

Second Meeting of the 2011/2012 Bureau
Geneva, Switzerland, 2-3 November 2011

For discussion and recommendations

Item 11(b) of the Provisional
Agenda

**CES 2012 SEMINAR ON IMPLEMENTING THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES
OF OFFICIAL STATISTICS, INCLUDING ISSUES RELATED TO
COORDINATION OF NATIONAL STATISTICAL SYSTEMS**

**Note prepared by the UNECE secretariat, in consultation with New Zealand, Ukraine,
United Kingdom and United States**

I. BACKGROUND

1. At its June 2011 plenary session, the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) selected the topic “Implementing the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, including issues related to coordination of national statistical systems” for one of the CES seminars in 2012. The organisation of the seminar is coordinated by UNECE. Ireland, New Zealand, Norway, Ukraine, United Kingdom and United States offered to contribute to the organization.

2. The document presents the draft outline of the seminar for discussion at the 2-3 November 2011 meeting of the CES Bureau.

3. The proposed seminar will mark 20 years from the adoption of the Fundamental Principles (FP) at a political level by the UNECE (resolution E/1992/32 - E/ECE/1266). The FP remain the precondition for trust in official statistics. The implementation of FP faces new challenges due to the evolving role of statistics and statistical offices. Changes have taken several directions, including more diverse sources of official statistics and increasing requirements for evidence-based decision-making.

4. The high-level forum on official statistics at the 42nd session of the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) discussed the current challenges related to FP. It called for regional assessments of the implementation of the FP and for development of a practical guide for their implementation including good practices. The seminar is aiming to give input to global discussion on this topic led by the UNSC Friends of the Chair Group formed under the leadership of the United States.

5. The seminar will pay special attention to the coordination of national statistical systems which is one of the most challenging principles to implement in practice. The surveys on the implementation of FP that have been carried out by the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) in 2004, and UNECE in 2009 found that national coordination was among the least implemented principles. The global assessments of national statistical systems in several countries of East Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia have confirmed that many countries experience difficulties in this area.

6. The following countries and organizations offered to contribute papers to the seminar: Czech Republic, Finland, Georgia, Italy, Lithuania, Mexico, Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, United Kingdom, Eurostat, UNECE. The

abstracts of the contributions offered are provided in the Annex (except for the Netherlands and Eurostat which abstract are not yet received).

II. STRUCTURE OF THE SEMINAR

7. The seminar will be chaired by Katherine Wallman.
8. The seminar will open with an introduction by the Chair (5-7 minutes).
9. The opening of the seminar will also be used as an opportunity to mark the 20th anniversary of the Fundamental Principles: their adoption at a political level by the UN Economic Commission of Europe in 1992. Several ideas have been proposed how to celebrate the 20 years of FP:
 - A keynote speech by a prominent person who was involved in drafting the Principles (possible candidates: Ivan Fellegi or Hallgrimur Snorrason);
 - A video of interviews with key persons explaining the challenges in implementing FP and how the FP have helped to improve quality of statistics;
 - Panel discussion on implementation of the FP;
 - A podcast of a panel discussion where keynote speakers could contribute from afar.
10. The seminar will consist of two sessions: the first one focusing on implementing the FP, and the second one on coordination of national statistical systems.

A. Session 1: Implementing the fundamental principles of official statistics

Session Chair/Organiser: Jil Matheson, ONS, United Kingdom

Contributions offered (abstracts of papers are provided in the Annex):

Invited papers:

- Switzerland – paper on how to reinforce the fundamental principles vis-à-vis the political actors and the general public, both at the national and international levels.
- UNECE – paper on current challenges in the implementation of FP based on the UNECE survey on implementation of FP in countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) and South-East Europe, and experience from Global Assessments of national statistical systems.

Supporting papers: Czech Republic, Georgia, Italy, Romania, Spain, Ukraine, [United Kingdom](#), Netherlands; (*Note:* Eurostat has offered a contribution without indicating the session).

11. The session should discuss real-life problems in the implementation of FP and propose messages to be communicated to policy makers. The session could further discuss the following aspects:

- (a) Increased demand for professional independence and accountability in the field of official statistics; bearing in mind the budget cuts at both national and international

levels, what could the national and international offices do jointly to pave face this challenge?

(b) Resistance to pressure from political authorities, which are often tempted to intervene in statistical activities and even manipulate technical choices of statisticians, or to limit the role and missions of official statistical bodies;

(c) Institutional arrangements and practices that provide for successful implementation of the fundamental principles;

(d) Reacting appropriately and rapidly in case of attacks on the independence of statistics or use of “bad practices”;

(e) Protection against misuse of statistical data by outsiders or organized media campaign to discredit the statistical service, its outputs, methods, or staff;

(f) Are the fundamental principles sufficient to ensure compliance? The need for detailed guidelines for the implementation of FP;

(g) The role of international organizations in supporting the implementation of FP.

B. Session 2: Coordination of national statistical systems

Session Chair/Organiser: Konrad Pesendorfer, Statistics Austria (*to be confirmed*)

Contributions offered (abstracts of papers are provided in the Annex):

Invited papers

- Finland – on the current and future challenges of co-ordination and means and tools to keep co-ordination effective and efficient.
- A possible 2nd invited paper can be selected from among the supporting papers (the paper by Sweden has been suggested).

Supporting papers Lithuania, Mexico, Portugal, Sweden, ~~United Kingdom~~; (*Note*: Eurostat has offered a contribution without indicating the session).

12. The FP no. 8, national coordination has proved to be the one of the most challenging principles to implement. Usually the national coordination is understood as the coordination of statistical activities and principles applied by other national producers of official statistics. This session will cover national coordination from a wider viewpoint broadening the concept to the entire statistical process, taking into account also other important stakeholder groups. E.g. including data providers (be them institutional entities like enterprises or providers of administrative data) or main users of official statistics (like ministries). The emphasis and the tools of co-ordination vary among different target groups. The content of coordination work has changed during the years.

13. The biggest challenges are relating to the reorganization of government activities and decreasing budgets. Topical questions are e.g. the (high) quality of all statistics produced; coherence of official statistics produced by separate authorities; uniform and smooth

handling of ESS matters; prioritization of needs of various ministries; uniform systems of data collection and data dissemination.

14. The session could discuss the following issues:

(a) How to ensure that all national statistical authorities apply the same ethics, statistical standards and quality frameworks?

(b) How to strengthen the role of national statistical offices (NSOs) in national coordination?

(c) Relations with government and the role of NSO as a national coordinator, e.g. in the context of government reorganization, decreasing budgets, e-government systems, etc.

(d) What would be the value added of the work of NSOs to the rest of the national statistical system?

(e) What is the role of NSO in national coordination vis-à-vis international organizations, how to diminish the burden of NSOs facing diverse needs of international organizations?

(f) How to apply in practice the 8th fundamental principle of official statistics?

(g) What are the good practices in effective coordination?

(h) Planning and follow-up mechanisms?

**ANNEX
ABSTRACTS OF PAPERS**

Session 1. Implementing the fundamental principles of official statistics

Proposed invited papers:

Switzerland

Context: Switzerland is a democratic society where statistics are considered independent and which adheres to the fundamental principles as well as to the Code of Practice. The paper discusses how to strengthen the fundamental principles 20 years after their promulgation.

Diagnosis: Established principles have provided a global code of ethics to official statistics as well as weapons to chief statisticians to defend their independence from politics. Considerable progress has been made on several principles. What is missing: the principles are *inward-looking*: they are addressed to statisticians themselves. A frequent criticism is that there is a lack of implementation of outward-oriented principles: e.g. right to comment and coordination.

Thus, the paper proposes ways to **make better use of this text with respect to (a) the media and (b) political actors, with a focus on the international level.**

(a) Various options to better communicate the text and related actions at the national level (gaining public support) and at the international level (UN promotion of the text);

(b) A realistic discussion of the issue of independence: most statistical offices are not independent agencies in the institutional sense (cf: central banks); they have to draw their legitimacy from their performance. At the international level, statisticians ought to address "political" issues in a calmer and more level-headed way;

Some sort of "jurisprudence" is lacking on the questions of independence: a collection of concrete situations and an international review mechanism which would function on a voluntary basis.

Conclusions and recommendations concerning the international level:

- (a) Adoption by the highest political body (UNGA) of the text setting out the principles;
- (b) Online compendium of good practices;
- (c) Voluntary and simple regional evaluation mechanism. The results would be presented to the CES for comment.

UNECE: Challenges in the implementation of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics in countries with economies in transition

The paper will provide an overview of the main challenges in the implementation of the FP in the countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA), and South-East Europe based on two main sources: a survey that the UNECE carried out in these countries in 2009, and the global assessments (GA) of national statistical systems conducted in a number of CIS countries within recent years (in cooperation with Eurostat and EFTA).

The first part of the paper will provide a short analysis of the results and main conclusions from the 2009 survey. The survey showed that the legal basis is in place in practically all these countries but there are many issues related to implementing the principles in practice. Among the most among the most challenging principles to implement are the national coordination and prevention of misuse.

The second part of the paper will go more into detail on the practical problems in the implementation of FPs in EECCA countries. In recent years, GAs have been carried out by UNECE, Eurostat and EFTA in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. The assessment of the Ukrainian statistical system should be completed by the end of 2011 and further GAs are planned in 2012 for

Moldova, Belarus and Tajikistan. The main objective of a GA is to evaluate the compliance of the legal and institutional framework of a national system of official statistics with the FP and the European Statistics Code of Practice. It also provides a picture of the state of development of the statistical system in a country and assesses the technical and organizational capacity of the system to produce statistical information according to international standards, norms and recommendations.

Each GA's report incorporates country-specific recommendations for the implementation of the FP and raises awareness among the Government and other national authorities in charge of the long-term development of statistics.

Supporting papers:

Czech Republic: On the Challenges Related to the Independence of the Czech National Statistical System

The primary aim of National Statistical Service is to provide high quality data that objectively depict the socio-economic reality from number of viewpoints. Statistical quality is a very complex phenomenon covering not only requirements to key processes of statistics production, but also to all other supporting processes e.g. such as planning, finance, dissemination or governance.

In order to foster the quality of the European statistics the Code of Practice was introduced by the European Statistical Programme Committee in 2005. This is in fact a benchmarking tool enabling National Statistical Institutes compare their internal processes with the best practices in the field. These quality requirements are aggregated within 15 key principles of the Code. Five years of experience with implementing its basic principles show that Code of Practice is a good benchmark for identifying gaps and bottle-necks in the processes of production official statistics. However it doesn't practically help to solve these issues since it is not related neither to legal nor to financial tools. Those are however the most important prerequisites that are basic for adopting any other statistics production and dissemination processes.

In the first part of the paper we would like to address the issue of "Adequacy of resources" that is a very crucial principle of the Code of Practice. It is objectively not possible to produce statistical data of satisfactory quality without appropriate financing. Reduction of financial resources as reaction of the world financial and consequent economic crisis is one of the most significant challenges that National Statistical Institutions have been facing lately. The increasing pattern of data demands by the EU and national stakeholders set very high pressures on statistics producers. Focusing on quantity jeopardizes ability to improve quality of data. It goes without saying that new data requirements should be balanced by reductions in existing statistics.

The second problem to be addressed deals with legal tools that on the one hand enable access of National Statistical Offices to data both from respondents and from administrative data sources, and on the other hand determine the total degree of how independently the NSI's can act in order to achieve their basic aims. In light of the latest events in the field of EDP as well as ever increasing financial pressures, independence is another basic principle that is being seriously jeopardized. Pressures compromising independency of National Statistical Offices are numerous and have different intensity.

In the beginning of 2011 the Czech Statistical Office (CZSO) has experienced a totally unprecedented attack in this field. Due to changes in methodology the CZSO has decided to break the time series of price indexes in wood-cutting industry. The quasi-state firm that has been using this index in its contracts sued CZSO in a court for that. The CZSO is now facing different negative pressures from the variety of interested parties. The Czech professional community, business as well as international stakeholders are currently standing still waiting for the results of this court trial.

Georgia: Georgian experience in development of national statistical system: achievements, obstacles, challenges

Statistical Reform and Legislation

In this part, first of all the new law on “Official Statistics” will be described. The law regulates the entire statistical system and sets the principles of coordination of all institutions responsible for official statistics. At present, whole statistical system is well managed through legislation. The law was adopted according to Eurostat recommendations, where main fundamental principles of official statistics are applied. In the past Department of Statistics was subordinated institution under the Ministry of Economy. According to this law GEOSTAT as an independent agency was formed. GEOSTAT is managed by board, which is comprised not only by government representatives, but also by individual independent professionals.

International Cooperation

In 2010 Georgia subscribed to the IMF’s SDDS. NSDS was prepared and approved. The IMF ROSC mission evaluated the Georgian Statistical System. Georgia has been independently involved in the International Comparison Program (ICP). New technologies were introduced in different surveys. Successful bilateral cooperation started with different NSOs. A three-year cooperation project with Statistics Sweden, while there is also essential cooperation with Netherlands, Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, and Armenia under way.

Dissemination and Communication

A new web page, new dissemination and communication strategy were implemented. User surveys were conducted. Modern, open and transparent approaches of communication and dissemination by the standards of modern statistical offices were introduced. Communication policy with different data users is based on dialogue, formal memoranda of cooperation with each of data users’ groups – academia, business, NGOs, media etc. The aim of this policy is to have data that are reliable, well described, analyzed, accurate and confidential.

Improvements, Difficulties and Challenges.

Some positive changes in methodology, data periodicity and timeliness will be discussed. Several new products were introduced. Survey frame and field work operations improved, as well as new technologies were introduced and trainings of the staff conducted. Besides, there are difficulties in financing, staff quality, declining number of statisticians, misuse of official statistics by users, and a growing number of producers of official statistics. But the main problem remains low public trust. Therefore, the main challenges for a locally and internationally trusted as well as well coordinated statistical system will be discussed.

Italy The strength of the fundamental principles of official statistics and the responsiveness of NSIs and the National Statistical System

The essential role of official statistics in producing the statistical indicators and underlying data to be used for the economic policy is quite visible: the availability of up-to-date comparable statistics of good quality is a necessary condition for implementing European and national policies. The recent European crisis had an impact on the responsiveness of the NSIs which are called to produce and disseminate official statistics also for risk and preventive analysis. The pressure on NSIs is increasing, even if we have on our side the strength of the fundamental principles of official statistics and other specific tool to avoid external pressure. However are there principles on which the NSIs and the Statistical System could focus their efforts?

An increase in the demand for official data have increased the requests to NSIs and to the Statistical System to ensure the accuracy and timeliness of the data. The main risk is that if NSIs are not able to provide the requested data with high quality standards, policy makers could collect information by using other sources, also external of the National Statistical System, which do not follow the same rules and the fundamental principles of official statistics. In order to better respond and react, the activities carried out by the NSIs and by other National statistical authorities should be properly

coordinated, taking into account the presence of a National Statistical Programme, whose implementation other members of the System could take part and contribute.

Romania: Statistics dramatically changed: should the fundamental principles of statistics be reformed to keep the pace with the changes?

Recent developments, such as: (a) globalization, (b) new technologies, (c) political governance structures, many fold crises (financial, food, climate...) which are faced by the global statistical system led to challenges assumed by the system which oblige the international community of statisticians to envisage approaches for setting up and implementation adequate adjustments in the infrastructure, production process, and governance of the statistical system.

Significant changes in statistics are imperative for effectiveness and efficiency of the statistical processes; for reaching mutual trust and confidence of the users in statistics; for ensuring transparency in order to guarantee the quality of the decisions taken.

Under the conditions of all the changes recently taken place in statistics, one question is stemming as natural: does the vital achievement in the field of statistical standards of the years '92 and '94, which was the approval of Fundamental principles of official statistics, essential for official statistics development (especially for countries in transition and for developing countries), is still preserving the high ranking position and influence among the set of tools for efficient functioning of the official statistics? And if the answer is affirmative, should the principles such as impartiality, independence of statistics, professional standards, transparency, use of administrative sources, quality commitment, a.s.o. be strengthen? In which sense? And if such, could the improvements lead to a powerful system, would succeed to contribute to a robust governance of the statistical system, could enhance its credibility and productivity?

The well-known relationship between the fundamental principles adopted at the international and European level and their applicability in national practice, are they sufficiently adequate to allow statistics to answer to domestic needs?

Spain: An empirical evaluation of Spanish statistics using the European Code of Practice

The National Statistics Plan (NSP) of Spain is the main tool of Central Administration to respond to the needs expressed by users and to provide the information necessary for proper decision making.

This paper will analyse the works that have been developed during 2010 and 2011 to assess the official statistics of Spain and prepare the next NSP.

Specifically, the results of a structured query to 237 experts will be presented. This query has enabled, in the framework of the Code of Practice of the European Statistics, the assessment of more than 280 statistical operations of 22 thematic areas from a quantitative and qualitative point of view.

Ukraine: Problems of Implementation of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics in the Countries with Transition Economies (on the example of Ukraine)

The report analyses the role of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics in the development of the Ukrainian statistical system and its adaptation to international standards. Special attention is paid to the problems of the fundamental principles implementation, in particular, to ensuring the professional independence of national statistics, the role of the principles in coordinating the national statistical system, bringing the administrative information as a source of official statistics data, observing the confidentiality of statistical information. The characteristics of the national principles of statistical bodies, their peculiarities, approaches to the elaboration and application in the statistical practice are given. The importance of international cooperation and use of other statistical offices experience for the improvement of statistical activities in Ukraine is described.

| [+United Kingdom](#)

Session 2. Coordination of national statistical systems

Proposed invited paper:

Finland: Meeting current and future challenges by using effective co-ordination tools and methods

The co-ordination of the national statistical system is often understood as a specific task aiming to co-ordinate the statistical products and principles to be applied by other national producers of official statistics. We would like to broaden the concept of co-ordination to the development of the entire statistical process, i.e. starting from data collection right up to the publication and dissemination of data. In terms of co-ordination of the whole process, one has to take into account all the important stakeholder groups, e.g. the data providers (be they institutional entities like enterprises or providers of administrative data.) or the main users of official statistics (like ministries). The focus and the tools of the co-ordination work vary among different target groups.

The biggest challenges currently relate to the re-organisation of government activities and diminishing budget frames. Several questions have come up: How can the (high) quality of all official statistics be sustained? Which methods do we need to assure uniform and smooth handling of EU and other international requirements? How to prioritise the data needs of various ministries and other stakeholders? Furthermore, how to rationalise data collections and optimise the division of labour within the national statistical system? Finally, one could ask what is the role of uniform government IT systems in the complete statistical process?

To tackle all these issues one needs continuous co-operation, use of various co-ordination tools and arrangements at the national level. The tools and methods can be e.g. offering of facilities for training in official statistics, enhancing methodological co-operation, using of common standards, and pooling of resources for joint development projects and working parties.

The paper discusses the current practices applied by Statistics Finland and describes the ongoing development work in this field.

Supporting papers:

Lithuania: Coordination of national statistical system in Lithuania

Statistics Lithuania is an institution of the government implementing a uniform State policy in the field of methodology and organization of official statistics in the country. The principal responsibilities and the rights of Statistics Lithuania are laid down in the Law on Statistics. This legal act gives Statistics Lithuania the right to coordinate the activities of other institutions managing official statistics in the field of production of statistics as defined in the Official Statistics Programme.

Strengthening the coordinating role of Statistics Lithuania in preparation and dissemination of official statistical information as well as implementation of the relevant provisions of the European Statistics Code of Practice in other institutions managing official statistics is one of the key objectives defined in The Strategy of Statistics Lithuania 2008–2012 and one of the main principles of the quality management system which was introduced at Statistics Lithuania and certified as conforming to the requirements of the ISO 9001 standard, in 2007. Sharing its experience gained in the field of quality management with other national providers of official statistics (meetings, trainings/seminars, methodological consultations, etc.), Statistics Lithuania aids them in implementation of the Code of Practice and thereby envisages improvement of the quality of the statistics they provide.

The quality and the credibility of official statistics have become the main subject of discussion of statistical governance in Europe. Recently issued Communication „Towards robust quality

management of European Statistics (COM (211)) and established “confidence pact” by which each Member State has the responsibility to implement the European Statistics Code of Practice are the right steps in this direction. However, it should be noted that the national statistics office does not have enough power to implement all the measures proposed in the Communication and this further underlines the growing need for strengthening the coordination role of the institution by law.

This paper will present the experience of Statistics Lithuania in the field of implementation of the 8th fundamental principle “National Co-ordination” and extending the implementation of the provisions of the Code of Practice to other national institutions producing European statistics: measures taken, difficulties faced, lessons learned.

Mexico: INEGI as the coordinating central unit of the National System of Statistical and Geographical Information (SNIEG) of Mexico

Mexico has an extensive experience in the generation of official statistics. Currently, the country has about 70 public sector institutions registered, on federal and state levels, which administrative units perform statistics by the generation or integration of information. The current statistical and geographical information law, from July 15, 2008, establishes the integration of a National System of Statistical and Geographical Information (SNIEG) to develop Information of National Interest. Under this mandate, the SNIEG is intended to provide society and Government with timely, truthful, accurate and quality information to contribute to national development. In the context of the information produced by the System members, the Information of National Interest, in order to assure its quality, must meet four requirements also stipulated in the law. It is noteworthy that the units that generate this information can also produce and disseminate other kinds of official information. The law provides INEGI both attributions, of production unit as the rest of the units, and as the SNIEG coordinating unit.

The aim of this paper is to present the progress and experiences that INEGI, on its coordinating role, has reached for the construction and development of the SNIEG, through the law established mechanisms for the organization and operation of the System and the programmatic instruments that regulate the work of its members.

Portugal: Fundamental Principals of Official Statistics: the need for coordination by NSIs

Today’s society, including policy decision-makers, demands increasingly more of the official statistics: more and more complex phenomena are to be observed, the mature statistics are expected to be delivered quicker and in a more detailed fashion, the short term developments are requested almost in real time. In sum the national statistical system face a big challenge compounded with a very limited resource basis in every country. Expectations are to be met maintaining the highest level of quality. The fundamental statistical principles that assure confidence and trust in official statistics are of paramount importance for statistical producers. Efficiency gains are part of the solution but more is necessary to satisfy demand and meet expectations. Making use of expertise and knowledge existing in many other public entities is part of the solution provided NSI are able to ensure certification and quality. In a word NSIs are expected to perform an active role in bringing others in the family of official producers and ensuring high standards of quality and full respect for the Fundamental Principles throughout the developing, producing and dissemination process. The experience so far in the context of the Portuguese national statistical system, delegating statistical functions and remaining challenges. What else can be done in order to meet user needs under high standards of quality and limited financial resources? The paper will debate these questions and propose avenues for further work.

Sweden: Soft coordination and broad cooperation: implementing principles and guidelines across the system of official statistics

Official statistics in Sweden are currently produced in a decentralized system of 27 different government agencies. A Council of Official Statistics was established in 2002 with the purpose of

improving coordination of the system of official statistics, primarily concerning the availability of the official statistics, quality and usefulness, and the response process.

As a purely advisory body, the Council has established a number of guidelines and recommendations for the statistical agencies, such as on electronic publishing, the scope of official statistics and ensuring sufficient quality of official statistics. The Council follows up and reports annually on several of these areas, in particular how each agency has worked to ensure sufficient quality and to reduce the respondent burden. The guidelines established by the Council are considered binding in the sense of the “gentleman’s agreement” and have no legal status. How widespread is the implementation of the principles and guidelines established by the Council? How does the Council follow-up on this implementation? And how do the Council guidelines take into account and work with other national and international principles relating to official statistics?

This paper will present some of the successes and challenges of implementing principles and guidelines in a decentralized system, where soft coordination and broad cooperation are the main tools for implementation and follow-up. The decentralized system of official statistics is currently the subject of a government inquiry, to determine whether the system works as well as it can. Many of the questions posed above will also be discussed as part of this inquiry.

United Kingdom => [to first session](#)

In 2008, the United Kingdom implemented a new legal framework for official statistics, including those statistics produced in all parts of the decentralised statistical service. Central to this framework was the creation of the UK Statistics Authority and a new legal power to create, and assess compliance with, a revised Code of Practice for Official Statistics. That Code was published in January 2009 and is consistent with both the UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and the European Statistics Code of Practice. In this way, the legislation gives a degree of legal force within the UK to the Fundamental Principles. The paper describes the legal framework and the arrangements for accountability of the statistical service to Parliament and the devolved legislatures in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. It describes also how the Act led to the establishment of the UK Statistics Authority and how the Authority operates, the development of the Code of Practice and the monitoring and assessment role of the Authority relating to production of UK official statistics. The paper concludes by looking at the practical impact, so far, of the new legal framework in terms of improving both the quality and independence of the statistical service and the way that the Statistics Authority has developed a distinctive public voice on matters of the use of official statistics in public debate.

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