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What role for official statistics: provider of statistical services for a specific use, or more?

Results of official statistics are meant to be authoritative from two points of view:

- a) the quality of the data used in terms of “fitness for use”
- b) the conceptual adequacy of the definitions and classifications as being able to reflect adequately and impartially a societal phenomenon for a wide community of users and a variety of uses.

In most cases, conceptual adequacy is obtained through national official statistics, as well as international producers, being in line with international standards of official statistics.

Another function of both national and international producers of official statistics is the provision of statistical services for individual users and specific uses, using data available in the system (in the case of national producers), or obtained from countries (in the case of international organizations). In this case, the guarantee function of official statistics only covers the quality of the data; the conceptual adequacy is defined by one single user, or for one specific use, outside the mechanisms of official statistics.

Until now, the work in official statistics for the issue of climate change has been predominantly of the second type, i.e. statistical services for concepts defined outside the mechanisms of official statistics. It is clear that such services should continue as part of the functions of statistical systems, but should this function remain the only one for official statistics in the context of climate change? The paper examines the potential, as well as the limits, of either using existing statistical standards from other subject areas, or developing new standards and guidelines, for the measurement of climate change in the framework of international official statistics.

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