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

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Data has become a global commodity produced, used and shared by a myriad of actors

Increased demand for and use of data in public debate; strong appetite for data-driven decisions

Official statistics have lost their quasi-monopoly position in the production and dissemination of information to inform the public debate

New actors that have entered the data ecosystem may not be aware or be at odds with Official Statistics’ long-established rules and ethics principles

This raises questions about independence, integrity, quality, transparency and privacy of data and statistics and the governance of data

And can lead to mis-use, mis-information, disinformation and distrust in statistics
So, what can Official Statistics do?

Official Statistics have a major role to play in:
- Addressing data misuse
- Improving governance
- Restoring/Preserving 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 misuse
- Professional ethics and deontological practices essential for reinforcing trust
- Misuse, manipulation detrimental to 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 mis-use

- 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
- Push for laws and regulations to secure professional independence, compliance to professional standards, data protection, openness, accessibility and dissemination
- Establish/promote the NSO as the data steward in relevant domains
- Establish frameworks for the use, re-use and repurposing of various kinds of data
- Secure investments in order to develop infrastructure, implement relevant innovation and share knowledge and know-how with other actors
Restoring/Enhancing Trust

- Communicate widely the core values of official statistics
- Ensure full compliance to codes of ethics and conduct within official statistics community
- Disseminate principles and best practices to other data producers and users
- Valorise and improve dissemination of existing official statistics; adopt open data policies
- Develop new statistical products that provide relevant and timely information, and up-to-date services to users as to producers
- Anticipate potential sources of crises and develop appropriate tools to respond
- Build partnerships with other actors concerned with mistrust and misuse of information
Fostering ethics

- 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
  - Through regular assessments containing recommendations and making the findings public
- Promote the creation of an independent mechanism to monitor compliance and accountability with respect to the principles
- Create alliances among actors to combat bad practices and promote good ones

Fundamental Principles of National Official Statistics

European Statistics Code of Practice

Declaration on Professional Ethics

National Statistical Laws

Principles Governing International Statistical Activities

Recommendation of the OECD Council on Good Statistical Practice
Issues for discussion and next steps

In your view:

- 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, trust, governance and ethics?
- What concretely does your own institution do? With whom are you talking?
- 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 steps:
Creation of an IAOS reflection group to discuss issues, elaborate scenarios and advance proposals