

Misuse, Governance, Trust and Ethics: Enhancing Official Statistics' Capacity to address these issues

Martine Durand,

Member of the French Statistics Authority - Former OECD Chief Statistician

Jan Robert Suesser,

Member of IAOS Executive Committee and of ISI Advisory Board on Ethics

IAOS22 Special Meeting, Krakow, 25 April 2022



A fast-evolving landscape for Official Statistics

- A 'datafied' society: data has become a global commodity produced, used and shared by a myriad of actors
- Data revolution facilitated by technology, IoT, AI
- Increased demand for and use of data in public debate; strong appetite for data-driven and evidence-based decisions
- New actors that have entered the data ecosystem can be perceived as more agile, more responsive and more innovative
- But they may not be aware of, or be at odds with Official Statistics' long-established professional and ethics principles



Bottom line

- Official statistics have lost their quasi-monopoly in the production and dissemination of statistics to inform the public debate
- **Their authority is contested:** the once prevailing 'statistics logic' has been (partly) replaced by a 'data logic'
- Increased risks of misuse, mis-information, alternative facts, information bubbles, distrust in data and statistics and **vis-a-vis** experts and institutions

So, what can Official Statistics do?



Official Statistics have a major role to play in:

- **Addressing data misuse**
- **Improving governance**
- **Enhancing trust**
- **Fostering ethics**

But they should not act alone

**They need to engage
with other relevant actors**

The issues are inter-linked and need to be tackled together

Good governance key for trust and to address mis-use

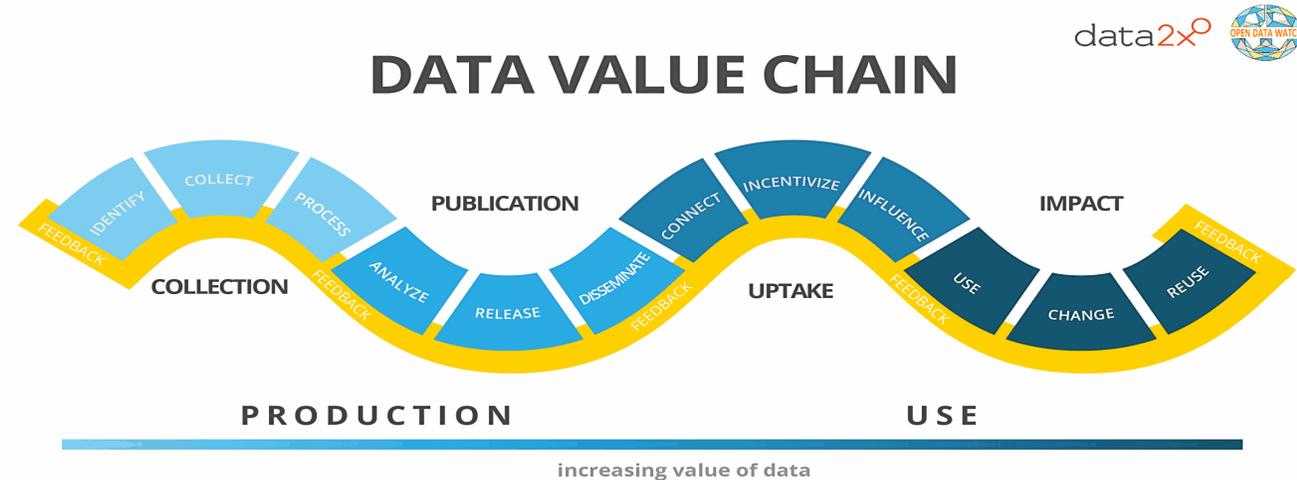
Misuse, manipulation detrimental to trust

Professional ethics and deontological practices essential for reinforcing trust

Trust key for enhanced use of data



Need to act along the whole data value chain and involve relevant actors at all stages





Addressing Misuse

- **Speak out if statistics are being misused or manipulated; correct inaccurate facts and errors of interpretation**
- **Expand social media culture; be more present where opinions are formed**
- **Build partnerships and collaborations with other actors; work with fact-checkers**
- **Contribute to statistical literacy of data producers and users**

Improving Governance

**Clarify
respective roles
and responsibilities
of different actors**

**Ensure strong
institutional
frameworks and
adequate financing**

**Establish/promote
the NSO as
data steward
where relevant**

**Share knowledge and know-how and offer
services to other public providers
and private actors**

**Engage in/lead co-investment,
co-innovation and co-production
with other actors**



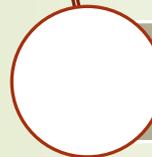
Enhancing Trust



Enforce independence vis-a-vis public authorities and private lobbies; safeguard data privacy and confidentiality



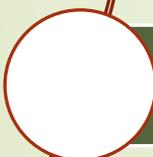
Ensure full compliance to codes of ethics and conduct within Official statistics community



Adopt open data policies by default



Invest in data science skills, labs, experimental statistics and data viz to offer more and better products and services to users



Develop new/enhanced quality frameworks



Anticipate potential sources of crises and develop appropriate tools to respond

Fostering Ethics



Fundamental Principles of National Official Statistics

EUROPEAN STATISTICS
CODE OF PRACTICE

For the National Statistical Authorities
and Eurostat (EU statistical authority)



DECLARATION ON PROFESSIONAL
ETHICS

National Statistical
Laws

RECOMMENDATION OF
THE OECD COUNCIL ON
GOOD STATISTICAL
PRACTICE



Principles Governing
International Statistical
Activities

- Speak up about the overarching importance of ethics principles in Official statistics' practices

- Contribute to set up an International Forum involving all actors to address misuse, governance, trust and ethics

- Based on existing frameworks, develop and promote the effective use of a set of core values and of universal ethical data principles, to be followed by public and private actors

- Promote the creation of a recognised independent mechanism to monitor compliance and accountability with respect to the principles

- Through regular assessments containing recommendations and making the findings public

- Create alliances among actors to combat bad practices and promote good ones

Issues for discussion and next steps

- What are the main assets and weaknesses of Official statistics in the present data environment?
- What are the main issues to be tackled in relation to misuse, governance, trust and ethics?
- What should be the role of Official Statistics and how active should the engagement be with other actors in the data ecosystem?
- How best can the IAOS contribute to addressing the issues at stake?
- Next step:
Creation of an IAOS reflection group to discuss issues, elaborate scenarii and bring forward proposals



Thank you!