



Recommendation of the Council on Good Statistical Practice

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Date(s)

Adopted on 23/11/2015

Background Information

The Recommendation on Good Statistical Practice was adopted by the OECD Council on 23 November 2015 on the proposal of the OECD Committee on Statistics and Statistical Policy (CSSP). The Recommendation is the OECD's first legal instrument concerning statistics. It reflects the fact that the quality of statistics is fundamental for the quality of evidence-based analytical work of the Organisation and also for the quality of statistical publications and databases produced by the OECD. It follows from Article 3 of the OECD Convention, where members agreed to "furnish the Organisation with the information necessary for the accomplishment of its tasks". There are twelve recommendations covering: the institutional, legal and resource requirements for statistical systems; the methods and quality of processes of statistical production; dissemination; coordination and co-operation; and statistical innovation.

THE COUNCIL,

HAVING REGARD to Article 5 b) of the Convention on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development of 14 December 1960;

HAVING REGARD to the fact that the quality of statistics produced by the OECD for its analytical work and for inclusion in its reporting system depends largely of the quality of official statistics produced by countries;

HAVING REGARD to relevant international guidelines, such as the United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and the European Statistical Code of Practice;

CONSIDERING that quality statistics are an indispensable tool for good analysis, transparency, accountability and ultimately for informed decision-making and the functioning of democracies;

NOTING that international guidelines or codes of practice that currently apply to all OECD can usefully be complemented by recommendations that offer the level of specificity and emphasise aspects that correspond to developed statistical systems;

RECOGNISING that a set of concrete and practically-oriented recommendations would be of significant value to Members and non-Members seeking to assess their statistical systems and formulate their statistical policy;

On the proposal of the Committee on Statistics and Statistical Policy (CSSP),

I. **AGREES** that, for the purpose of the present Recommendation, the following definitions are used:

Administrative source refers to the organisational unit responsible for implementing an administrative regulation (or group of regulations), for which the corresponding register of units and the transactions are viewed as a source of statistical data.

Co-ordination of the National Statistical System refers to procedures allowing the existence of effective co-ordination among statistical agencies to ensure consistency and efficiency of the statistical system.

National Statistical Authorities refers to the leading statistical agencies within a national statistical system, which are responsible for the design of the statistical policy according to national legislation.

National Statistical Office (NSO) refers to the leading statistical agency within a national statistical system.

National Statistical System (NSS) refers to the ensemble of statistical organisations and units within a country that jointly collect, process, and disseminate official statistics on behalf of national government.

Official statistics refer to statistics that are disseminated by the national statistical system.

Statistical Data and Metadata eXchange (SDMX) refers to an initiative to foster standards for the exchange of statistical information, sponsored by the Bank for International Settlements (BIS), the European Central Bank (ECB), the Statistical Office of the European Union (Eurostat), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the OECD, the United Nations (UN) and the World Bank.

Statistical data refers to data from a survey or administrative source used to produce statistics and/or the data comprising such statistics.

Statistical producer refers to the producers of official statistics.

II. RECOMMENDS that Members and non-Members adhering to this Recommendation (hereafter the “Adherents”):

1. Put in place a clear **legal and institutional framework** for official statistics which should in particular provide:

- i) details as to the organisation of the NSS, the legal status and role of the NSO, as well as the legal status, functions, relationship, rights and responsibilities of other institutions within the NSS;
- ii) a clear mandate for institutions of the NSS to collect data for statistical purposes.

2. Ensure professional independence of National Statistical Authorities. To this end, Adherents should ensure that the National Statistical Authorities:

- i) are professionally independent from other policy, regulatory or administrative departments and bodies, as well as from private sector operators, considering that professional independence of the producers of official statistics is essential for the production and the dissemination of objective statistics;
- ii) have the exclusive authority, as part of their professional independence, to decide on statistical methods and dissemination;
- iii) are protected, through the inclusion of explicit provisions in statistics legislation, from political and other interference in developing, compiling and disseminating official statistics.

3. Ensure adequacy of human financial and technical resources available to the National Statistical Authorities for the production and dissemination of official statistics. To this end, Adherents should ensure that the resources are:

- i) sufficient to allow National Statistical Authorities to meet their commitment to quality, and to meet professional standards thereby fulfilling their role as providers of reliable, relevant and accessible data for national and international use;
- ii) adequate to produce a minimum core set of data, to be defined nationally or internationally, to monitor the economy, society and the environment.

4. Protect the privacy of data providers (including individuals, households, enterprises, administrations, and all levels of government) and guarantee by law the confidentiality of the individual information provided and its use for statistical purposes only.

5. Ensure the right to access administrative sources to produce official statistics. To this end, Adherents should ensure that:

- i) National Statistical Authorities have the right to access administrative data for the regular production of official statistics and to use them in the interest of ensuring quality of official statistics, raising the analytical value of official statistics, reducing burden on survey respondents and reducing the cost of statistical programmes;
- ii) National Statistical Authorities co-operate with owners of administrative records as regards their statistical quality and have authority to influence their design to ensure they are fit for statistical purposes.

6. Ensure the impartiality, objectivity and transparency of official statistics, through the development, production and dissemination by the National Statistical Authorities of statistics respecting scientific independence put in place in an objective, professional and transparent manner in which all **users are treated equitably**. Equitable treatment implies in particular equal access to data by all users.

7. Employ sound methodology and commit to professional standards used in the production of official statistics. To this end, Adherents should:

- i) apply appropriate statistical procedures and methods, including a stated revisions policy;
- ii) strive to adhere to international norms and standards, such as methodological manuals developed by the United Nations Statistical Commission or by the OECD, and international classifications in the statistics collected by the OECD.

8. Commit to the quality of statistical outputs and processes, in particular to key quality dimensions as defined in national and international quality assessment frameworks, for instance in the *Quality Framework and Guidelines for OECD Statistical Activities*: timeliness and punctuality (statistics are released in a timely and punctual manner); relevance (statistics meet the needs of users); accuracy (statistics accurately and reliably portray reality); credibility (confidence is placed by users in statistical products); coherence and comparability (statistics are consistent internally, over time and in space and it is possible to combine and make joint use of related data from different sources); and interpretability and accessibility (see Recommendation 9).

9. Ensure user-friendly data access and dissemination, so that statistics are presented in a clear and understandable form, released in a suitable and convenient manner, including in machine-readable form ('open data'), can be found easily, and are available and accessible on an impartial basis with supporting metadata and guidance. This also entails a commitment to respond to major misinterpretations of data by users.

10. Establish responsibilities for co-ordination of statistical activities within the NSS. To this end, Adherents should ensure that:

- i) the co-ordination of statistical activities among statistical producers is done through the use of standard concepts and classifications and avoids the duplication of effort;
- ii) responsibilities for such co-ordination function are clearly laid out and anchored in statistical legislation.

11. Commit to international co-operation. To this end, Adherents should:

- i) encourage statistical producers to achieve common goals in statistics jointly with the statistical producers in other countries and with international organisations, with a view to developing internationally comparable statistics, to designing international standards and to exchanging information on good practice.
- ii) provide the necessary data for the OECD's reporting system and analytical work, in compliance with international statistical standards as recognised by the OECD and preferably using the Statistical Data and Metadata eXchange method/standard in particular for domains with internationally agreed Data Structure Definitions (DSDs).

12. Encourage exploring innovative methods as well as new and alternative data sources as inputs for official statistics, and in particular encourage statistical agencies to actively explore possibilities to use new data sources (including large datasets owned by the private sector), or to combine existing and new data sources as input for official statistics. At the same time, these opportunities are weighted against the limits of using modern information technologies and the need to maintain the quality of official statistics.

III. INVITES Adherents and the Secretary-General to disseminate this Recommendation;

IV. INVITES Adherents to disseminate this Recommendation at all levels of government;

V. INVITES non-Adherents to take account of and to adhere to this Recommendation;

VI. INSTRUCTS the Committee on Statistics and Statistical Policy to monitor the implementation of this Recommendation and to report thereon to the Council no later than three years following its adoption and regularly thereafter.

Adherents*

OECD Members

Austria
Belgium
Canada
Chile
Czech Republic
Denmark
Estonia
Finland
France
Germany
Greece
Hungary
Iceland
Ireland
Israel
Italy
Japan
Korea
Latvia
Luxembourg
Mexico
Netherlands
New Zealand
Norway
Poland
Portugal
Slovak Republic
Slovenia
Spain
Sweden
Switzerland
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United States

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Peru
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Since the creation of the OECD in 1961, around 450 substantive legal instruments have been developed within its framework. These include OECD Acts (i.e. the Decisions and Recommendations adopted by the OECD Council in accordance with the OECD Convention) and other legal instruments developed within the OECD framework (e.g. Declarations, international agreements).

All substantive OECD legal instruments, whether in force or abrogated, are listed in the online Compendium of OECD Legal Instruments. They are presented in five categories:

- **Decisions:** OECD legal instruments which are legally binding on all Members except those which abstain at the time of adoption. While they are not international treaties, they entail the same kind of legal obligations. Adherents are obliged to implement Decisions and must take the measures necessary for such implementation.
- **Recommendations:** OECD legal instruments which are not legally binding but practice accords them great moral force as representing the political will of Adherents. There is an expectation that Adherents will do their utmost to fully implement a Recommendation. Thus, Members which do not intend to do so usually abstain when a Recommendation is adopted, although this is not required in legal terms.
- **Declarations:** OECD legal instruments which are prepared within the Organisation, generally within a subsidiary body. They usually set general principles or long-term goals, have a solemn character and are usually adopted at Ministerial meetings of the Council or of committees of the Organisation.
- **International Agreements:** OECD legal instruments negotiated and concluded within the framework of the Organisation. They are legally binding on the Parties.
- **Arrangement, Understanding and Others:** several ad hoc substantive legal instruments have been developed within the OECD framework over time, such as the Arrangement on Officially Supported Export Credits, the International Understanding on Maritime Transport Principles and the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Recommendations.