

ANNEX 1 - THE UNITED NATIONS FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF OFFICIAL STATISTICS

The Statistical Commission,

- Bearing in mind that official statistical information is an essential basis for development in the economic, demographic, social and environmental fields and for mutual knowledge and trade among the States and peoples of the world.
- Bearing in mind that the essential trust of the public in official statistical information depends to a large extent on respect for the fundamental values and principles which are the basis of any society which seeks to understand itself and to respect the rights of its members.
- Bearing in mind that the quality of official statistics, and thus the quality of the information available to the Government, the economy and the public depends largely on the cooperation of citizens, enterprises, and other respondents in providing appropriate and reliable data needed for necessary statistical compilations and on the cooperation between users and producers of statistics in order to meet users' needs.
- Recalling the efforts of governmental and non-governmental organizations active in statistics to establish standards and concepts to allow comparisons among countries,
- Recalling also the International Statistical Institute Declaration of Professional Ethics,
- Having expressed the opinion that resolution C (47), adopted by the Economic Commission for Europe on 15 April 1992, is of universal significance,
- Noting that, at its eighth session, held in Bangkok in November 1993, the Working Group of Statistical Experts, assigned by the Committee on Statistics of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific to examine the Fundamental Principles, has agreed in principle to the ECE version and had emphasized that those principles were applicable to all nations,
- Noting also that, at its eighth session, held at Addis Ababa in March 1994, the Joint Conference of African Planners, Statisticians and Demographers, considered that the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics are of universal significance,

Adopts the present principles of official statistics:

Principle 1. *Official statistics provide an indispensable element in the information system of a society, serving the government, the economy and the public with data about the economic, demographic, social and environmental situation. To this end, official statistics that meet the test of practical utility are to be*

compiled and made available on an impartial basis by official statistical agencies to honour citizens' entitlement to public information.

Principle 2. *To retain trust in official statistics, the statistical agencies need to decide according to strictly professional considerations, including scientific principles and professional ethics, on the methods and procedures for the collection, processing, storage and presentation of statistical data.*

Principle 3. *To facilitate a correct interpretation of the data, the statistical agencies are to present information according to scientific standards on the sources, methods and procedures of the statistics.*

Principle 4. *The statistical agencies are entitled to comment on erroneous interpretation and misuse of statistics.*

Principle 5. *Data for statistical purposes may be drawn from all types of sources, be they statistical surveys or administrative records. Statistical agencies are to choose the source with regard to quality, timeliness, costs and the burden on respondents.*

Principle 6. *Individual data collected by statistical agencies for statistical compilation, whether they refer to natural or legal persons, are to be strictly confidential and used exclusively for statistical purposes.*

Principle 7. *The laws, regulations and measures under which the statistical systems operate are to be made public.*

Principle 8. *Coordination among statistical agencies within countries is essential to achieve consistency and efficiency in the statistical system.*

Principle 9. *The use by statistical agencies in each country of international concepts, classifications and methods promotes the consistency and efficiency of statistical systems at all official levels.*

Principle 10. *Bilateral and multilateral cooperation in statistics contributes to the improvement of systems of official statistics in all countries.*

ANNEX 2 - THE INTERNATIONAL STATISTICAL INSTITUTE DECLARATION ON PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

1. Obligations to society

1.1 Considering conflicting interests: Statistical inquiry is predicated on the belief that greater access to well-grounded information is beneficial to society. The fact that statistical information can be misconstrued or misused, or that its impact can be different on different groups, is not in itself a convincing argument against its collection and dissemination. Nonetheless, the statistician should consider the likely consequences of collecting and disseminating various types of data and should guard against predictable misinterpretations or misuse.

1.2 Widening the scope of statistics: Statisticians should use the possibilities open to them to extend the scope of statistical inquiry, and to communicate their findings, for the benefit of the widest possible community.

1.3 Pursuing objectivity: While statisticians operate within the value systems of their societies, they should attempt to uphold their professional integrity without fear or favour. They should also not engage or collude in selecting methods designed to produce misleading results, or in misrepresenting statistical findings by commission or omission.

2. Obligations to funders and employers

2.1 Clarifying obligations and roles: Statisticians should clarify in advance the respective obligations of employer or funder and statistician; they should, for example, refer the employer or funder to the relevant parts of a professional code to which they adhere. Reports of the findings should (where appropriate) specify their role.

2.2 Assessing alternatives impartially: Statisticians should consider the available methods and procedures for addressing a proposed inquiry and should provide the funder or employer with an impartial assessment of the respective merits and demerits of alternatives.

2.3 Not pre-empting outcomes: Statisticians should not accept contractual conditions that are contingent upon a particular outcome from a proposed statistical inquiry.

2.4 Guarding privileged information: Statisticians are frequently furnished with information by the funder or employer who may legitimately require it to be kept confidential. Statistical methods and procedures that have been utilised to produce published data should not, however, be kept confidential.

3. Obligations to colleagues

3.1 Maintaining confidence in statistics: Statisticians depend upon the confidence of the public. They should in their work attempt to promote and preserve such confidence without exaggerating the accuracy or explanatory power of their data.

3.2 Exposing and reviewing methods and findings: Within the limits of confidentiality requirements, statisticians should provide adequate information to colleagues to permit their methods, procedures, techniques and findings to be assessed. Such assessments should be directed at the methods themselves rather than at the individuals who selected or used them.

3.3 Communicating ethical principles: To conduct certain inquiries statisticians need to collaborate with colleagues in other disciplines, as well as with interviewers, clerical staff, students, etc. In these cases statisticians should make their own ethical principles clear and take account the ethical principles of their collaborators.

4. Obligations to subjects

4.1 Avoiding undue intrusion: Statisticians should be aware of the intrusive potential of some of their work. They have no special entitlement to study all phenomena. The advancement of knowledge and the pursuit of information are not themselves sufficient justifications for overriding other social and cultural values.

4.2 Obtaining informed consent: Statistical inquiries involving the active participation of human subjects should be based as far as practicable on their freely given informed consent. Even if participation is required by law, it should still be as informed as possible. In voluntary inquiries, subjects should not be under the impression that they are required to participate; they should be aware of their entitlement to refuse at any stage for whatever reason and to withdraw data just supplied. Information that would be likely to affect a subject's willingness to participate should not be deliberately withheld.

4.3 Modifications to informed consent: On occasions, technical or practical considerations inhibit the achievement of prior informed consent. In these cases, the subjects' interests should be safeguarded in other ways. For example:

- *Respecting rights in observation studies.* In observation studies, where behaviour patterns are recorded without the subject's knowledge, statisticians should take care not to infringe what may be referred to as the 'private space' of an individual or group. This will vary from culture to culture.
- *Dealing with proxies.* In cases where a 'proxy' is utilised to answer questions on behalf of a subject, say because access to the subject is uneconomic or because the subject is too ill or too young to participate directly, care should be taken not to infringe the 'private space' of the subject or to disturb the relationship between the subject and the proxy. Where indications exist or emerge that the subject would object to certain information being disclosed, such information should not be sought by proxy.
- *Secondary use of records.* In cases where a statistician has been granted access to, say, administrative or medical records or other research material for a new or supplementary inquiry, the custodian's permission to use the records should not relieve the statistician from having to consider the likely reactions, sensitivities and interests of the subjects concerned, including their entitlement to anonymity.
- *Misleading potential subjects.* In studies where the measurement objectives preclude the prior disclosure of material information to subjects, statisticians should weigh the likely consequences of any proposed deception. To withhold material information from or to misinform subjects involves a deceit, whether by omission or commission, temporarily or permanently, which will face legitimate censure unless it can be justified.

4.4 *Protecting the interests of subjects:* Neither consent from subjects nor the legal requirement to participate absolves the statistician from an obligation to protect the subject as far as possible against the potentially harmful effects of participating. The statistician should try to minimise disturbance both to subjects themselves and to the subjects' relationships with their environment.

4.5 *Maintaining confidentiality of records:* Statistical data are unconcerned with individual identities. They are collected to answer questions such as 'how many?' or 'what proportion?'; not 'who?'. The identities and records of co-operating (or non-cooperating) subjects should therefore be kept confidential, whether or not confidentiality has been explicitly pledged.

4.6 *Inhibiting disclosure of identities:* Statisticians should take appropriate measures to prevent their data from being published or otherwise released in a form that would allow any subject's identity to be disclosed or inferred.

For more information see <http://www.cbs.nl/isi/ethics.htm>.