



# **CODE OF GOOD PRACTICE IN STATISTICS FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN<sup>1</sup>**

(November 2011)

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The *Code of Good Practice in Statistics for Latin America and the Caribbean* was developed by the **Working Group on Capacity Building**, comprising Mexico, Panama and Paraguay and coordinated by the *Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística (DANE)* of Colombia and the technical support of Eurostat and ECLAC.

The Code of Practice is a technical and regulatory instrument, structured by principles and best practices, in order to contribute to the improvement of national statistical activity.

Principles are fundamental rules or ideas that govern the thinking and practice in statistical activity, while best statistical practices are replicable actions based on proven experience with the best results, contributing to the improvement of national statistical activity.



- A. Institutional environment and coordination:** The credibility and accuracy of official statistics depend on the institutional environment of the national statistical institute and of the other members of the national statistical system. The national statistical system must be regulated by a governing body which coordinates and directs the research, production and dissemination of quality statistics using appropriate policies, norms and standards.

### **Principle 1.**

**Professional independence:** In order to guarantee the credibility of official statistics, the national statistical institute and other members of the national statistical system must be professionally independent of political and administrative agencies and other external sources of interference.

#### Compliance criteria

- 1.1. The legislation in force specifies that the national statistical institute and other members of the national statistical system must compile and disseminate official statistics independently of political influence and other external interference.
- 1.2. The director of the governing body of the national statistical system must be appointed at a sufficiently high rank to ensure that he has senior-level access to political authorities, Government agencies and national and international entities.
- 1.3. The highest-ranking authorities of the national statistical institute and of each entity belonging to the national

statistical system shall be professionally competent and have expert knowledge in the field of statistics.

- 1.4. Official statistics disseminated by the members of the national statistical system are clearly distinguished from, and issued separately from, political statements.
- 1.5. The national statistical system shall have a statistics committee, made up of a professionally competent group of experts who advise on the general policy and strategic plans of the system.
- 1.6. The national statistical institute and other members of the national statistical system have sole responsibility for deciding on the use of statistical methods, standards and procedures and on the content and timing of statistical releases.
- 1.7. When appropriate, the highest authorities of the national statistical institute and of each entity belonging to the national statistical system issue public statements on statistical matters, including criticisms, and address misuses of official statistics.

## **Principle 2**

**Coordination of the national statistical system:** This will enable the statistics producing entities to plan and implement national statistical activity in a participatory manner, maintain close contact and work jointly to improve the quality, comparability and consistency of official statistics.

### **Compliance criteria**

- 2.1. The country's legislation provides for the establishment of the national statistical system and for the appointment of a coordinating body.

- 2.2. The coordinating body of the national statistical system shall establish guidelines, plans and programmes for statistical production at the national level.
- 2.3. The coordinating body of the national statistical system shall establish parameters for participation and responsibility for the entities that make up the system.
- 2.4. The national statistical system shall appoint consultative committees of experts with rules of procedure to facilitate communication between the entities and the principal users of official statistics.
- 2.5. The entities belonging to the national statistical system shall prioritize in a coordinated manner the generation of statistical information required for decision-making.

### **Principle 3**

**Statistical mandate for data collection:** The collection of information for the preparation of official statistics must be supported by a clear legal mandate. At the request of the national statistical institutes and members of the national statistical system, the administrations, corporations, households and the public in general may be required by law to provide access to data for the preparation of official statistics or to submit such data, which will be treated as confidential.

#### Compliance criteria

- 3.1. The legislation in force grants the national statistical institute and the members of the national statistical system a mandate to collect information for the preparation and dissemination of official statistics.
- 3.2. The legislation in force specifies that individuals and corporations are bound to provide information to the coordinating body of the national statistical system and provides for penalties for failure to comply with the law.

3.3. Legislation grants the governing body of the national statistical system access to, and use of, administrative registers for the purpose of generating official statistics.

#### **Principle 4**

**Statistical confidentiality:** The national statistical institute and the other members of the national statistical system shall guarantee the protection and confidentiality of the information used to produce official statistics and shall refrain from identifying the sources.

#### Compliance criteria

- 4.1. The legislation specifies that data are confidential and prohibits their use for any purpose other than statistical ones (such as commercial purposes, taxation or judicial investigation).
- 4.2. Persons with access to individual or confidential information must sign a declaration stating their respect for confidentiality and taking note of the penalties for non-compliance.
- 4.3. Legal standards and commitments to confidentiality must be established for the staff involved in the generation of official statistics, together with the penalties that apply for non-compliance.
- 4.4. There must be protocols establishing guidelines on the security and integrity of statistical databases.
- 4.5. Respondents are informed of the main uses and limitations in terms of access to the information that they provide.
- 4.6. Access to microdata is subject to confidentiality protocols for external users who access them for purposes of analysis and statistical research.

4.7. Information must be stored in accordance with established security and confidentiality protocols and existing standards.

## **Principle 5**

**Adequacy of resources:** The resources available for national statistical activity must be sufficient and appropriate for the generation of official statistics.

### Compliance criteria

- 5.1. Sufficient human, financial, physical and technological resources are available in order to meet the need for statistical information.
- 5.2. The coverage and detail of official statistics and the cost and time necessary for their generation are based on an analysis of information requirements.
- 5.3. New requests for information must be assessed and justified with reference to their costs using control mechanisms.
- 5.4. The exclusion, inclusion or continuity of official statistics must be evaluated periodically by those responsible for statistical production in order to optimize resources.

## **Principle 6**

**Quality commitment:** The entities that produce statistics within the national statistical system must work and cooperate in accordance with rules, principles and standards

### Compliance criteria

- 6.1. A quality model and policy must be clearly defined, documented and made known to the members of the national statistical system.

- 6.2. The quality of the statistical output must be assessed periodically to ensure that it complies with internal guidelines and international standards.
- 6.3. Systematic efforts must be made to promote and further a culture of continuous improvement in statistical production.
- 6.4. Documented procedures for quality assessment and assurance must be applied at each phase of the statistical process.

## **Principle 7**

**Impartiality and objectivity:** The national statistical institute and the other members of the national statistical system must produce and disseminate official statistics respecting scientific independence and in an objective, professional and transparent manner, so that all users are treated equally.

### Compliance criteria

- 7.1. Official statistics must be prepared using methodologies and technical processes based on impartiality and transparency.
- 7.2. The standards, classifications, methods and processes used to produce the statistics must be documented and made known to the public.
- 7.3. The choice of information sources, methods, processes, concepts and data dissemination paths is a professional responsibility and is based on national and international principles and best practices.
- 7.4. The approaches and guidelines used must guarantee all users simultaneous access to statistical reports, in an impartial and comprehensible manner.
- 7.5. The timing of the release of official statistics must be announced beforehand.



- 7.6. Statistical reports must be delivered in an objective and professional manner.
- 7.7. A statement must be made on the conduct, standards and ethical values governing statistical practices.

## **Principle 8**

**Cooperation and international participation:** The entities belonging to the national statistical system must cooperate in the exchange of experiences and information and work jointly on the preparation of international statistical standards and activities.

### Compliance criteria

- 8.1. The national statistical institute must participate in international activities of statistical interest and in the joint establishment of standards supported by international bodies.
- 8.2. The national statistical institute must participate in international cooperation activities in order to share with, and transfer knowledge to, international bodies and other national statistical institutes.
- 8.3. International cooperation mechanisms must be developed for the transfer of knowledge.

**B. Statistical processes:** The guidelines, approaches, standards and good practices, both national and international, are the basis for the development of methodologies and processes for the production of quality statistics.

## **Principle 9**

**Sound methodology:** The production of official statistics by the national statistical institute and the other members of

the national statistical system must be based on sound instruments, procedures and expertise.

#### Compliance criteria

- 9.1. Agreement must be reached on the implementation of methodologies, concepts, classifications and good practices that follow principles and guidelines for national and international acceptance.
- 9.2. The survey methodology and the use of administrative registers must be assessed periodically and, where necessary, adjusted to guarantee a high quality product.
- 9.3. There should be detailed concordance between the national and international benchmark classifications prepared by the competent bodies.
- 9.4. At the design stage of the statistical operation, flexibility is permitted for the preparation of instruments for data capture and processing based on users' information needs.
- 9.5. There are academic, inter-institutional and sectoral committees to assess and improve the methodology used in the statistical process.
- 9.6. Better instruments and procedures based on sound knowledge must be promoted.

#### **Principle 10**

**Appropriate statistical procedures:** The quality of official statistics used by national statistical institute and the other members of the national statistical system must be underpinned by appropriate procedures and tools at every stage of the statistical process.

#### Compliance criteria

- 10.1. The methodologies, questionnaires, manuals, computer-based applications and other instruments

must be checked and validated before starting the data-collection process.

- 10.2. Computer systems must be used for data capture, codification, criticism and validation of information.
- 10.3. The stages of the statistical process must be reviewed or updated as required by statistical operation and research.
- 10.4. Appropriate technological resources must be used to carry out estimates and imputations and to review them or update them periodically as provided for by the design of the statistical operation.
- 10.5. Revisions follow well-established standard procedures in accordance with the established time-table. Studies and analysis of revisions are made known to the public.
- 10.6. The concepts and definitions used when administrative registers are used for statistical purposes must comply with the parameters required in a quality statistical process.
- 10.7. Editing and validation processes must be conducted in accordance with the rules of consistency and imputation.

## **Principle 11**

**Non-excessive burden on respondents:** The national statistical institute and the other members of the national statistical system must set their targets so as to gradually reduce the burden on respondents. The request for information must be in keeping with the needs of users and must not be excessive for the respondents.

### Compliance criteria

- 11.1. The national statistical institute must use coordinated and systematic procedures for obtaining information relating to corporate accounts (financial information).

- 11.2. The coverage and detail of the request for information from respondents must be limited to information that is strictly necessary.
- 11.3. A constant effort must be made, or techniques developed, in order to reduce the burden on respondents.
- 11.4. Sharing data between producers of statistics must be promoted in order to avoid duplication of statistical output.

## **Principle 12**

**Cost-effectiveness:** The national statistical institute and the other members of the national statistical system must use resources efficiently and effectively.

### Compliance criteria

- 12.1. The use of resources by the statistics-producing entities must be controlled.
- 12.2. Proactive efforts must be made to improve the statistical potential of the administrative registers and avoid costly direct surveys.
- 12.3. National regulations must enable members of the national statistical system to share data on corporations and persons in order to reduce collection costs without prejudice to statistical confidentiality or any reservations that may exist under the law.
- 12.4. Information and communications technologies must be used in order to optimize processes for the generation and dissemination of official statistics.

- C. Statistical production: Official statistics must satisfy users' needs and comply with the quality standards established for statistical outputs.

### **Principle 13**

**Relevance:** The national statistical institute and other members of the national statistical system must satisfy users' information needs on the basis of their requirements.

#### Compliance criteria

- 13.1. The supply of statistics nationally must be based on mechanisms and strategies for identifying the priority information needs of the Government, the business sector and the community as a whole.
- 13.2. The entity must follow procedures for advising, training and reporting to users on the statistical outputs and for consulting them periodically on the practical use of statistical data.
- 13.3. Users and producers of official statistics must participate in the processes of identification, analysis and evaluation of information requirements through academic, inter-institutional and sectoral committees.
- 13.4. Surveys must be conducted periodically to determine whether the official statistics are satisfactory to users.

### **Principle 14**

**Accuracy and reliability:** The official statistics produced by the national statistical institute and the other members of the national statistical system must be an accurate and reliable reflection of the actual situation.

## Compliance criteria

- 14.1. The original data, intermediate results and statistical output must be assessed and validated by comparing them, where appropriate, with other statistical information.
- 14.2. Sampling and non-sampling errors must be analyzed and documented.
- 14.3. The data must be collected in accordance with the methodology and designs published to guarantee reliability.
- 14.4. Regular reviews of the statistical process are undertaken to introduce improvements at the different phases.
- 14.5. Methodologies are updated periodically to comply with the quality criteria for producing official statistics and to bring them in line with international standards.

## **Principle 15**

**Timeliness and punctuality:** The national statistical institute and the other members of the national statistical system must produce and disseminate official statistics in a timely, punctual and transparent manner.

## Compliance criteria

- 15.1. In order to be relevant, the statistics must be produced on a timely basis, that is, within a reasonable period after the completion of the reference period.
- 15.2. The periodicity with which the official statistics are to be made available must be determined bearing in mind users' requirements as well as international standards and commitments in this regard.
- 15.3. A date and time must be set for the dissemination of all official statistics. If the deadline is not going to be met, notification must be given in advance together with the

relevant explanation and an indication of a new date for publication.

- 15.4. Any significant error identified in the official statistics disseminated must be corrected and the correct figures published promptly.
- 15.5. Any substantial update in the statistical methodology, procedures or techniques must be announced prior to the final publication of the results.

## **Principle 16**

**Coherence and comparability:** The official statistics produced by the national statistical institute and the other members of the national statistical system must be coherent internally and over time and must be comparable across regions and countries.

### Compliance criteria

- 16.1. Official statistics must be coherent internally and reconcilable over time.
- 16.2. Statistics based on administrative registers must be coherent in the use of classifications and concepts required for a quality statistical process.
- 16.3. The use of statistical frameworks, classifications, procedures, indicators, concepts and good practices must be promoted in the production of official statistics in order to enhance their comparability over time and with other data sets.
- 16.4. Steps must be taken to promote the national and international comparability of the statistics produced.

## **Principle 17**

**Accessibility and clarity:** The official statistics generated by the national statistical institute and the other members of the national statistical system must be presented clearly and comprehensibly and disseminated appropriately, thereby enabling equitable access by all users.

### Compliance criteria

- 17.1. All users must be guaranteed free and equal access to official statistics on the basis of clearly established and well-known procedures.
- 17.2. Official statistics and the relevant metadata must be made available to users clearly and precisely to enable users to interpret them correctly and make meaningful comparisons.
- 17.3. Different media and technologies that meet requirements and ensure full coverage must be used for the dissemination of official statistics.
- 17.4. In order to promote the use of official statistics, relevant instructions must be prepared and made available to the press and the public as a whole.
- 17.5. As far as possible, technical support for data analysis must be provided at the request of users, and, depending on the agreement, the results should be made public.
- 17.6. Information must be provided to users on projects, working documents and methodologies.