
Economic Commission for Europe

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Item 9 of the provisional agenda

Collaboration with private data providers

Position statement on the access to data held by the private sector for purposes of official statistics

Adopted by the seventieth plenary session of the Conference of European Statisticians

We, the Chief Statisticians of the United Nations Member States that participate in the work of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES),

Recalling the United Nations General Assembly Resolution on Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics¹ and the role of official statistics as an indispensable element in the information system of democratic societies,

Recognising the role that the global official statistical community has in ensuring that society is informed by independent and impartially compiled evidence,

Affirming the great potential for official statistics of data generated by the private sector as part of its business, thereby enabling the delivery of more timely and relevant statistics amid the rapidly changing socio-economic environment and users' needs, increasing efficiency of statistical production, and reducing respondent burden,

Recognising the increased challenges associated with the collection of primary data from persons, households, businesses and institutions in a changing society,

Recalling the use of private sector data during the COVID-19 pandemic that has been effective in informing health policy and pandemic response,

Acknowledging the ongoing work on data governance and data sharing at international and national levels,

Stressing the public interest in the production of official statistics which is underpinned by trust and social acceptability from the public supporting the justified use of data held by the private sector for the purpose of producing official statistics,

Recognizing the essential role of legislation and administrative regulations in providing safeguards supporting the trust and relationships between national statistical offices and private sector data providers,

¹ General Assembly Resolution 68/261

Acknowledging the challenges related to the access to and the use of data held by the private sector and the need to cooperate further on issues related to confidentiality, quality assurance, data integrity and consistency, and technical aspects of data sharing,

Call upon national governments and relevant ministries to support national statistical offices in their key coordinating role in the access to data held by the private sector for official statistical purposes, bearing in mind the critical role of high-quality, independent and impartial official statistics in evidence-based public debate and informed decision-making and taking into account the setup of the statistical system in a particular country.

Call upon international organizations to coordinate strategically the work undertaken by different international bodies dealing with the access to data held by the private sector in order to achieve greater specialization, more efficient use of human and financial resources, and wider dissemination of the results, as well as to support national statistical offices in their efforts to collaborate with the private sector.

We *state* that the national statistical offices are dedicated to contribute their expertise to facilitate access to data held by the private sector for use in official statistical production.

We are *committed* to:

- (a) *Engage effectively* with private sector data providers to ensure mutual benefits of collaboration while avoiding conflicts of interest with other public interests;
- (b) *Develop* guidance in regard to institutional arrangements and the source and type of data to enable sustainable use of data held by the private sector for purposes of official statistics;
- (c) *Explore* the need to legislate for sustainable access to privately held data for purposes of official statistics;
- (d) *Support* the development and implementation of common standards, protocols and infrastructure to facilitate data access;
- (e) *Ensure* the strict adherence to legal provisions in the access to data held by the private sector for purposes of official statistics and to use such data under strict observance of statistical codes and good practices;
- (f) *Ensure further* that acquisition of data is based upon the principles of necessity, always has a specific purpose, and that purpose of the acquisition is in the best interest of the citizens;
- (g) *Establish* open communication and mutual understanding with private sector data providers and the public on the access to and the use of data held by the private sector for official statistical purposes, to create trust and to earn and maintain social acceptability from the public;
- (h) *Ensure* the quality of statistics based on data held by the private sector, including in situations where such data is integrated with data from other sources;
- (i) *Enhance* organizational capabilities via training and competency building, develop data management infrastructures for connectivity, storage, computing and digital security risk management to strengthen institutional readiness and efficiency for collaboration with private sector data holders;
- (j) *Create and advocate* for shared principles and best practices for responsible public-private sector collaboration on the access to data held by the private sector.

To live up to these commitments, we *acknowledge* the importance of sharing experiences and learning from each other through the established mechanisms of the CES.

We *emphasize* the importance of efficient coordination of the work at international level on the access to data held by the private sector.