Case study for *Road Map on Statistics for SDGs 2.0*
Netherlands: Quality criteria for externally sourced data

Description	For data from sources outside NSOs, Statistics Netherlands (CBS) drafted a quality assessment framework to assess external data in terms of their suitability as input for calculating SDG indicators. In drafting these quality criteria, CBS looked extensively at quality guidelines for statistics as established by CBS, Eurostat/European Statistical System (ESS) and OECD. A study of these sources showed that a number of aspects are common to all of them, but as they pertain to institutions whose primary task is producing statistics, they are not always relevant for the proposed framework, which was also to be applied to non-statistical organizations. For our purpose, the following elements are the most important:

1. Independence and transparency of the organization: what is its mandate? And on whose authority? Are the data impartial/unbiased? How and to whom is the organization accountable for its methods and procedures?
2. Data quality assurance: do the data comply with independently set national/international standards?
3. If the data have been processed: are the methods well-founded and well-described? Are they scientifically justified/verified?
4. Are the data relevant? Do they meet the requirements of the indicator? Are they fit for purpose?
5. Are the data up-to-date, and will they be kept up-to-date?
6. Are the data comparable in time (consistent, more than one data point in time)? And comparable with other countries?
7. Are the data easy to understand? Alternatively: can they be made to be easy to understand?
8. Can the data be disaggregated (gender, age, region, etc.)

Score allocation matrix (see Table 1)

To get an overall picture of the quality of the data provided by external organizations, a score is assigned to each criterion in accordance with the table below (cf. Eurostat's Principles, criteria and selection process for developing an EU-SDG indicator framework[1]).

To be considered for inclusion in the Dutch national indicator set, the data must have a minimum quality level: they may not score 0 (not acceptable), and the average score must be at least 1.5 points (= total points divided by number of criteria applied).

No score is assigned for independence/transparency of the organization providing the data, but there are a number of hard conditions: organization/method of governance and financial governance must be autonomous and information about these and about (accountability) of supervisory structures, financing, methods and processes must be publicly accessible. (e.g. via the organization's website). This will include things like annual work programmes, annual reports, codes of practice concerning integrity and conflicts of interest.

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[1] https://sdgtoolkit.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Indicators-EU-2019-01-08__EU_SDG_indicator_set_2019_review_final_report.pdf

Table 1

The CBS score allocation matrix for assessing quality of externally sourced data

Criterion/ Score	3. High	2. Medium	1. Low	0. Not acceptable
Quality	Complies with internationally recognized norm (e.g. ISO)	Complies with nationally recognized norm	Complies with internally defined norm	No norm defined
Methods	Internationally recognized, scientifically justified, well described	Scientifically justified, well described	Well described and justified, publicly accessible	Not described or justified
Relevance	Identical to IAEG	Population identical to IAEG	Considered by experts to be a good proxy	Rejected as proxy by experts
Frequency	Annual	Biennial	Triennial	Less frequently or one-off
Timeliness	T-1 year	T-2 years	T-3 years	> T-3 years
Comparability over time	At least 5 data points without methodological break	At least 3 data points without methodological break	At least 2 data points without methodological break	0 data points without methodological break

Advantages The matrix is a quick way to assess the reliability of the source of external non-official data.

Challenges It is sometimes difficult to find out exactly how these organizations collect their data.

More information Available on request from:

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