
Information Notice No.1

I. DATE AND LOCATION

The UNECE Workshop on Ethics in Modern Statistical Organisations will take place in person from 26 to 28 March 2024 in Geneva, Switzerland.

II. PURPOSE AND TARGET AUDIENCE

As societies undergo continuous change, the increased complexity of the societies demands constant adaptation within the realm of official statistics. Consequently, National Statistical Offices (NSOs) face the challenge of meeting the growing demand for refined, diverse, and timely data in larger quantities. To address this, NSOs are expanding beyond traditional methods, embracing alternative data sources, and incorporating data science and modern data integration techniques. These rapid advancements push NSOs into uncharted waters, not only in terms of technical and methodological aspects, but also beyond organisational policy and guidelines, which highlights the necessity for data ethics. In an increasingly competitive data environment, maintaining public trust is crucial, requiring proactive communication of ethical values and practices to prevent any loss of trust in statistical offices.

At the same time, institutional ethics in NSOs are gaining importance. The spread of disinformation in the age of social media places increased importance for NSOs to be seen as independent informational authorities. Consequently, NSOs themselves must act as moral agents by upholding ethical behaviour, not just relying on individual staff members. Leaders in NSOs play a vital role in promoting ethical practices through effective communication, emphasizing the organisation's values, and making employees aware of the consequences of not adhering to codes of conduct. Given the sensitive nature of the data they handle, statistical offices must maintain the highest ethical standards.

The Workshop on Ethics in Modern Statistical Organisations aims to bring together experts from around the world to exchange their experiences and lessons learned from these challenges. The target audience of the meeting includes senior and middle-level managers responsible for business, institutional and data ethics as well as communication experts who handle ethical issues within statistical organisations.

III. AGENDA

The programme of the workshop will consist of the following substantive sessions:

Session 1: Ethics in institutional contexts

Institutional ethics are a growing area of interest. The application of ethics in an institution refers to how an institution itself conducts its behaviour in an ethical manner, with the institution being regarded as a moral agent with responsibility and accountability. National and international statistical offices, as institutions themselves, must consider themselves as moral agents.

It is not enough for a statistical office to have staff with ethical awareness, rather NSOs themselves need to create, promote, and adhere to codes of conduct.

The structure of a statistical office has an effect on the ethical behaviour of that office. Proper accountability of power, the elimination of unnecessary bureaucracy, and the promotion of an environment that supports its staff, all contribute to the health and ethical practices of offices.

Ethical leadership is crucial. Managers should demonstrate outstanding ethical behaviour to inspire others to follow suit. They should also build strong communication skills to champion the values of official statistics and to foster open dialogue on ethical matters. Additionally, leaders should educate their staff on the significance of ethical protocols and practices, including any relevant codes of conduct, as tools for nurturing a healthy organisational culture within the NSO. Consequently, employees will be motivated to identify with and to adhere to the offices' values, roles, and objectives, thereby increasing performance and fostering a positive work environment.

This Session aims to:

- compare the ethics management practices (i.e. codes of conduct, procedures, etc.) that aim to preserve, disseminate and grow cooperation and a sense of belonging within/to the organisation, regardless of varying working methods;
- find appropriate topics to promote awareness initiatives on ethics, inclusiveness and mutual respect at work;
- share possible assessment systems that have been set up to evaluate the compliance of behaviours to the institutional ethics;
- discuss the line between discretionary power and maladministration, preferably through case studies about assignment procedures or other ways to allocate responsibilities;
- share policies about Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR);
- compare whistleblowing practices and their effects.
- share information about effective training programs on ethics;
- create competency datasets to train competent ethical leader. These competencies include evaluation skills, talent recognition, the ability to address ethical issues, the capability to implement ethical policies, and the utilization of tools as management instruments, among others.

Session 2: Ethics in daily work life

The core business of statistical offices is the production of official statistics and data services which play a pivotal role in shaping economic, social and developmental policies of the nation. Statistical offices often obtain data directly on individuals and enterprise that, if not safely handled, could result in adverse impacts on these stakeholders. The need for measuring intricate and occasionally highly sensitive subjects has a potential to raise ethical dilemmas and unexpected negative consequences that affect both respondents and the staff of statistical offices.

With this significant responsibility and risks comes the need for upholding the highest ethical standards in every aspect of their work. A deep knowledge about one's own institute, as well as the expectations that external stakeholders have of the public sector is key. In order to implement best ethical practices, statistical offices should establish means to ensure staff participation in developing an ethical culture. This should include traditional areas of work life as well as the new frontiers of social media.

This Session aims to:

- outline any practices on ethics shared by the NSOs with their stakeholders inside and outside. Such practices would be the result of paying attention – outside – to the expectations about the reliability of the services provided, and – inside – to the expectations from staff to grow professionally and as humans as well;
- facilitate the stakeholders’ participation in focusing strategic objectives on ethics;
- share transparency management practices on the services provided;
- examine and discuss actual situations that can daily occur at work and challenge the discretionary power of people who are called to decide;
- find any connection and interdependency factors between institutional policies and daily practices in action.

Session 3: Ethics for new data sources and technology

Statistical offices are operating in a continuously changing environment with the pace of change accelerating every year. The need to monitor and respond to increasingly complex issues that current society face has led to an increase in the demand for timelier and more disaggregated statistics and data services. To respond to this need, the world of official statistics needs to constantly adapt by extending beyond conventional methods, responding to refined, diverse, and time-sensitive data needs. This involves delving into alternative data sources, adopting data science methodologies, and modernising data integration strategies. Amid this swift progress, ethical considerations take center stage, underscoring the vital importance of data ethics.

This Session focuses on the ethical dimensions intertwined with the utilisation of emerging data sources and cutting-edge technologies. Spanning from AI-driven algorithms to the analysis of social media and beyond, each innovation presents distinct ethical challenges that require thorough examination and resolution.

This Session aims to:

- develop awareness of the new data sources and technologies, along with the ethical concerns they raise;
- share examples of how to create a culture of good data ethics practices in the NSOs;
- share best practices and strategies for integrating ethical considerations into the design, development, and deployment of new data sources and technologies;
- discuss and analyse real case studies and identify ethical dilemmas and considerations coming from new technology use;
- explore existing ethical frameworks that can guide our decisions and actions while dealing with new data sources and technology.

Session 4. Ethics and proactive communication

Statistical offices are operating in an increasingly competitive data landscape. Data providers from the private sector as well as influential individuals contribute information that may not only pose challenges to official statistics but also cast doubt on its value in society.

There has been the heightened self-awareness of responsibility in statistical offices with new data sources and technologies as well as strenuous efforts to safeguard and promote ethical behaviours. However, without effectively communicating the ethical values and practices in statistical offices to users and society at large, the efforts could remain incomplete and statistical offices might find themselves in a bubble of self-praise. The

public trust in which statistical offices rely upon is social capital – it is hard to earn but easy to lose. Therefore, adopting a proactive communication approach should be viewed as a strategic investment.

This Session aims to:

- compare different ways to communicate ethical values, both within and outside the organisations, and assess their effectiveness;
- discuss any unique challenges associated with communicating on ethics;
- share experiences, best practices and lessons learned;
- discuss how to better define and communicate what is meant by data ethics in different contexts and why it is an important enabler for the use of data for statistical purposes;
- discuss the role of proactive listening (both to external and internal stakeholders) in establishing effective communication on ethical values.

IV. PARTICIPATION AND ACCREDITATION

Representatives of all Member States of the United Nations and of interested international organisations are invited to the meeting. Participants representing non-governmental organisations in a consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council may also attend. All participants must be accredited by the competent authorities of their country or international organisation.

All participants attending the workshop are requested to have a valid passport and, if required, a visa. Applications for visas should be made as soon as possible to the Embassy of Switzerland in the country in which the participant resides, with a reference to the 2024 UNECE Workshop on Ethics in Modern Statistical Organisations. A letter to facilitate obtaining a visa should be requested by February 2024 to the contact person listed in Section VII.

Participants should register online by **1 March 2024** at the latest by following the link:
<https://indico.un.org/e/Ethics2024>

V. CALL FOR PAPERS, METHODS OF WORK AND OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Participants are strongly encouraged to consider submitting an abstract that summarises the content of their proposed contribution. These should be covering one or more of the topics of the meeting programme. All contributions should be submitted in English only. Information about the selection of contributions for the meeting, guidelines on formatting, and a reminder of deadlines will be sent to authors by email. Please note that due to the limited space, it may not be possible to allocate time to all proposed contributions. The Ethical Leadership Task Team under the HLG-MOS Capabilities and Communication Group will review all submissions and, if need be, select the contributions to be presented at the meeting.

The following **deadlines** and requirements apply (further instructions will be shared when the abstract is accepted):

- A short abstract of the proposed contribution should be submitted as soon as possible or by **28 November 2023** at the latest. Please use the following link to submit your abstract:
<https://forms.office.com/e/s7ik8caPgH>;
- A written paper must be submitted by **15 February 2024** at the latest;
- Presentation slides, videos or other electronic materials should be submitted by **15 March 2024** at the latest.

Papers and presentations will be made available on the UNECE website before the workshop at the following location: <https://unece.org/statistics/events/Ethics2024>.

Participants are encouraged to download the papers from the website and, where feasible, to use electronic devices to read papers to minimise paper use. Documents posted on the website before the workshop will not be distributed in the conference room.

VI. VENUE

The workshop will take place at: Palais des Nations, Geneva, meeting room V. A second information notice will be issued and made available on the meeting website in due time, with details for locating and entering the building, along with additional logistical information.

VII. FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information you may contact the following organisers:

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DEADLINES

28 November 2023	Abstract or proposal for intended contribution submission
15 February 2024	Paper submission
15 March 2024	Presentation or other material to be presented submission
1 March 2024	Registration
26-28 March 2024	Workshop on Ethics