



**United
Nations**

DESA
Statistics Division

Session 5: Discussion of additional topics

5.2 Quality assurance and ethics – introduction

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Workshop on the Implementation of a National Quality Assurance Framework for Official
Statistics in Countries of the Latin American and Caribbean Region

Bogota, Colombia, 22-24 November 2023



The following information is from “**In-depth review of data ethics**”, Prepared by Canada and the United Kingdom with contribution by Eurostat, Economic Commission for Europe Conference of European Statisticians Seventy-first plenary session Geneva, 22–23 June 2023

...plus, a few brief additional observations

Definition and practices

- **No definition of data ethics is offered.**
- **Statistics Canada created a Data Ethics Secretariat that performs ethical reviews of new projects and data acquisitions based on six guiding principles:**
 1. Benefits for Canadians;
 2. Privacy and security;
 3. Transparency and accountability;
 4. Trust and sustainability;
 5. Data quality;
 6. Fairness and do no harm.
- **UK Statistics Authority defines data ethics using the following ethical principles:**
 1. Benefit: The use of data has clear benefits for users and serves the public good;
 2. Confidentiality, data security and consent: The data subject's identity;
 3. Mitigate risk of technology and have human oversight
 4. Follow existing laws and regulations
 5. Public views: The views of the public are considered in light of the data used and the perceived benefits;
 6. Transparency: The access, use and sharing of data is transparent, and is communicated clearly.

Definition and practices

➤ Data ethics at Eurostat

- Eurostat finds that the European Statistics Code of Practice (CoP) and its quality framework for European statistics constitutes an ethical framework for the development, production and dissemination of European statistics.
- The following the principles are closely related to data ethics as they ensure the ethical use and the quality of data through the statistical production process:
 1. commitment to quality
 2. statistical confidentiality
 3. impartiality and objectivity
 4. sound methodology
 5. principles related to statistical output

From the conclusions and recommendations:

1. Ethical considerations are not new to official statistics but go beyond traditional topics of privacy and security
2. Changing circumstances make statistical office to approach data ethics in a more transparent, practical and systematic way to ensure **social acceptability** and trust
3. There is a need to better define and communicate what is meant by data ethics and why it is an important enabler for the use of data for statistical purposes
4. The other main challenge is seen in implementation and communication

Additional observations:

1. UN NQAF and other quality assurance frameworks cover many aspects of data ethics such as benefit to users (Principle 14), privacy and security (Principle 7), impartiality and objectivity (Principle 5 with requirement 5.2 referring to the implementation of a code of conduct or ethics), transparency (Principle 6), equal access (Principle 17).
2. However, there are aspects that UN NQAF does not explicitly reflect such as the consent of respondents and possible misuse of official statistics
 - Canada refers to “Fairness and do not harm”
 - UK has issued guidance on work with vulnerable groups.
3. Please also see International Statistical Institute (ISI) – Declaration on Professional Ethics, available at <https://www.isi-web.org/declaration-professional-ethics>



Thank you.