are provided when feasible and the public is informed.
- 15.4: Access to microdata is allowed for research purposes and is subject to specific rules or protocols.
- 15.5: Metadata are documented according to standardised metadata systems.
- 15.6: Users are kept informed about the methodology of statistical processes including the use of administrative data.
- 15.7: Users are kept informed about the quality of statistical outputs with respect to the quality criteria for European Statistics.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE EUROPEAN STATISTICS CODE OF PRACTICE

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Publications Office