



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
15 July 2022

English
Original: English, French and
Russian

Economic Commission for Europe

Conference of European Statisticians

Seventieth plenary session

Geneva, 20-22 June 2022

Item 2 of the provisional agenda

Core values of official statistics and their mapping with Fundamental Principles

Core values of official statistics

Prepared by the Task Team on Core Values

Summary

The 2021 plenary session of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) discussed how national statistical systems adhere to the core values of official statistics and proposed to initiate a conversation within the official statistics community to elaborate a list of those core values. The Bureau was asked to oversee this work, including mapping the core values to the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics. This paper presents the draft list of core values as well as their descriptions and the mapping.

The Conference is invited to endorse the core values, descriptions and the mapping, and to approve future work to elaborate the behaviours that will demonstrate how the core values are implemented in practice.



I. Background

1. Following the discussion on “How national statistical systems adhere to the core values of official statistics” at the June 2021 plenary session of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES), the Conference noted the importance of explicitly recognising, upholding and demonstrating the core values of official statistics, and requested:

(a) The Secretariat to initiate a conversation within the official statistics community to elaborate a list of core values of official statistics;

(b) The Bureau to oversee this work, including mapping the core values to the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, and defining behaviours that support the core values and implementation of the Fundamental Principles;

(c) The Secretariat to report on progress at the 70th CES plenary session in 2022.

2. A Task Team was formed to take this work forward under the leadership of Ireland, and comprising members from Australia, Canada, Colombia, France, Lithuania, New Zealand, Norway, Poland and the United Kingdom.

3. The Task Team has prepared a list of core values, including a preamble, short descriptions, and mappings to relevant international standards. This work is presented below, and takes account of inputs from across the official statistics community, including through an on-line conversation across the international statistical community from July to September 2021, discussions in the CES Bureau in October 2021 and February 2022, and via a written consultation of all CES members in April-May 2022.

II. Introduction

4. Any discussion on the core values of official statistics inevitably generates many ideas and suggestions as to what those core values should be, and how they should be defined. The Task Team has taken all of the diverse inputs into account, discussed them at length, and eventually reached agreement on the values and definitions presented in this paper. It was impossible to fully accommodate all points of view, but the Task Team feels that the present list is the best compromise between the different perspectives.

5. The list of core values, with their brief definitions and mappings to other standards is the first stage of the work of the Task Team set up by the CES Bureau. The next stage will be to define in more detail the behaviours that support the core values and implementation of the Fundamental Principles. At this stage, the definitions are deliberately kept as short as possible, to provide a clear and concise one-page summary for readers who don't want or need to go into further detail. The aim is to provide a communication tool about official statistics for internal and external stakeholders. Additional detail will be provided later, for those that need it, in the description of behaviours.

6. The core values are intended to be those common values that have guided the development of the official statistics community, including the formulation of key standards such as the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, regional and national codes of practice and quality frameworks. They have always been implicitly present in the background of statistical work, but are now, for the first time, being explicitly elaborated. The core values are intended to be complementary to the Fundamental Principles and other standards, providing an additional element to help define and communicate the concept of official statistics. This is the reason why the detailed mappings between the core values and several key standards have been developed (see Annex). Looking forward, it is intended that the core values will help to guide future decisions on the development of official statistics at the national and international levels.

7. The concept of core values is sometimes confused with related but separate work on the value of official statistics. The core values are designed to help describe the moral, ethical and professional considerations that set official statistics apart from other data, whilst the work on value of official statistics seeks to highlight and quantify the value added for society of official statistics outputs.

8. Concepts such as trust and quality are often proposed as core values, but after a lengthy reflection, the Task Team decided that these were desired outcomes, rather than values themselves. They should be the natural result of applying the values in practice.

9. Whilst some core values may be seen as more “core” than others, this may vary depending on the context. Thus there is no implied order of importance in the list, just as there is no implied order of importance in the list of Fundamental Principles.

III. Proposed list of core values with descriptions

A. Preamble

10. The official statistics community strives to provide a truthful reflection of socio-economic developments using independently compiled objective facts. In doing so, we are guided by the following set of core values, which are reflected in our standards and practices, including the United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics. The core values provide an ethical framework to support decision-making and interactions with governments, society and other stakeholders. The aim of communicating these core values is to promote trust in official statistics and the organisations that produce them, by helping to articulate what sets official statistics apart from other data.

B. Core values

11. These are the values that we, the official statistics community, uphold.

1. Relevant

12. The official statistics community ensures relevance through:

- An **engaged, responsive, user-centric** approach, based on clear and regular **communication** with all stakeholders;
- A **proactive, innovative** and **agile** approach to the development of new products, services, tools, methods and sources;
- Applying appropriate **standards** and **quality frameworks** to produce **accurate, timely, coherent** and **comparable** statistics.

2. Impartial

13. The official statistics community:

- Is **objective**, in all aspects of our work, acting with **fairness** and **integrity** to serve the **public good**;
- Ensures **equal access** for all users through all relevant channels;
- Produces **inclusive** statistics reflecting all parts of society.

3. Transparent

14. Official statistics, methods, processes, products and quality reports are communicated to the public through appropriate channels, and are **open** to scrutiny.

4. Professionally independent

15. **Credible, trustworthy** and **authoritative** official statistics are based on:

- Freedom from external interference;
- The application of **professional expertise** and scientific principles;
- **Countering misuse** and misinterpretation of official statistics.

5. Respects confidentiality

16. The official statistics community:

- Protects privacy by ensuring that data collection is limited to what is **necessary and proportionate**;
- Upholds the **confidentiality** of data on individual people, households and businesses;
- Acts in an **ethical** way, following professional ethics standards.

6. Collaborative

17. Official statistics are strengthened by sharing ideas and experiences within the international statistical **community** and with other stakeholders.

IV. Mapping the core values to relevant standards

18. The Task Team has mapped the Core Values to the United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, as requested. It has also mapped them to the following standards and frameworks:

- United Nations National Quality Assurance Framework (UN-NQAF);
- European Statistics Code of Practice;
- OECD Recommendation on Good Statistical Practice;
- ISI Declaration on Professional Ethics.

19. These mappings are presented in the table in the Annex to this paper. Further work is underway to embed the core values in tools to measure compliance with the Fundamental Principles using a maturity model approach.

V. Next steps

20. As well as defining the core values and mapping them to the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, the Conference requested that the Bureau oversee the definition of “behaviours that support the core values and implementation of the Fundamental Principles”. If the Conference endorses the values, brief definitions and mappings, the Task Team proposes to launch this next stage of the work in the second half of 2022, under the guidance of the CES Bureau. It will report on progress to the 2023 plenary session of the Conference

VI. Action requested from the Conference

21. The Conference is invited to:

- Endorse the proposed list of core values and their descriptions;
- Endorse the mappings to the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and other standards;
- Support the continuation of the work of the Task Team, with a focus on the elaboration of behaviours that demonstrate the implementation of the Core Values and the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics in practice.

Annex

Mapping the core values to relevant standards

<i>Core Values</i>	<i>Fundamental Principles</i>	<i>UN National Quality Assurance Framework Principles</i>	<i>ESS Code of Practice Principles</i>	<i>OECD Recommendation on Good Statistical Practice</i>	<i>ISI Declaration on Professional Ethics (Values and Principles)</i>
Relevant	1. Relevance, impartiality and equal access 9. Use of international standards 4. Prevention of misuse	14. Assuring relevance 15. Assuring accuracy and reliability 16. Assuring timeliness and punctuality 17. Assuring accessibility and clarity 18. Assuring coherence and comparability 2. Managing relationships with data users, data providers and other stakeholders 3. Managing statistical standards 8. Assuring commitment to quality 12. Assuring appropriate statistical procedures	11. Relevance 12. Accuracy and reliability 13. Timeliness and punctuality 14. Coherence and comparability 15. Accessibility and clarity 4. Commitment to quality 8. Appropriate statistical procedures	8. Commit to the quality of statistical outputs and processes 9. Ensure user-friendly data access and dissemination 12. Encourage exploring innovative methods as well as new and alternative data sources as inputs for official statistics	V1. Respect §. 2 V2. Professionalism §. 1, 3, 4, 5, 9 V3. Truthfulness and Integrity §. 8
Impartial	1. Relevance, impartiality and equal access	5. Assuring impartiality and objectivity	6. Impartiality and objectivity	6. Impartiality, objectivity and transparency	V2. Professionalism §. 1, 4, 5, 10 V3. Truthfulness and integrity §. 1, 2, 4, 5 P1. Pursuing objectivity P3. Assessing Alternatives Impartially
Transparent	3. Accountability and transparency	6. Assuring transparency 17. Assuring accessibility and clarity	15. Accessibility and clarity	6. Impartiality, objectivity and transparency	V3. Truthfulness and integrity §. 3, 5

<i>Core Values</i>	<i>Fundamental Principles</i>	<i>UN National Quality Assurance Framework Principles</i>	<i>ESS Code of Practice Principles</i>	<i>OECD Recommendation on Good Statistical Practice</i>	<i>ISI Declaration on Professional Ethics (Values and Principles)</i>
	7. Legislation		6. Impartiality and objectivity	9. Ensure user-friendly data access and dissemination	P9. Exposing and reviewing methods and findings
Professionally independent	2. Professional standards and ethics 5. Sources of official statistics	4. Assuring professional independence 10. Assuring methodological soundness	1. Professional independence 7. Sound methodology	2. Ensure professional independence of National Statistical Authorities 7. Employ sound methodology and commit to professional standards	V2. Professionalism §. 10 V3. Truthfulness and Integrity §. 1, 2, 6 P8. Maintaining Confidence in Statistics
Respects confidentiality	6. Confidentiality 2. Professional standards and ethics	7. Assuring statistical confidentiality and data security 13. Managing the respondent burden	5. Statistical confidentiality and data protection 9. Non-excessive burden on respondents	4. Protect the privacy of data providers	V1. Respect §. 1, 2 P6. Guarding privileged information P12. Protecting the interests of subjects
Collaborative	10. International cooperation 8. National coordination	1. Coordinating the national statistical system 2. Managing relationships with data users, data providers and other stakeholders	1bis. Coordination and cooperation	10. Establish responsibilities for co-ordination of statistical activities within the NSS 11. Commit to international co-operation	V2. Professionalism §. 2, 8