



Institutional Governance and Support to Statistical Independence.

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Statistical independence

- What it is?
- When was it invented?
- Why is it important?

And why is other aspects equal important



Introduction



- In probability theory, two events are **independent, statistically independent, or stochastically independent**^[1] if the occurrence of one does not affect the probability of occurrence of the other. This not a discussion based on probability theory
- What we want to discuss is how to avoid political interference in the production and dissemination of official statistics.
- The value and practical use of official statistics is dependent of confidence and confidence includes that users have trust in no political interference



Independence of various type

- 1. Independency as regards data.
 - 2. Independency as regards methods and principles
 - 3- Independency as regards dissemination of statistics and publications.
 - 4. Obligation for government sector to deliver true data to NSI for statistical purposes. (No fake data)
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Independency as regards data

- Data collected for statistics is only allowed for statistical use
- The use in official statistics of administrative records from
- involvement by the NSI in building smart systems for joint data collection unclear roles?
Discussed in a paper Ljones 2011 (SJIAOS. Independence and ethical issues..)
- A necessity is the Confidentiality principle



Independency as regards methods and principles.

- ▶ the NSI is fully accountable or responsible for the choice of statistical methods, principles and computations.
- ▶ the choice of methods is not a result of decisions taken in full isolation by the NSI.



Independence as regards dissemination and publication of statistics.

- A risk for various direct or indirect pressure on the NSI to change the publications of statistics for political cosmetic reasons.
- Cultivate internal culture in the NSI, intellectual fighting spirit
- Transparency and the statistical calendar (public and detailed plans for publications and releases.
- The principle of equal access. No pre information for ministries



Obligation for government sector to deliver true data to NSI for statistical purposes.(No fake data)

- Inspired by the recent incidents e,g in Greece.
- the possibilities for the NSI to detect and avoid such manipulations may be limited.
- Transparency and democratic control - naïve ?



The history of independence

- 100 years history of NSI as separate institutions.
- Professionalism, independency and efficiency
- Norway the principle of professional independence was clearly stated in the Statistics act as late as in 1989
- In general it is a broad acceptance of the independent role of Stat Norway



International considerations and recommendations

- UN Fundamental Principles of official statistics. None of the 10 principles uses the word independency
- The revised preamble includes independency
- United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics , Implementation guidelines ,(Final draft, subject to editing) (January 2015) include a separate chapter on independence
- the 1. 2, and 3. Principle are fundamental claims for quality without mentioning independency. But it is obvious that these paragraphs are interpreted to be about independency



Handbook of Statistical Organization, 1. edition

- ▶ 1954“ The necessity for complete objectivity of official statistics has the corollary that the statistical agency must within its own field, possess the same kind of independency of political change as , in most countries is possessed by the judiciary, That is to say that changes in the political complexion of the legislative should not be allowed to influence the facts shown by the statistics. To maintain this kind of independence the statisticians must continually give proof of their statistical integrity so that their data will come to be respected by all persons and parties in the country. The prestige which the national statistical system enjoys with the public depends on the integrity, independence and objectivity of the statisticians and the recognition of these by the public.



Handbook of Statistical Organization

2. edition

- ▶ “ While on the one hand formal independence in professional matters strengthens the public confidence in the national statistical service, on the other hand the political authorities cannot entrust the statistical service with such an independence unless the service is in fact objective and impartial.”



Handbook of Statistical Organization

3. edition

- ▶ A strong position of independence is essential for a statistical organization in order to establish credibility among its users and create a relationship of mutual respect and trust. Collecting, analysing and disseminating statistical information should always be distinct from policy-making activities
- ▶ It is my impression that the discussion in this edition of the handbook is more concerned with how to secure formal independency for the NSI than under what preconditions can the NSI and official statistics deserve and independent role.



Other international guidelines

- EU, Code of practice and European Statistics Act. Independence is an important claim. National legal regulations have to include this principle
- OECD
- IMF. The history of equal access.



Funding of official statistics

- Increasing challenge for national and international statistics is to balance the budgets and claims for statistic
- Full independency may only be gained in a situation with financial independency. Financial independency is of course an illusion.
- Statistics on commission or project base – with extra funding in addition to the general fiscal budget. A challenge or a safeguard for independence?



Centralised systems or decentralised systems and independency

- Many international guidelines are neutral when it comes to the choice between centralised or decentralised statistical systems
 - Natural to believe that full independence is more complex to gain in a decentralised statistical system
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International cooperation

- ▶ international cooperation has developed over the years
- ▶ the international recommendations give more and more detailed descriptions of concepts, classifications, data sources methods and dissemination. Legality.
- ▶ international recommendations are to improve quality and give an extra value to statistics by the international comparability
- ▶ the lack of national freedom in statistics from international regulations – does not create a problem or challenge the independence



Conclusions and recommendations

- Official statisticians have to further develop the role, task, function of official statistics. Convince the society of the value of official statistics.
- to defend or deserve independence
- Professional, does make all agree with NSI
- Transparency to avoid secret manipulations.
- Difficult to establish special procedures for official statistics ?
- Is the ombudsmann model better than judiciary system ? Take own initiatives