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Management seminar on global assessment

Session 6:

Institutional and legal framework
of the national statistical system

Yalta 23-25 September 2009

The legislative framework for the NSS



- The legislative framework for a national statistical system is both international and national
- The international framework is made up of
 - The UN Fundamental Principles for Official Statistics
 - Acknowledged codes of practice (ESS CoP, UNSD handbook)
 - Acknowledged codes of ethics (ISI)
- The national framework consists of
 - The national statistics act
 - Possibly – a legal act on privacy
 - Possibly – a code of practice

The UN Fundamental Principles 1



- The Fundamental principles were composed under the auspices of the Conference of European Statisticians in 1991-1992
- They were adopted by the UN ECE in 1992
- Issued as a Resolution of the UN Statistical Commission in 1994
- Originally they were designed to meet the needs of the new independent states but were soon applied extensively by the old and established national statistical institutions (NSI's) in Europe and in many other countries
- They form the basis for statistics acts in individual countries
- Are to be found on the webpages of most NSI's

The UN Fundamental Principles 2



- The Fundamental Principles are a very powerful tool owing to their strong applicability
- They are to be applied continuously in the national statistical system
- Pragmatic guidelines for everyday business and a clear and concise reference framework for producers, data providers and users
- The FP's carry messages to four instances:
 - For government - specify the conditions for operations of the official statistical system
 - For statisticians - provide sound guidelines for professional and impartial practices
 - For data providers - guarantee that data are collected and used solely for a good purpose
 - For users of official statistics - framework for measuring the quality, relevance, utility and the procedures of official statistics

Codes of practices and ethics



- Code of practice – concerns the operations of the NSI and other producers of official statistics
- Code of ethics – concerns the professional behaviour, responsibility and good conduct of individual statisticians or NSI staff members
- Code of ethics provides guidance and is more for consideration rather than being absolute
- The Code of Ethics of International Statistical Institute (ISI) from 1985 is the basic document in this respect – it is now being revised
- Some NSI's have formulated their own codes of ethics (e.g. Statistics Finland) but these are invariably based on the ISI code

The legislative framework of the ESS



- The EU “statistics act” – Regulation on European Statistics
 - Statistical principles and definitions
 - Governance – the ESS, the NSI’s, the Commission, the ESS Committee
 - The ESS Code of Practice, statistical quality
 - The statistical programme of the ESS
 - Dissemination
 - Confidentiality, data protection, transmission of data, access to confidential data, administrative records
- The ESS Code of Practice

The purpose of the legislation of a national statistical system - NSS



- To legitimize the statistical activities of the NSI or other statistical agencies
- To ensure the professional autonomy of the NSI/statistical agencies and oblige them to be purely professional and independent from political and other interference
- To make the NSI (or some equivalent specialized body) responsible for coordination of the official statistics
- To authorise the NSI/statistical agencies to collect data from households, businesses and institutions and from administrative records
- To oblige the NSI/statistical agencies to keep the data confidential
- To oblige the NSI/statistical agencies to disseminate their statistics to all users and grant access to micro data for research

Content of a statistics act 1



- Scope – involves all official statistics, incorporating the NSI and other institutions producing official statistics
- Role, duties and organization of the NSI
 - Place within government (responsible ministry, budget etc.)
 - Professional independence of the institution on tasks, priorities etc.
 - Obligation of impartiality and objectivity
 - Coordination of the NSS – tasks, methods, standards, classifications, requirements for quality and publication, treatment of data collected for statistical purposes
 - Obligation to consult with users (user groups, statistical council, advisory groups etc.)
 - Governance of the NSI

Content of a statistics act 2



- Data collection
 - Authority to collect data from public and private bodies for statistical purposes
 - Obligation to be efficient and keep response burden moderate, e.g. by use of administrative data
 - Obligation of state and municipal authorities to provide data free of charge and to consult with the NSI on plans for and application of administrative registers for statistical purposes
 - Obligation of businesses to provide data – counter-obligation to collect the data efficiently (digital methods)
 - Collection of data from households; from administrative records and by surveys and censuses

Content of a statistics act 3



- Confidentiality in official statistics
 - General principle of confidentiality: all information collected for statistical purposes concerning specific persons or legal entities is confidential – shall be used solely for statistical purposes
 - Obligation to take all reasonable measures to hinder identification or traceability of individual data
 - Obligations of staff on confidentiality
 - Treatment of confidential data: storage, protection, destruction of identifiers or of the data after use
 - Access to data for research: duty to facilitate the use of the data
 - Conditions for granting access to confidential data

Content of a statistics act 4



- Dissemination – obligation to disseminate the statistics produced – to all users, at the same time
- Statistical quality – obligation to observe quality standards (relevance, accuracy, timeliness, punctuality, accessibility, comparability, coherence)
- Code of practice or equivalent regulatory instruments
- Cooperation between the different producers of official statistics
- International cooperation