



## **Empowering Official Statistics: Upholding the Fundamental Principles to Stay Relevant**

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### **1. Introduction**

In our increasingly data-driven era, the journey of Official Statistics is marked by continuous evolution, responding to the needs of a globally interconnected world. The Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics (FPOS), established by the Statistical Commission (the Commission) in 1994 and endorsed by the General Assembly in 2014<sup>1</sup>, have played a pivotal role in this dynamic progression. These principles, rooted in openness, transparency, and professional independence, are more crucial than ever. They ensure that Official Statistics remain relevant, trustworthy, and effective, providing a framework for producing reliable statistics and fostering mutual understanding among nations.

The adoption of the FPOS reflects a commitment to maintaining the highest standards in statistical practices. They support the integrity and objectivity of statistical data, which is crucial for informed governance and sustaining public trust. These principles guide the development and dissemination of Official Statistics, influencing policies across economic, demographic, social, and environmental domains. Their global recognition and adoption underscore the importance of Official Statistics as a reliable foundation for understanding and improving our world.

The FPOS have significantly influenced the compilation of various statistical standards globally. The European Regulation on European Statistics, amended in 2015<sup>2</sup>, fully aligns with the FPOS. The European Statistics Code of Practice, introduced in 2005<sup>3</sup>, is an operational extension of the FPOS and has inspired the creation of other regional codes of practice for Official Statistics, such as the African Charter on

Statistics<sup>4</sup>, the ASEAN Code for Statistics<sup>5</sup>, and the Code of Good Practice in Statistics for Latin America and the Caribbean<sup>6</sup>. Additionally, the Generic Law on Official Statistics for Eastern Europe, Caucasus, and Central Asia<sup>7</sup>, which is crafted from the FPOS, has been issued in multiple languages and adapted by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia<sup>8</sup> and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean<sup>9</sup> to ensure that the FPOS are tailored to the unique situations in these regions.

The Dissemination Standards of the International Monetary Fund<sup>10</sup>, formulated in 1996 and 1997, also incorporate the FPOS, notably equal access (Principle 1), professional autonomy (Principle 2), and transparency (Principle 3). Similarly, the Recommendation of the OECD Council on Good Statistical Practices<sup>11</sup> and the United Nations National Quality Assurance Framework<sup>12</sup> and other frameworks at regional and national levels have integrated the FPOS. This integration ensures that national statistical practices meet international benchmarks of quality, transparency, and reliability, underscoring the role of the FPOS in enhancing the quality and credibility of statistical practices across nations.

This document delves into the historical context, evolution, and universal significance of the FPOS. We explore how these principles have been adapted to meet the demands of a changing data landscape and the contemporary challenges faced by Official Statistics. This exploration reaffirms the enduring importance of the FPOS as beacons of trust, relevance, and scientific rigor in Official Statistics. Upholding these principles enables the national statistical office and other producers of Official Statistics (statistical authorities or National Statistical System) to offer detailed insights into our progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), highlight areas needing concerted action, and guide global efforts towards sustainable futures.

## 2. Distinctiveness of Official Statistics

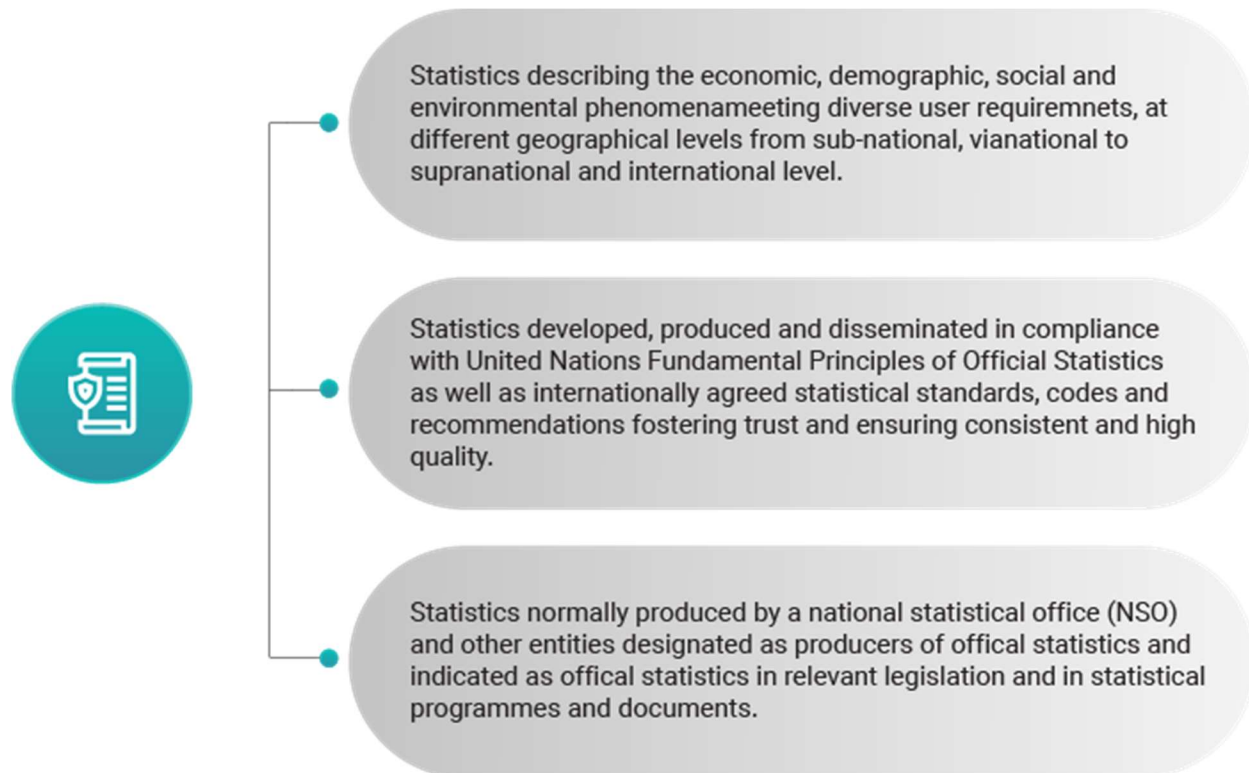
In the diverse data and information landscape, Official Statistics uniquely stand out, distinguished by their foundational principles, purpose, and practices. These statistics are more than just numbers; they encapsulate the objective reality of a nation's economic, social, and environmental conditions. They serve as an indispensable tool for informed decision-making and policy guidance. Unlike other data sources that may cater to narrower managerial, regulatory, administrative, and commercial purposes, Official Statistics serve the broader public good, providing critical insights into societal progress and challenges.

At the heart of Official Statistics lies their fundamental purpose, which is to serve as objective indicators of a nation's progress in areas of development and well-being. By upholding the principles of relevance, impartiality, and equal access, as outlined in the FPOS, these statistics transcend partisan interests and agendas. They offer an accurate reflection of a nation's developmental strides, forming an indispensable foundation for an informed citizenry, accountable governance, and effective policy formulation.

Moreover, an unwavering adherence to professional standards and ethics further cements the unique standing of Official Statistics. These standards ensure that the methods and procedures utilized in data collection, processing, and presentation are scientifically sound and universally comparable. This steadfast commitment positions Official Statistics as a vital tool for global understanding, enabling meaningful comparisons across different nations and over time. It provides a comprehensive and coherent view of societal trends and dynamics, crucial for a broad range of stakeholders from policymakers to researchers.

Beyond their methodological rigor, Official Statistics have a broader societal impact that extends beyond organizational boundaries. They inform public policy, guide economic planning, and monitor global initiatives like the SDGs. This expansive role is underpinned by a commitment to transparency and accountability, fostering a culture of informed decision-making and democratic engagement.

*Figure 1: Definition of Official Statistics*



The public's trust in Official Statistics is deeply rooted in their integrity, comparability, and adherence to universal standards. This trust is further reinforced by the statistical authorities' mandate to correct erroneous interpretations and maintain strict confidentiality for individual data. Such commitments ensure that Official Statistics are not only accurate but also respected and trusted as reliable reflections of societal realities.

Moreover, Official Statistics are distinguished by the global collaboration they inspire. Using international concepts, classifications, and methods promotes consistency and efficiency, ensuring that statistics are relevant both nationally and internationally. This collaboration fosters a shared approach to global challenges, underscoring the role of Official Statistics as a unifying element in the global information ecosystem.

Finally, the robust legal and institutional frameworks supporting Official Statistics are critical to their comprehensive scope and societal relevance. These frameworks ensure that the statistics

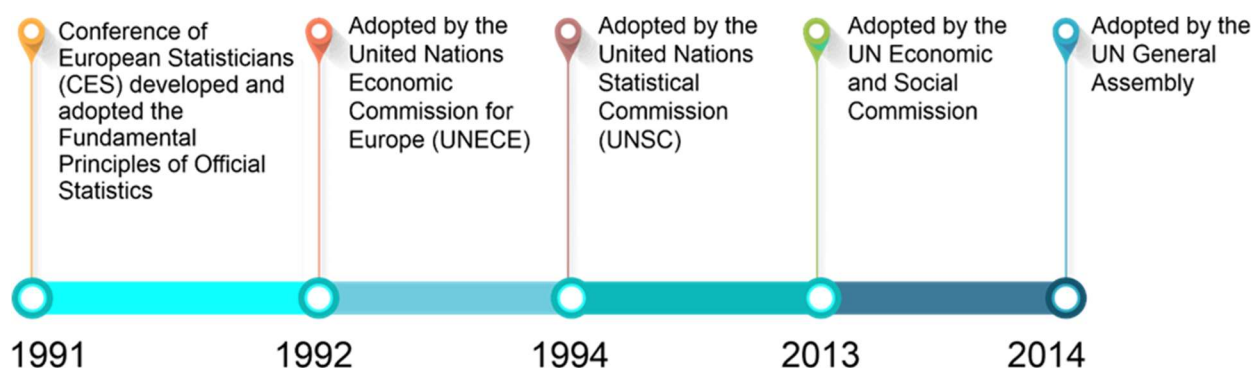
comprehensively reflect societal conditions and trends, providing a basis for informed public discourse and policymaking. In this way, Official Statistics stand as a cornerstone of a well-informed and democratic society, distinguishing themselves significantly from other data types.

### 3. The Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics

#### Genesis and Global Endorsement of the FPOS

The FPOS originated at a pivotal moment in history, particularly during the early 1990s transition of Eastern European countries from planned to market economies. Conceived in 1991 by the Conference of European Statisticians, the FPOS were designed to guide these transitioning nations in establishing robust and independent statistical systems. Recognizing their broader importance, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) endorsed the FPOS in 1992<sup>13</sup>, highlighting their potential as a standard for statistical integrity and professionalism beyond national boundaries.

*Figure 2: The Genesis of the FPOS*



The recognition of the FPOS's universal applicability was solidified in 1994 when the United Nations Statistical Commission adopted them. This endorsement was critical in establishing the FPOS as foundational guidelines for the global statistical community. Later, the United Nations General Assembly's adoption in 2014 underscored their role as essential standards, ensuring that Official Statistics worldwide serve as reliable tools for understanding and improving societal conditions. The FPOS advocate for statistical production based on scientific methods, professional ethics, and transparency, underpinning their relevance and trustworthiness in informing global policy and governance.

#### Principle 1: Relevance, Impartiality, and Equal Access

##### Overview:

Principle 1 underscores the importance of relevance, impartiality, and equal access in the compilation and dissemination of Official Statistics. This principle is foundational, setting the standard for how Official Statistics should be managed and presented to ensure they serve the needs of a democratic society effectively.

*Key Aspects:*

1. **Relevance:**
  - Official statistics should be relevant to users' needs, including government, businesses, research institutions, and the general public.
  - This involves ensuring that the data collected, processed, and disseminated addresses the key issues and questions pertinent to societal, environmental, and economic developments.
2. **Impartiality:**
  - Impartiality in Official Statistics means that data collection and processing should be free from non-solicited political or other external interferences.
  - It ensures that statistical outputs are objective, reliable, and produced in a neutral manner, maintaining the integrity of the data.
3. **Equal Access:**
  - Equal access implies that all users have equal opportunity to access and use Official Statistics.
  - This principle is crucial for transparency and democratic processes, as it allows citizens, policymakers, and other users to make informed decisions based on the same set of reliable data.

*Conclusion:*

Principle 1 of the FPOS establishes the essential framework for producing and disseminating statistical information. By adhering to relevance, impartiality, and equal access, statistical authorities can ensure that their work effectively meets the needs of a democratic society, maintains public trust, and supports informed decision-making.

**Principle 2: Professional Standards, Scientific Principles, and Professional Ethics**

*Overview:*

Principle 2 of The FPOS underscores the importance of maintaining professional standards, adhering to scientific principles, and upholding professional ethics in Official Statistics. This principle is not just a guideline; it's a commitment to excellence, ensuring the credibility, reliability, and integrity of statistical data. It represents a foundational pillar for trustworthy and respected statistical practices.

*Key Aspects:*

1. **Professional Standards:**
  - Upholding high professional standards is a fundamental expectation for statistical authorities. This encompasses employing appropriate methodologies, ensuring accuracy in data collection and processing, and maintaining rigor in data analysis and dissemination. It is not just about following procedures; it is about striving for excellence and precision in every aspect of statistical work.

- Professional standards also entail a commitment to continuous improvement and adherence to established best practices in statistical science. It is a dynamic process involving the regular update of practices to keep pace with advancements in statistical methods and technologies.

2. Scientific Principles:

- Applying scientific principles to collecting, processing, storing, and disseminating statistical data is crucial. It ensures that methodologies are not only technically sound but also robust and capable of withstanding scrutiny. This commitment to scientific rigor underpins the validity and reliability of statistical outputs.
- These principles guide statistical authorities in producing data that is not only accurate but methodologically sound, enabling the drawing of valid and reliable conclusions from statistical output.

3. Professional Ethics:

- Ethical considerations form the backbone of professional conduct in Official Statistics. This includes maintaining the confidentiality of data subjects, avoiding any manipulation of statistical outputs, and ensuring impartiality and objectivity in statistical reporting.
- Professional ethics also involve a commitment to transparency in methodology and unbiased reporting, free from external influences. It is about ensuring that statistics are an accurate and fair representation of reality, maintaining the trust and confidence of all stakeholders.

4. Trust and Integrity:

- Adherence to professional standards, scientific principles, and professional ethics is key to maintaining public trust in Official Statistics. It is not just about producing reliable statistical data; it is about doing so in a way that is respected and valued for its integrity.
- The trustworthiness of statistical data is fundamental for informed decision-making by governments, businesses, and the public. It is a cornerstone of a well-informed society and effective governance.

### *Conclusions*

As a critical element of the FPOS, Principle 2 establishes a comprehensive framework for professional conduct, scientific rigor, and ethical responsibility. Upholding these standards is crucial for ensuring that statistical authorities produce data that is not only high in quality but also respected and trusted. It reinforces the integrity and credibility of official statistical systems globally, cementing their role as indispensable and reliable information sources.

### **Principle 3: Accountability and Transparency**

#### *Overview:*

Principle 3 of the FPOS, focusing on "Accountability and Transparency," highlights these crucial aspects in Official Statistics. This principle is integral to building and sustaining public trust in statistical systems and their outputs. It goes beyond mere data production; it is about establishing a foundation of confidence and reliability in every aspect of statistical work.

*Key Aspects:*

1. Accountability:

- Statistical authorities are responsible for the quality and integrity of the statistical information they produce. This responsibility extends to the methods used, the accuracy of data, and the timeliness of their outputs. It is a commitment to produce statistics and ensure that it meets the highest standards of quality and reliability.
- Being accountable also means being answerable to users and the public for all decisions and practices in the statistical process. This involves an open and honest dialogue about the choices made in the statistical process, providing justifications and explanations for methodologies and outcomes. It is about creating a culture of responsibility and responsiveness in Official Statistics.

2. Transparency:

- Transparency in Official Statistics means ensuring that all processes, methodologies, and practices used to produce statistics are open and transparent to users and the public. This is about demystifying the statistical process, making it accessible and understandable to everyone who relies on statistical data.
- It also involves providing detailed documentation on data sources, methods of collection, and procedures for data processing, analysis, and dissemination. This openness allows users to fully understand how the data was gathered and processed, reinforcing the credibility of the statistical outputs.

3. Building Public Trust:

- Statistical authorities build and maintain public trust by adhering to principles of accountability and transparency. This trust is not just important but essential for accepting and effectively using statistical data in policymaking and public discourse.
- Transparency and accountability build trust and allows users to assess the quality and reliability of the data independently. This enhances the overall credibility and acceptance of statistical output.

4. Facilitating Informed Use:

- Being transparent about methodologies and processes enables users to understand and interpret the statistical data correctly. This clarity facilitates its informed and effective use, ensuring that decisions based on statistics are well-founded.
- It also fosters a constructive dialogue between statistical authorities and their users, leading to feedback that can drive improvements in statistical practices. This interaction is crucial for the continuous enhancement of statistical methodologies and outputs.

*Conclusions:*

Principle 3 of the FPOS establishes the paramount importance of accountability and transparency in Official Statistics. Upholding these values is critical to ensuring the integrity, credibility, and public trust in both the data and the processes involved in statistical work. This principle highlights the dedication of

statistical authorities to conduct their work openly, ethically, and responsibly, reinforcing their role as trustworthy custodians of public data and guardians of statistical truth.

#### **Principle 4: Prevention of Misuse**

##### *Overview:*

Principle 4, titled "Prevention of Misuse," underscores the responsibility of statistical authorities to take proactive measures to prevent the misuse of Official Statistics. This principle is vital for upholding the integrity and trustworthiness of statistical data, ensuring that it serves its intended purpose of informing and guiding rather than misleading or deceiving.

##### *Key Aspects:*

##### 1. Proactive Measures Against Misuse:

- Statistical authorities are responsible for implementing measures to prevent the misuse of statistical data. This encompasses ensuring that data is presented clearly, accurately, and in a manner that minimizes potential misinterpretation or manipulation.
- Providing metadata and guidelines on the appropriate use of statistics is also crucial. This information helps users understand and apply the data correctly, fostering responsible usage and interpretation of statistical information.

##### 2. Addressing Potential Misinterpretation:

- Part of preventing misuse involves actively addressing potential misinterpretations of data. Authorities should anticipate common misunderstandings and provide clear, contextual explanations to guide users toward correct interpretation.
- This may involve issuing clarifications, additional information, or context, especially when releasing sensitive or complex statistics. It is about proactively engaging with the data's reception and understanding in the public sphere.

##### 3. Maintaining Credibility and Trust:

- Preventing the misuse of statistics is critical for maintaining the credibility and trust in Official Statistics. Misuse of statistics can lead to losing confidence in the data and the agency producing it, damaging the public's perception and trust in statistical institutions.
- By actively working to prevent misuse, statistical authorities uphold the integrity of their work and reinforce the public's trust and confidence in the statistical information they provide.

##### 4. Educational Outreach:

- Part of the strategy to prevent misuse involves educational outreach to improve statistical literacy among the public and stakeholders. This includes helping them understand the nuances of statistical data and how to use it responsibly.
- Educational efforts can extend to partnerships with the scientific and research communities, media, and other organizations to promote accurate reporting and interpretation of statistical data. These collaborations can amplify the reach and impact of correct statistical understanding.



*Conclusion:*

Principle 4 of the FPOS emphasizes the importance of preventing the misuse of statistical data. By taking proactive measures to ensure clarity, accuracy, and responsible usage, statistical authorities play an essential role in maintaining the integrity and credibility of their data. This principle underscores the statistical authorities' commitment to open, ethical, and responsible practices in their work, thereby supporting informed decision-making and fostering public trust in the power and reliability of statistics.

**Principle 5: Sources of Official Statistics**

*Overview:*

Principle 5, titled "Sources of Official Statistics," concentrates on the judicious selection and utilization of various data sources for compiling Official Statistics. This principle is critical in the modern era, where the variety and volume of data have expanded dramatically. It emphasizes the need to choose sources that serve the statistical objectives and ensure the resulting data's quality and reliability.

*Key Aspects:*

1. Variety of Sources:

- Official statistics today can be derived from an array of sources, including traditional statistical surveys and administrative records, and increasingly, from big data sources like social media, sensors, and transactional data. This principle acknowledges the evolving and diverse nature of potential data sources in the contemporary data landscape.
- The choice of the source is crucial and should be guided by the specific needs of the statistical exercise and the suitability of the data to those needs. It's about striking the right balance between what's available and what's needed to ensure the relevance and usefulness of the statistics.

2. Quality of Data:

- The quality of the data source is paramount. This includes considerations of accuracy, relevance, timeliness, comparability, and coherence. It's not just about having data; it's about having data that meets the rigorous standards required for Official Statistics.
- High-quality data sources are essential for producing reliable and credible Official Statistics. They are the foundation upon which trust in statistical outputs is built.

3. Cost-Effectiveness and Efficiency:

- The costs associated with data collection and processing are significant considerations. In an era of limited resources, statistical authorities are tasked with finding cost-effective solutions that do not compromise the quality of statistical data.
- Efficiency in data collection and processing is also crucial, particularly in a resource-constrained environment. Statistical authorities must navigate these challenges innovatively, ensuring that resources are utilized optimally without diluting the quality of statistics.

#### 4. Minimizing Respondent Burden:

- The burden on data providers, whether individuals or organizations, should be minimized. This involves a careful balancing act between the need for comprehensive data and the practicalities and constraints faced by respondents.
- Reducing respondent burden can lead to better data quality as it often results in higher response rates and more accurate information. It reflects a respectful and considerate approach to data collection.

#### *Conclusion:*

Principle 5 of the FPOS highlights the critical importance of carefully selecting sources for Official Statistics. In prioritizing data quality, cost-effectiveness, efficiency, and minimizing respondent burden, statistical authorities can ensure the production of reliable and relevant statistics. This principle showcases the commitment of statistical authorities to navigate the diverse and expanding data landscape responsibly, maintaining the integrity and credibility of official statistical systems while adapting to emerging data opportunities.

### **Principle 6: Confidentiality**

#### *Overview:*

Principle 6, titled "Confidentiality," is centered on protecting individual data collected by statistical authorities. This principle is paramount in maintaining the trust of data providers and the integrity of the statistical process, ensuring that personal and sensitive information is handled with the utmost care and respect.

#### *Key Aspects:*

##### 1. Protection of Individual Data:

- The strict confidentiality of individual data, whether pertaining to natural or legal persons, is a non-negotiable aspect of statistical work. This applies universally to all data, regardless of its source, including surveys, administrative records, and new forms of data like big data.
- Ensuring confidentiality is not just a legal obligation but an ethical one, crucial for protecting the privacy and rights of individuals and organizations. It's about respecting the personal nature of the data and safeguarding it against misuse or unauthorized disclosure.

##### 2. Use Exclusively for Statistical Purposes:

- Data collected by statistical authorities should be used exclusively for statistical purposes. This prohibition against using data for non-statistical activities, such as law enforcement or taxation, is central to maintaining public trust.
- Adhering strictly to this principle reinforces the idea of non-intrusiveness in data collection, which is essential for encouraging engagement and cooperation from the public.

3. Legal Frameworks and Standards:

- The principle of confidentiality is supported by robust legal frameworks and standards that define and enforce individual data protection. These frameworks provide the legal backing to ensure that statistical authorities adhere to strict protocols for handling and storing data.
- These legal protections are a cornerstone of the trust individuals and organizations place in statistical systems.

4. Building Public Trust:

- Upholding data confidentiality is critical to maintaining public trust in Official Statistics. When people trust that their data is protected, they are more likely to provide accurate and complete information, enhancing the quality of statistical outputs.
- This trust is a fundamental element of the reliability and credibility of statistical data and the overall integrity of the statistical system.

*Conclusion:*

Principle 6 of the FPOS, "Confidentiality," underscores the critical importance of protecting individual data in statistics. By ensuring data confidentiality and exclusive use for statistical purposes, statistical authorities uphold ethical standards, maintain public trust, and ensure the integrity and reliability of their statistical outputs. This principle is a cornerstone in the responsible and ethical practice of statistical data collection, processing, and dissemination, forming the basis of trust and credibility in statistical work.

**Principle 7: Legislation**

*Overview:*

Principle 7, titled "Legislation," focuses on the legal framework governing statistical systems. It underscores the importance of having clear, transparent legislation that provides a solid legal basis for the operation of these systems, ensuring their integrity and public trust.

*Key Aspects:*

1. Clear Legal Framework:

- A clear and transparent legal framework is crucial for governing statistical data collection, processing, and dissemination. This framework should comprehensively outline the rights and responsibilities of statistical authorities, and users as well as the protections afforded to respondents and data providers.
- Such a framework establishes the legal boundaries and expectations for statistical work, ensuring that all activities are grounded in law and ethical practices.

2. Transparency and Accessibility:

- Legislation governing statistical activities should be publicly accessible and easily understandable. This transparency is essential for building trust in the statistical system and ensuring its accountability to the public.

- Public accessibility of these laws allows stakeholders, including the general public, to be aware of and understand the legal basis for collecting, using, and protecting statistical data.
3. Compliance with International Standards:
    - The legal framework should align with international standards and best practices. This alignment ensures the credibility and reliability of the statistical outputs and their consistency with global norms.
    - Compliance with international standards enhances the comparability and consistency of statistics globally, facilitating international analysis and decision-making.
  4. Building Trust and Confidence:
    - Clear, accessible legislation is instrumental in building and maintaining public trust in Official Statistics. It reassures the public and data providers that their data is handled responsibly and ethically within a legal framework.
    - Trust in the statistical system is crucial for encouraging voluntary compliance and cooperation from data providers and respondents, thereby enhancing the quality and reliability of the data sources and eventually of the statistical output.

*Conclusion:*

Principle 7 of the FPOS, "Legislation," highlights the critical role of a clear, transparent legal framework in underpinning statistical systems. This principle ensures that the operations of statistical authorities are grounded in law, fostering transparency, accountability, and public trust in Official Statistics. As a cornerstone for maintaining the integrity and reliability of statistical data and practices, this principle embodies the commitment to legally sound, transparent, and accountable statistical operations.

## **Principle 8: National Coordination**

*Overview:*

Principle 8, titled "National Coordination," emphasizes the critical role of coordination among various statistical authorities within a country. This principle ensures consistency, efficiency, and quality in the national statistical system, fostering a unified approach to statistical practices across different sectors and sub-national entities within a country.

*Key Aspects:*

1. Essential Coordination:
  - Coordination among different statistical authorities within a country is key to maintaining consistency in statistical methods, classifications, and outputs. Such coordination ensures that data from various sectors and sub-national entities are comparable, reliable, and harmonized.
  - This harmonization is crucial for producing a comprehensive and unified national statistical picture, avoiding discrepancies and contradictions in data that could arise from isolated operations.
2. Efficiency and Resource Optimization:

- Effective coordination leads to a more efficient use of resources, avoiding duplication of efforts and reducing the burden on respondents. By sharing resources and expertise, authorities can optimize their operations and enhance the overall quality of their work.
  - It also fosters the sharing of best practices, methodologies, and technologies across authorities, leading to improvements in statistical processes and outputs.
3. Consistency in National Statistical Systems:
- Consistency in national statistical systems is crucial for the credibility and utility of statistical information. It ensures that statistics produced by different statistical authorities are reliable for policymaking, research, and public information.
  - Coordination helps align national statistical practices with international standards, enhancing global comparability and ensuring national statistics are internationally relevant.
4. Collaboration and Communication:
- Strong communication channels and collaboration among statistical authorities are essential for successful coordination. This includes regular interactions, joint projects, and shared data platforms, fostering a sense of community and shared purpose.
  - Collaboration also extends to planning and implementing statistical surveys, as well as developing and adopting new statistical methods and tools, fostering innovation and advancement in the field.
5. Responsiveness to National Needs:
- A well-coordinated national statistical system is more responsive to the evolving data needs of the country. It can adapt more quickly to changing social, economic, and environmental conditions, providing timely and relevant data.
  - This responsiveness is critical for providing high-quality statistics for national development, policymaking, and fulfilling international reporting obligations.

*Conclusion:*

Principle 8 of the FPOS, "National Coordination," underscores the importance of effective coordination among statistical authorities within a country. This principle is fundamental in ensuring that statistical data are reliable, comparable, and fit for decision-making at both national and international levels. It fosters a collaborative and harmonized approach, enhancing the overall quality and utility of statistical information within a country. It also builds a robust, responsive, and cohesive national statistical system.

**Principle 9: Use of International Standards**

*Overview:*

Principle 9 emphasizes the importance of using international concepts, classifications, and methods in statistical practices by statistical authorities in each country. This principle is pivotal in promoting the consistency and efficiency of statistical systems at all official levels, ensuring that national statistics are aligned with global standards.

*Key Aspects:*

1. Adherence to International Standards:

- Statistical authorities are encouraged to adhere to internationally recognized concepts, classifications, and methods in their work. This commitment to global standards ensures that the statistics are comparable internationally, facilitating analyses and decision-making on a worldwide scale.
- Adherence to these standards is not just a technical requirement; it is a commitment to producing data that can be seamlessly integrated into the global data ecosystem, enhancing its utility and relevance.

2. Consistency Across Borders:

- Using common international standards allows statistical outputs from different countries to be compared more reliably. This consistency is crucial for multinational organizations, researchers, and policymakers who rely on data from multiple countries for comparative analyses and policy development.
- This uniformity across national statistical systems enhances the utility of statistics in international contexts, providing a reliable basis for cross-country comparisons and studies.

3. Efficiency in Statistical Processes:

- The application of international standards streamlines statistical processes, reducing the need for country-specific adjustments or conversions. It promotes data collection, processing, and dissemination efficiency, saving time and resources.
- This efficiency also extends to sharing and exchanging statistical data among countries and with international organizations, simplifying collaborative efforts and joint analyses and dissemination.

4. Quality and Reliability:

- International standards are developed through a rigorous and collaborative process involving experts from various countries. Adhering to these standards helps maintain the high quality and reliability of Official Statistics, ensuring they meet global benchmarks.
- This commitment to quality and reliability is critical to maintaining the credibility and trustworthiness of Official Statistics, both nationally and internationally.

5. Facilitating International Cooperation:

- The use of common standards fosters easier collaboration and data exchange among countries. It supports bilateral and multilateral cooperation in statistical matters, contributing to improving global statistical systems.
- This shared methodological framework is fundamental in addressing global challenges and issues, where consistent and reliable data are essential for effective solutions and interventions.

*Conclusion:*

Principle 9 of the FPOS, "Use of International Standards," underscores the importance of aligning national statistical practices with international concepts, classifications, and methods. This alignment enhances the consistency, efficiency, and comparability of statistical systems across countries. By adopting these international standards, statistical authorities contribute to a unified global statistical landscape, making national statistics more relevant and useful for international analysis and decision-making. It also facilitates international cooperation and data sharing, contributing significantly to developing and harmonizing statistical practices worldwide.

**Principle 10: International Cooperation**

*Overview:*

Principle 10, titled "International Cooperation," highlights the crucial role of collaboration among countries in Official Statistics. Recognizing the interconnectedness of our world, this principle asserts that international cooperation is essential for improving and advancing official statistical systems globally.

*Key Aspects:*

1. Enhancing Statistical Capacity through Collaboration:
  - International cooperation offers a platform for countries to exchange knowledge, expertise, and experiences, which is particularly beneficial for developing nations in enhancing their statistical capacity. This collaboration encompasses technical assistance, training programs, and joint research initiatives.
  - Such cooperation fosters a global community of statistical practice, where countries learn from each other, share successes, and collectively address challenges, leading to the overall strengthening of statistical systems worldwide.
2. Resource Sharing and Joint Efforts:
  - Through international cooperation, countries can pool resources and collaborate on statistical projects. This collective approach reduces the burden on individual nations, maximizes efficiency, and promotes sharing best practices and innovations.
  - Joint efforts enable countries to address common challenges and develop innovative solutions in statistical methodologies and technologies, benefiting the global statistical community.
3. Standardization and Harmonization of Practices:
  - International cooperation is key in standardizing and harmonizing statistical methodologies and practices. This ensures the production of comparable and reliable statistics at the international level.
  - Such efforts aid in aligning national statistical systems with international standards, promoting global consistency and efficiency in statistical practices.
4. Global Statistical Development and Improvement:
  - International cooperation is crucial for the development of global statistical systems. It encourages countries to work together to enhance the quality and comparability of statistical

data, which is vital for addressing global challenges like economic development, public health, and environmental sustainability.

- Collaborative endeavors support the global statistical community in meeting the evolving data needs of an interconnected world, ensuring that statistics remain relevant and effective.

5. Fostering Global Understanding and Trust:

- Cooperation in statistics promotes understanding and trust among nations. It facilitates the exchange of information and strengthens international relations, contributing to a more harmonized global community.
- This mutual understanding and trust are essential for effective global partnerships and initiatives, where accurate and comparable statistics play a pivotal role.

*Conclusion:*

Principle 10 of the FPOS, "International Cooperation," underscores the importance of collaboration among countries in Official Statistics. This cooperation is instrumental in improving statistical systems, sharing knowledge and resources, and ensuring the production of high-quality, comparable statistics. By fostering a collaborative global statistical community, this principle contributes significantly to developing and harmonizing statistical practices worldwide. It embodies the spirit of global partnership and cooperation, which is crucial in an increasingly interconnected and data-driven world.

#### **4. Contemporary Challenges and Opportunities in Official Statistics**

In this era of rapid technological advancements and an explosion of data sources, Official Statistics stand at a pivotal juncture. The FPOS are instrumental in guiding these transformations, ensuring statistical authorities adeptly adapt to the evolving landscape while steadfastly maintaining integrity, relevance, and public trust. This transformative period is characterized by integrating new data types, rapid technological shifts, and increased competition from agile and alternative data providers, creating a multifaceted arena of challenges and opportunities.

Integrating novel data sources and innovative technology has become necessary for modern statistical authorities. The emergence of big data, sourced from digital platforms, social media, sensors, and mobile devices, offers real-time insights, and augments the depth of statistical analyses. Advanced tools such as AI, machine learning, and cloud computing are essential for efficiently managing large data volumes and deriving insights that traditional methods might miss. While opening new avenues for data analysis, this evolution also calls for significant investment in infrastructure and skills development, aligning with the FPOS's emphasis on professional competence and scientific methodologies.

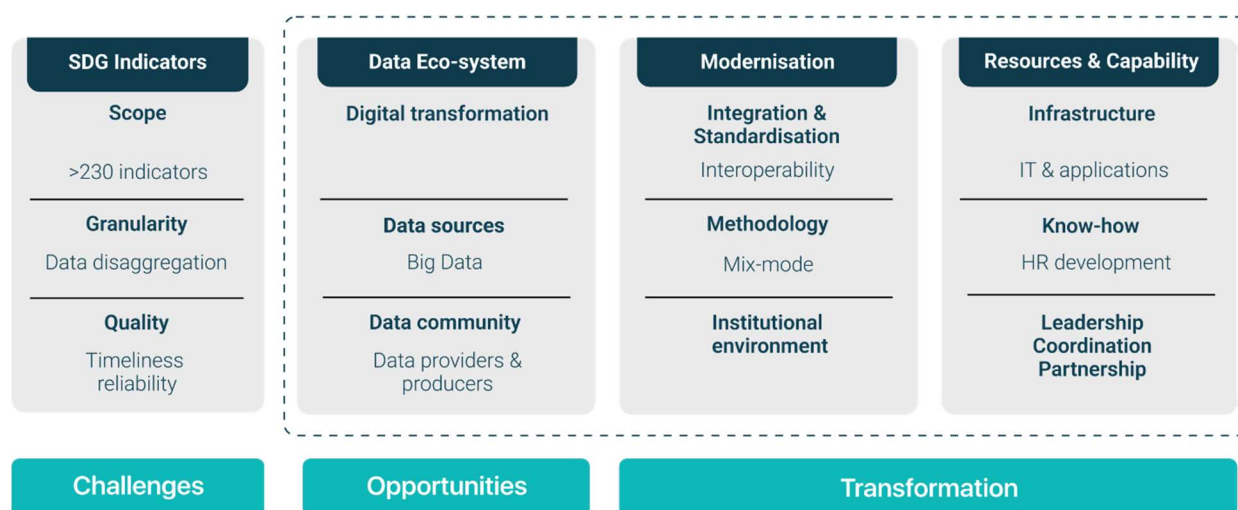
Data stewardship and governance take on new dimensions as the data landscape expands, extending beyond traditional statistical boundaries. Managing a varied and complex national data ecosystem responsibly and ethically becomes crucial. Trust, transparency, and accountability form the core of this approach, resonating with the FPOS and upholding the public's right to accurate and unbiased information. Robust governance frameworks become essential, providing a structured approach to privacy, ethical use, and data-sharing policies, ensuring that statistical authorities maintain public confidence amidst these emerging complexities.



The competitive pressures from alternative data providers, capable of delivering rapid insights, present a challenge for official statistical authorities. They must strike a delicate balance between the need for prompt data delivery and their commitment to accuracy, reliability, and adherence to ethical standards. In this rapidly evolving data landscape, preserving professional independence and adhering to ethical standards is paramount, ensuring that methodologies and decisions are rooted in scientific principles and free from external influences.

Developing robust legal and regulatory frameworks is imperative in this digital age, where data privacy and security are significant concerns. These frameworks must be agile enough to address the unique challenges posed by new technologies and data sources, ensuring that statistical practices align with the digital landscape's evolving requirements. Moreover, maintaining consistency with global standards and enhancing international cooperation becomes essential for harmonizing methodologies and approaches. This international collaboration allows statistical authorities to address shared challenges, share best practices, and leverage collective expertise, underscoring the role of Official Statistics as a unifying element in the global information ecosystem.

*Figure 3: Challenges and opportunities for Official Statistics*



Responding to user demands for timely, relevant, and detailed statistics is critical, as is enhancing data literacy in a world where data becomes more integral to daily life. Providing accessible, user-friendly statistics and educational initiatives improves public understanding and confidence in statistical information. Navigating these changes requires balancing innovation with the foundational principles of the FPOS. By embracing new data sources and technologies while committing to robust data stewardship, statistical authorities ensure that Official Statistics remain reliable and impactful tools, upholding public entitlement to information and maintaining the trust and transparency that define quality statistics.

## 5. Future Directions and Implementation Strategies for Official Statistics

### Commission's Fifty-Fourth Session in 2023: Discussion and Decisions

The fifty-fourth session of the Commission in 2023 was a pivotal moment for the FPOS. The Commission reviewed the Secretary-General's Report<sup>14</sup> and acknowledged the planned activities for the 2024 FPOS anniversaries, including global workshops and updating the implementation guidelines. The significant role of the Friends of the Chair Groups in promoting and monitoring the FPOS implementation was highlighted, recognizing their guidance in enhancing global understanding and application of the FPOS. However, the Commission noted the increasing complexity of the FPOS Implementation Guidelines<sup>15</sup>, calling for a review for greater clarity and focus.

Key decisions from the session include the endorsement of an Independent Advisory Board to focus on non-implementation and non-compliance with the FPOS, with its Terms of Reference to be finalized in 2024. The initiative to review and refine the FPOS Implementation Guidelines for improved compliance and user-friendliness was also welcomed. The Commission also emphasized inclusive activities for the 2024 FPOS celebrations, ensuring a multifaceted approach to promoting the FPOS.



### Proposals for the 55th Commission's Fifty-fourth Session in 2024

In response to these developments, the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) initiated a series of global engagements, including consultations with experts and statistical associations such as the ISI and IAOS, webinars, workshops, and international conferences. These efforts aimed to deepen understanding of the FPOS for Official Statistics in a fast-changing data ecosystem and to discuss and prepare the proposals for the 55th session of the Commission in February 2024, in particular on the ToR of the Independent Advisory Board and the commented outlines of the revitalized FPOS Implementation Guidelines.

- ***Establishment of the FPOS Independent Advisory Board: A Crucial Step Forward***

The establishment of the FPOS Independent Advisory Board, as proposed by UNSD, marks a significant advancement in the governance and advocacy of Official Statistics. The Board, awaiting review at the 55th session of the Commission, is envisioned as more than just a monitoring entity; it is intended to actively advocate for the FPOS, guiding their implementation and promoting adherence.

The Board's structure is designed to focus on independence and accountability, ensuring that it operates without bias and upholds the integrity of Official Statistics. To achieve this, its composition is thoughtfully diverse, including former national Chief Statisticians, senior statisticians, and experts from fields such as law and ethics. This variety of expertise is crucial for addressing the multifaceted challenges and dynamics within modern statistical practices, providing a balanced and comprehensive perspective.

The operational strategy of the Board involves continuous engagement and discussion on emerging statistical issues, as well as a review of compliance with the FPOS. A key aspect of the Board's function is preparing an annual report for the Commission. This report, aimed to be publicly accessible, will detail the Board's activities, findings, and recommendations, thus ensuring transparency and contributing to the global enhancement of FPOS implementation.

- ***Revitalization of the FPOS Implementation Guidelines: Tailoring for Future Needs***

In response to the Commission's requests, UNSD is undertaking a comprehensive project to revitalize the FPOS Implementation Guidelines. This initiative responds to the evolving needs of the global statistical community, aiming to make the guidelines more relevant, practical, and user-friendly.

The project involves the creation of two distinct sets of guidelines, each tailored to the unique needs of different audiences within the statistical community. The first set is aimed at statisticians and practitioners, providing them with actionable advice and practical tools for applying the FPOS at strategic, managerial, and operational levels. This set is envisioned as a comprehensive resource, assisting statisticians in navigating the challenges of the evolving data ecosystem and ensuring the delivery of trustworthy and fit-for-purpose statistics.

The second set of guidelines is crafted for policymakers and stakeholders. This set emphasizes the importance of supporting and advocating for the FPOS, aiming to foster environments conducive to transparency, accountability, and informed decision-making. It seeks to enhance the understanding and implementation of the FPOS within various domains, thus supporting a more informed and data-driven policy landscape.

Both sets of guidelines are scheduled for submission to the fifty-sixth session of the Commission in 2025. They will undergo regular updates under the guidance of the Independent Advisory Board, ensuring that they remain relevant amidst the evolving challenges of the modern data ecosystem. This proactive and continuous initiative to revise the FPOS Implementation Guidelines reflects a deep commitment to maintaining the relevance and effectiveness of these principles, which are crucial in shaping the future of Official Statistics globally.

These initiatives represent a significant commitment to enhancing the global framework of Official Statistics. Establishing the Independent Advisory Board and revitalizing the Implementation Guidelines mark significant advancements in maintaining the relevance, integrity, and effectiveness of Official Statistics. This proactive approach ensures that Official Statistics remain reliable tools for evidence-based decision-making and policy formulation in a dynamic data landscape, embodying the theme "Empowering Official Statistics: Upholding the Fundamental Principles to Stay Relevant."

## 6. Conclusions - Upholding Integrity and Trust in Official Statistics

As we approach the 2024 celebrations commemorating the endorsement of the FPOS by the Commission in 1994 and the General Assembly in 2014, it is imperative to reflect on the evolving role and the critical importance of Official Statistics. This milestone not only marks a significant achievement in the history of statistical governance but also reaffirms the relevance and necessity of the FPOS in a rapidly changing data ecosystem.

The distinctiveness of Official Statistics, grounded in integrity, trust, and adherence to the FPOS, is more crucial than ever. In an era characterized by vast and diverse data sources, Official Statistics stand as a beacon of reliability and authenticity. Upholding these principles is not merely about following a set of guidelines; it's about preserving the very essence that sets Official Statistics apart in an increasingly complex information landscape. The FPOS serve as a cornerstone, ensuring that Official Statistics maintain their distinctiveness and continue to be trusted and valued as accurate reflections of societal realities.

The role of Official Statistics in monitoring progress towards the SDGs is particularly noteworthy. As we navigate the challenges of sustainable development, the integrity and accuracy of Official Statistics are indispensable. They provide a reliable foundation for tracking progress, identifying areas needing attention, and guiding policy decisions toward achieving these global goals.

Looking ahead, the initiatives laid out for the 55th session of the Commission, such as establishing the FPOS Independent Advisory Board and revitalizing the Implementation Guidelines, are steps in the right direction. These measures are not just about compliance or adherence to standards; they are about enhancing the capability of Official Statistics to adapt, evolve, and stay relevant in a fast-paced world. Creating distinct guidelines for different stakeholders underscores the commitment to making Official Statistics more accessible, understandable, and usable for a wide range of audiences.

In conclusion, as we celebrate the milestones of the FPOS, we must also embrace the future with a commitment to uphold these principles rigorously. The integrity and trust in Official Statistics, their role in societal progress, and their contribution to global initiatives like the SDGs are paramount. The journey ahead requires a continuous and concerted effort to ensure that Official Statistics remain relevant and continue to serve as a cornerstone of informed decision-making and governance in our interconnected world.

## 7. Resources

### Endnotes with links:

- <sup>1</sup> General Assembly Resolution on the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics [[A/RES/68/261](#)]
- <sup>2</sup> Regulation (EC) No 223/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2009 on European statistics [[Consolidated Text](#)]
- <sup>3</sup> European Statistics Code of Practice [[link](#)]
- <sup>4</sup> African Charter on Statistics [[link](#)]
- <sup>5</sup> ASEAN Community Statistical System (ACSS) Code of Practice [[link](#)]
- <sup>6</sup> Code of Good Practice in Statistics for Latin America and the Caribbean [[link](#)]
- <sup>7</sup> Generic Law on Official Statistics for Eastern Europe, Caucasus, and Central Asia [[link](#)]
- <sup>8</sup> Guide on the Generic Law for Official Statistics in the Arab countries [[link](#)]
- <sup>9</sup> Generic Law on Official Statistics for Latin America [[link](#)]
- <sup>10</sup> IMF Standards for Data Dissemination [[link](#)]
- <sup>11</sup> Recommendation of the OECD Council on Good Statistical Practice [[link](#)]
- <sup>12</sup> United Nations National Quality Assurance Framework [[link](#)]
- <sup>13</sup> UNECE Website for the 30 years of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics in the UNECE Region [[link](#)]
- <sup>14</sup> Report of the Secretary-General to the 54<sup>th</sup> session of the Statistical Commission on the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics [[link](#)] and its background document [[link](#)]
- <sup>15</sup> FPOS Implementation Guidelines [[link](#)]

### Other Resources with links:

- Handbook for Management and Organization of National Statistical Systems (UNSD 2022) [[link](#)]
- The Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and the use of Mobile phone data for Official Statistics (ESCAP 2019) [[link](#)]
- Principles governing international statistical activities (UN CCSA, 2016) [[link](#)]
- ISI Declaration of Professional Ethics (ISI, 2010) [[link](#)]
- Guidance on Modernizing Statistical Legislation, (UNECE, 2018) [[link](#)]