

Quality Assurance Framework of the European Statistical System



EUROPEAN
STATISTICAL
SYSTEM

Version 1.2

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Introduction

The Quality Assurance Framework of the European Statistical System (ESS QAF) is a supporting document aimed at assisting the implementation of the European Statistics Code of Practice (CoP). It identifies possible activities, methods and tools that can provide guidance and evidence for the implementation of the indicators of the CoP. A first version of the ESS QAF covering principles 4 and 7 to 15 of the CoP was published in August 2011. Following a revision of the CoP adopted by the European Statistical System Committee (ESSC) on 28th September 2011, the ESS QAF was updated and approved by the Working Group Quality of Statistics in November 2012.

The current version (V1.2) emanates from work carried out in 2013-2015 by the ESS Task Force Peer Review who, in order to develop a complete and coherent self-assessment questionnaire, developed a set of methods and procedures to assess compliance for Principles 5 and 6 of the CoP. In addition, the ESS QAF V1.2 proposes a fine tuning of some of the activities, methods and tools for other principles. The suggested changes are the result of analysing the Frequently Ask Questions (FAQ) document produced during the peer reviews and proposals made by the ESS Task Force to develop the peer review methodology. Definitions provided in the FAQ have been added as footnotes. Language improvements are also included in the current revision. The ESS QAF V1.2 was adopted by the ESSC in May 2015.

Approach followed

The ESS QAF, in a systematic way from principle to indicator, contains recommendations of activities, methods and tools defined that facilitates the practical and effective implementation of the indicator. It reflects a mature compilation of activities, methods and tools already being used in the European Statistical System (ESS).

In addition, these recommended activities, methods and tools are designed in such a way that they should not depend on the organizational solutions that exist in Member States and are often supported by specific examples which have worked well in some countries. All the activities, methods and tools identified relate to existing practices already being implemented in some National Statistical Institutes where they have proved to be useful.

In general the ESS QAF may be used as a reference framework by all the different actors participating in the production and dissemination of European Statistics, for example national statistical institutes or other statistical authorities.

Organisation of the ESS QAF

The recommended activities, methods and tools used to support each indicator are identified at the institutional and product/process levels, where applicable, reflecting the level of adoption and use. They evolve from a general into a more concrete and detailed description. As some indicators in the Code of Practice are themselves recommendations, the supporting activities, methods and tools can be more detailed and of a more specific nature in order to facilitate the implementation of the indicator. The nature of the recommended activities, methods and tools may lead to their multiple use in support of different indicators. In fact one given activity/method/tool may provide support to all the indicators associated with one principle.

Future developments of the ESS QAF

The ESS QAF remains flexible and open to further development of activities, methods and tools in order to assist the diversity and specific characteristics of the ESS.

Quality Assurance Framework of the European Statistical System

Institutional environment

Institutional and organisational factors have a significant influence on the effectiveness and credibility of a statistical authority developing, producing and disseminating European Statistics. The relevant issues are professional independence, mandate for data collection, adequacy of resources, quality commitment, statistical confidentiality, impartiality and objectivity.

Principle 4: Commitment to Quality.

Statistical authorities are committed to quality. They systematically and regularly identify strengths and weaknesses to continuously improve process and product quality.

Indicator 4.1: Quality policy is defined and made available to the public. An organisational structure and tools are in place to deal with quality management.

Methods at institutional level

1. **A quality commitment statement.** A Quality Commitment Statement is made public¹, laying out principles, practices and commitments related to quality in statistics which are consistent with the goals set out in the Mission and Vision statements.
2. **An organisational structure for managing quality.** There is a clear organisational structure for managing quality within the statistical authority². Examples of such a structure are:
 - Quality Committee;
 - Quality Manager;
 - Centralised Quality unit;
 - Other structures (e.g. a selected group of staff trained as “quality pilots” to act as project/processes coach/advisers).
3. **Definition of Quality guidelines.** Guidelines are defined on how to implement quality management within the statistical production process, comprising:

¹ The most common way of making documents public is the external statistical authority website, however documents sent to other institutions (e.g. Parliament, Court of Auditors, ...) can also be considered as “made public” if they are available on the external websites of those institutions.

² Statistical authority means Eurostat, national statistical institutes (NSIs) and other national authorities responsible for the development, production and dissemination of European statistics, where appropriate (cf. Regulation (EC) No 223/2009, Articles 4 and 5).

- A description of the different stages of the statistical production process and links to relevant reference documentation for each stage, following the Generic Statistical Business Process Model (GSBPM) or any other equivalent process representation;
 - A description of the methods to monitor the quality of each stage of the statistical production process.
4. **Availability of Quality guidelines.** Quality guidelines, as defined above, are made available to all users at least in a summary version.
 5. **An infrastructure for documentation.** An appropriate infrastructure is in place in order to ensure updated documentation on quality.
 6. **Training courses.** Specific training courses support the quality policy and are available to relevant staff on a regular basis.

Indicator 4.2: Procedures are in place to plan and monitor the quality of the statistical production process.

Methods at institutional level

1. **Methodological and technical support and general tools.** Methodological and technical support and general tools are provided by specialised / dedicated units, namely Quality, Methodology and IT, for implementing process quality monitoring/quality assurance plan.

Methods at product/process³ level

2. **Procedures to monitor process quality.** Procedures are in place to monitor the quality of different stages of the statistical production process, e.g. according to a quality assurance plan, regular expert group meetings.
3. **A quality assurance plan.** The quality assurance plan or any other similar scheme, describes the working standards, the formal obligations (such as laws and internal rules) and the set of quality control actions to prevent and monitor errors, to evaluate quality indicators and to control different points at each stage of the statistical production process.

The quality assurance plan or any other similar scheme:

- takes user's needs into account and checks the relevance of the statistical process;
- ensures effective technical and organisational design of the statistical production process;
- assures the quality of data collection, including the use of administrative data;
- assures the quality of data treatment (coding, editing, imputation and estimation);
- ensures the systematic examination of possible trade-offs within quality;
- makes sure that the information described above is accessible and comprehensible to users and included in the quality reports;
- makes sure that reactions/feedback from users are regularly collected and assessed;
- ensures suitable metadata is provided to users to aid their understanding of quality.

³ Statistical process is the set of activities applied to collect, organise, classify, manipulate and disseminate data with the object of producing statistics. In the context of the ESS QAF, these activities are carried out by the European statistical authorities to produce European statistics.

Indicator 4.3: Product quality is regularly monitored, assessed with regard to possible trade-offs, and reported according to the quality criteria for European Statistics.

Methods at institutional level

1. **Procedures to monitor product quality.** Procedures based on quality reporting are in place to internally monitor product quality. Results are analysed regularly and senior management is informed in order to decide improving actions.
2. **User satisfaction surveys.** User satisfaction surveys or other indirect methods are implemented on a regular basis and their results are made public and incorporated where useful in Quality Reports, since they monitor “Relevance”, amongst other dimensions.

Methods at product/process level

3. **User oriented quality reports.** User oriented quality reports are made public, bearing in mind the standards for reference metadata and quality indicators, in particular the Single Integrated Metadata Structure (SIMS).
4. **Producer oriented quality reports.** Producer oriented quality reports are published regularly (periodicity to be determined: e.g. by the specific Regulation and the survey life cycle), bearing in mind the standards for reference metadata and quality indicators, in particular the Single Integrated Metadata Structure (SIMS).
5. **Product quality monitoring.** Users and producers quality reporting is used for regular quality monitoring over time.

Indicator 4.4: There is a regular and thorough review of the key statistical outputs using also external experts where appropriate.

Methods at institutional level

1. **A plan for implementing quality reviews.** An appropriate plan for conducting quality reviews (such as auditing and self-assessment) is defined/implemented regularly for key statistical outputs⁴ and systematically in the case of processes reengineering.
2. **An organisational structure for quality reviews.** An appropriate organisational structure for carrying out quality reviews is in place for internal audits and self-assessments.
3. **Training of internal auditors.** Internal quality auditors⁵ are trained in auditing techniques and behaviour.
4. **Reference documentation.** Quality reviews have as reference documentation:
 - Quality guidelines/quality assurance plan, or a similar scheme;
 - Producer oriented quality reports and/or user oriented quality reports;

⁴ Key statistical outputs refer to the most important outputs of the different statistical domains. In order to improve the quality of the key statistical outputs, the underlying statistical processes are assessed through quality reviews. In case of weaknesses, improvement actions and timeframes for their implementation are agreed. A similar approach is applied when a process is to be reengineered. In this case quality reviews are carried out before the process is redesigned in order to find out weaknesses and elements to be improved.

⁵ Internal quality auditors that audit statistical processes

- Self-assessment questionnaires filled by producers;
 - Reports from audit interviews;
 - Questionnaires completed by respondents and/or users;
 - Any other satisfaction survey.
5. **Action plans.** The findings of the quality reviews result in action plans.
 6. **Feedback from users.** Feedback from different users is used as input to action plans (making use of user satisfaction surveys or focus groups).
 7. **Deployment of outside experts.** Outside experts are deployed to review key statistical domains⁶ (e.g. Data Review of Standards and Codes (ROSC) by the IMF).
 8. **Benchmarking.** Benchmarking⁷ on key statistical processes with other statistical authorities is carried out to identify good practices.

Principle 5 – Statistical Confidentiality

The privacy of data providers (households, enterprises, administrations and other respondents), the confidentiality of the information they provide and its use only for statistical purposes are absolutely guaranteed.

Indicator 5.1 – Statistical confidentiality is guaranteed in law.

Methods at institutional level

1. **Clear provisions are stated in law.** Clear provisions exist in the statistical law or in other relevant legislation, as regards the observance of statistical confidentiality.

Indicator 5.2 – Staff sign legal confidentiality commitments on appointment.

Methods at institutional level

1. **Mandatory confidentiality commitments.** Commitments for the observance of statistical confidentiality exist within the statistical authorities and are signed by all staff in place or on appointment as well as by external parties who undertake work on behalf of the statistical authority. In case of modification, such agreements should be updated and signed again by all staff or parties concerned.

⁶ Key statistical domains are those more relevant for the statistical authority or which are under European legislation. The definition is particularly important for Principles 7 – 14 which are related to statistical processes and statistical outputs. For example, in the Eurostat peer review the following domains were described at different levels of detail: National Accounts; Balance of Payments; HICP; PPP; Population Census; LFS; EU SILC; EuroGroup Register; International Trade Goods Statistics; Short-term Business Statistics; Structural Business Statistics; Statistics on Information and Communication Technologies; Farm Structure Surveys; Foreign Affiliates Statistics; Foreign Direct Investment; Tourism Statistics and Community Innovation Survey.

⁷ Benchmarking means the comparison of a statistical process with other similar processes in order to improve quality and identify best practices. If one of the goals of the collaboration/sharing of best practices is to improve the statistical process these activities might be considered a kind of benchmarking.

Indicator 5.3 – Penalties are prescribed for any wilful breaches of statistical confidentiality.

Methods at institutional level

1. **Existence of provisions based on legal framework.** There are national provisions in place in the statistical law or other legal provisions on administrative, penal and disciplinary sanctions for violation of statistical confidentiality.
2. **Provisions on sanctions are available to the public.** Users of official statistical information are aware of the existing provisions on sanctions for violation of statistical confidentiality as this information is publicly available and accessible to them.

Indicator 5.4 – Guidelines and instructions are provided to staff on the protection of statistical confidentiality in the production and dissemination processes. The confidentiality policy is made known to the public.

Methods at institutional level

1. **Confidentiality policy.** A confidentiality policy is made publicly available, laying out principles and commitments related to statistical confidentiality which are consistent with the goals set out in the Mission and Vision statements.
2. **Organisational structure on the protection of statistical confidentiality.** An appropriate organisational structure exists in the statistical authority to ensure confidentiality and to provide guidelines, recommend appropriate methodologies and periodically examine methods used for data protection.
3. **Guidance to staff.** The statistical authority prepares and provides the staff with written instructions and guidelines in order to preserve statistical confidentiality when dissemination of disaggregated statistical data occurs.
4. **Methods for ensuring confidentiality.** The ongoing research in the field of confidentiality is observed permanently. The methods in use are selected in a way to counteract the trade-off between the risk of identification and the loss of information in an optimal way.
5. **Awareness of respondents regarding commitments to confidentiality.** Respondents contacted during data collection are made aware that the statistical authority commits itself fully to data protection and statistical confidentiality and the data are only used for statistical purposes and personal data are put forward under no circumstances.

Methods at product/process level

6. **Statistical disclosure control methods.** Provisions are in place to ensure that prior to the release of statistical information (aggregate data and microdata), statistical disclosure control methods are applied.
7. **Output checking.** Whenever access to confidential statistical information takes place in a secure environment (e.g. remote access, safe centre, remote execution), all output is checked for disclosure before release. Processes are in place preventing the release of output without checking for disclosure.

Indicator 5.5 – Physical, technological and organisational provisions are in place to protect the security and integrity of statistical databases.

Methods at institutional level

- 1. IT security policy.** An IT security policy for the protection and security of confidential and sensitive data is in place, covering the whole business, technical, legal, and regulatory environment in which the statistical authority operates. The policy is widely known to the staff of the statistical authority.
- 2. Security processes and measures.** The statistical authority has appropriate physical and logical security measures and processes in place to check that data security is ensured and to prevent data breaches and violation of statistical confidentiality.
- 3. IT security audits.** Regular and systematic security audits on the data security system of the statistical authority are carried out. The audit evaluates every tool and safeguard there is to protect the security and integrity of statistical databases.
- 4. Secured storage and monitoring of access to data.** All statistical data is stored in secured environments that prevent access by unauthorized persons. All access to statistical databases is strictly monitored and recorded. User rights are recorded and kept up-to-date to prevent unauthorized access. Names and addresses or other personal identifiers are deleted as early as possible.

Indicator 5.6 – Strict protocols apply to external users accessing statistical microdata for research purposes.

Methods at institutional level

- 1. Conditions for access to confidential data for scientific purposes.** Clear conditions for granting researcher access to confidential data for scientific purposes are set in the statistical law or relevant regulations. These conditions are publicly available on the website of the statistical authority.
- 2. Safeguards for researcher access to confidential data for scientific purposes.** The statistical authority ensures that all legal, technical and logical safeguards are in place to protect confidential information. Users are bound to sign an agreement on rules of usage of microdata.
- 3. Control over data duplication.** The statistical authority has appropriate measures in place to prevent duplication of data (data illegally copied or not deleted after use).

Methods at product/process level

- 4. Monitoring the use of microdata.** The use of microdata sets is monitored, to identify any circumstance in which data confidentiality may be breached. Procedures are in place to ensure immediate corrective action.

Principle 6 – Impartiality and Objectivity

Statistical authorities develop, produce and disseminate European Statistics respecting scientific independence and in an objective, professional and transparent manner in which all users are treated equitably.

Indicator 6.1 – Statistics are compiled on an objective basis determined by statistical considerations.

Methods at institutional level

1. **Guidelines on impartiality and objectivity.** Guidelines for assuring impartiality and objectivity exist at the statistical authority and are made known to statistical staff. The implementation of the guidelines is monitored.
2. **Objectivity of selection of external partners.** The criteria for the selection of external partners⁸ to conduct statistical surveys/work of the statistical authority are objective and made public.

Methods at product/process level

3. **Methodological objectivity and best practices.** Sources, concepts, methods, processes and data dissemination channels are chosen on the basis of statistical considerations and national and international principles and good practices.

Indicator 6.2 – Choices of sources and statistical methods as well as decisions about the dissemination of statistics are informed by statistical considerations.

Methods at institutional level

1. **Procedures on selection of sources.** Procedures on selection of sources of statistical information are in place and made public.
2. **Criteria for selection of sources and methodology.** Choices of sources and statistical methods as well as decisions about the dissemination of statistics are based on generally agreed methodology and best practices.
3. **Justification and information on sources and methodology.** The choices of sources and statistical methods are clearly stated in quality reports of statistical surveys/works. At the least, user-oriented quality reports are published on the website of the statistical authority.
4. **Assessment of the selection of sources and methodology.** Regular assessments statistically validate the collection mode and the methodology used.

⁸ External partners mean companies, institutions, bodies which carry out, alone or in cooperation with the NSI, statistical surveys/work. One typical example would be the selection of an external company to execute the field work (i.e. providing staff to carry out the interviews). Another example would be an institution with a specific scientific/technical competence in a certain statistical domain that cooperates with the NSI; the terms in which the cooperation occurs are usually set-up in a protocol or Service Level Agreement.

5. **Statistical considerations for non-disclosure of data.** Non-disclosure of data is only permitted for reasons of statistical confidentiality. In case of quality concerns, the data may be published with limitations clearly identified.

Indicator 6.3 – Errors discovered in published statistics are corrected at the earliest possible date and publicised.

Methods at institutional level

1. **Error treatment policy.** The statistical authority has a clear policy as to how to deal with errors, how to react when they are discovered and how they are corrected. The error treatment policy is publicly accessible.
2. **Error declaration.** Processes are in place to declare an error when found in published statistics.
3. **Announcement and correction of substantial errors.** Processes are in place for announcing and informing users promptly on substantial errors identified in published statistics and about when and how they will be / have been corrected. Errors are corrected as soon as possible.

Indicator 6.4 – Information on the methods and procedures used is publicly available.

Methods at product/process level

1. **Methodological notes and metadata.** All statistics are accompanied by relevant product and process-oriented metadata. Methodological notes and metadata on methods and procedures used are available in databases and are published on the website of the statistical authority.
2. **Transparency of processes.** The statistical authority documents its production processes. Documentation on these processes is available both for staff and users.

Indicator 6.5 – Statistical release dates and times are pre-announced.

Methods at institutional level

1. **Availability of the release calendar.** A publicly available and easily accessible release calendar is issued and made known to users in advance.
2. **Stability of the release calendar.** Changes to the dissemination schedule, when deemed absolutely necessary, are publicly and promptly announced in advance and duly accounted for. The original schedule remains public.

Indicator 6.6 – Advance notice is given on major revisions or changes in methodologies.

Methods at institutional level

1. **Calendar of regular revisions.** A calendar of the regular major revisions is issued and published by the statistical authority.
2. **Communication of information on revisions.** Information on major revisions or changes in statistical methodologies is communicated in advance using various channels by the statistical authority (e.g. in a calendar of revisions, in the statistical work programme, on a webpage, by a letter to specific users and/or in a user meeting).

Indicator 6.7 – All users have equal access to statistical releases at the same time. Any privileged pre-release access to any outside user is limited, monitored and publicised. In the event that leaks occur, pre-release arrangements are revised so as to ensure impartiality.

Methods at institutional level

1. **Formal provisions.** A formal provision is in force which specifies that statistical authorities should develop, produce and disseminate statistics in an impartial, objective, professional and transparent manner in which all users are treated equitably. Pre-release accesses⁹, if such practice exists, are publicised.
2. **Mechanisms of equal access.** Mechanisms are in place in the statistical authority to ensure equal access of all users to statistics at predetermined times.
3. **Embargo.** If processes for embargo⁹ exist, they are known to the public.
4. **Processes to prevent and handle leaks.** Processes are in place to prevent leaks from happening and to deal with them when they occur.

Indicator 6.8 – Statistical releases and statements made in press conferences are objective and non-partisan.

Methods at institutional level

1. **Objectivity in statements.** Statistical releases issued and statements made by the statistical authority are solely based on statistical findings and results.
2. **Guidelines for press releases.** Statistical press releases are compiled following clear and standard guidelines.

⁹ In the context of this principle there are no differences between pre-release access and embargo, although embargo is usually applied for pre-releases to the media (pre-release, early or under embargo access refer to the same conditions).

3. **Guidelines for press conferences.** There is a policy available to the staff on norms and rules for press conferences, including guidance on objectivity and non-partisanship.
4. **Independency of press conferences.** Press conferences take place independently of political events and are exempt from comments on political statements.

Statistical processes

European and other international standards, guidelines and good practices are fully observed in the processes used by the statistical authorities to organise, collect, process and disseminate European Statistics. The credibility of the statistics is enhanced by a reputation for good management and efficiency. The relevant aspects are sound methodology, appropriate statistical procedures, nonexcessive burden on respondents and cost effectiveness.

Principle 7: Sound Methodology.

Sound Methodology underpins quality statistics. This requires adequate tools, procedures and expertise.

Indicator 7.1: The overall methodological framework used for European Statistics follows European and other international standards, guidelines, and good practices.

Methods at institutional level

1. **A standard methodological document.** The methodological framework and the procedures for implementing statistical processes are integrated into a standard methodological document and periodically reviewed.
2. **Explanation of divergence from international recommendations.** Divergence from existing European and international methodological recommendations are explained and justified.

Indicator 7.2: Procedures are in place to ensure that standard concepts, definitions and classifications are consistently applied throughout the statistical authority.

Methods at institutional level

1. **Concepts, definitions, and classifications.** Concepts, definitions, and classifications are defined by the Statistical Authority, are applied in accordance with European and/or national legislation and are documented.
2. **A methodological organisational structure.** A methodological organisational structure¹⁰ (e.g. units, nets, committees) is in place which defines statistical methods, monitors their implementation and validates the results. In particular, it defines and makes available standard

¹⁰ A methodological organisational structure is the framework within which decisions concerning methods are taken, and which monitors that the decisions are translated into concrete action and approves of the results, or decides on corrective action if needed. The structure is formally set up and stable; it includes the definition of competencies and responsibilities. It can take the form of a committee, unit or another formal construction with a defined number of members and with a defined role and tasks in the organisation.

tools for every stage of the business process model (e.g. sampling, collecting and processing data, etc.).

Methods at product/process level

3. **Views of relevant experts and users.** Surveys or statistical processes benefit from the views of relevant experts and users where appropriate.
4. **Methodological documentation.** Methodological documentation is elaborated for each statistical process containing all pertinent information on metadata, namely concepts, methods, classifications, and is made public at least in a summary form.
5. **Attendance of seminars and workshops.** Staff attend seminars and workshops at a national or international level on the application of standards, classifications, etc.

Indicator 7.3: The business register and the frame for population surveys are regularly evaluated and adjusted if necessary in order to ensure high quality.

Methods at product/process level

1. **A procedure to update the business register.** For the business register, there is an updating procedure on all relevant changes in the population of businesses (i.e. change of activity, births, deaths, mergers, and acquisitions and other structural changes as well as changes of main variables). This update is performed continuously.
2. **Quality assessment of the business register.** The business register is subject to a regular follow-up survey on quality and/or quality indicators are calculated and evaluated.
3. **A procedure to update the household register.** For household surveys the appropriate population frame is updated regularly and sufficiently often to ensure the quality of samples.
4. **Use feedback from surveys.** Information gathered during the conduct of surveys is used to assess and improve the quality of the frame, especially its coverage.

Indicator 7.4: Detailed concordance exists between national classifications systems and the corresponding European systems.

Methods at product/process level

1. **Consistency of national classifications.** National classifications are consistent with the corresponding European classification systems.
2. **Correspondence tables.** Correspondence tables are documented and kept up-to-date. Explanatory notes or comments are made public.

Indicator 7.5: Graduates in the relevant academic disciplines are recruited.

Methods at institutional level

1. **Recruitment of staff.** Staff of the statistical authority are recruited openly and with appropriate qualifications from relevant disciplines.

2. **Qualifications requirements for posts.** Appropriate qualifications requirements are specified for all posts.

Indicator 7.6: Statistical authorities implement a policy of continuous vocational training for their staff.

Methods at institutional level

1. **A policy for the training of staff.** An adequate structure and regular processes ensure continuous vocational training of staff which is an integral part of the human resource policy.
2. **Continuous vocational training.** Continuous vocational training is encouraged and valued in the career path.
3. **Updating of staff skills.** Staff skills are updated concerning new tools and fields of study.
4. **Attendance of staff at courses.** Attendance of staff at relevant training courses and/or to national, European or other international conferences is encouraged.

Indicator 7.7: Co-operation with the scientific community is organised to improve methodology, the effectiveness of the methods implemented and to promote better tools when feasible.

Methods at institutional level

1. **Contact with the scientific community.** There is regular contact, e.g. through conferences, workshops, task forces, with the scientific community to discuss methodological, IT and innovation developments.
2. **Collaboration with colleagues at international level.** Staff collaborates on methodological issues with colleagues at international level.
3. **Participation and presentations at conferences.** Regular participation and presentations at relevant (i.e. in which there is attendance of members of the scientific community) national and international conferences is encouraged for exchange of knowledge and experiences.
4. **Organization of conferences.** National and international conferences, seminars, workshops, or similar events with the participation of the scientific community are organised by the statistical authority. Participation of ESS statistical authorities¹¹ is encouraged.

Methods at product/process level

5. **External evaluation.** Evaluations/assessments/audits of the methods used are requested from external experts where appropriate.

¹¹ According to article 4 of Regulation 223/2009 on [European statistics](#): “The European Statistical System (ESS) is the partnership between the Community statistical authority, which is the Commission (Eurostat), and the national statistical institutes (NSIs) and other national authorities responsible in each Member State for the development, production and dissemination of European statistics”. That means in practice that all NSIs are part of the ESS as well as the bodies recognised as Other National Authorities (ONAs). The official list of ONAs is in the document “List of National Statistical Institutes and other national authorities” available on the Eurostat webpage.

Principle 8: Appropriate Statistical Procedures.

Appropriate statistical procedures implemented from data collection to data validation, underpin quality statistics.

Indicator 8.1: When European Statistics are based on administrative data, the definitions and concepts used for administrative purposes are a good approximation to those required for statistical purposes.

Methods at institutional level

1. **Responsibility for statistical processing of administrative data.** The statistical authority is responsible for the statistical processing of administrative data used for European Statistics.
2. **Distinction between statistical and administrative data processing.** Statistical processing is clearly distinguished from administrative data processing and includes appropriate validation rules and specific procedures for checking quality. When administrative data are used for statistical purposes, data are treated specifically for their statistical use. This might imply deriving new variables, applying different validation and imputation rules, creating new data files, calculating weights and new aggregates and specific quality checks.

Methods at product/process level

3. **Documentation about administrative and statistical processes.** Documentation exists describing the differences between administrative and statistical processes in terms of definitions, concepts, coverage, etc.
4. **Studies about differences in concepts and measures to deal with it.** Differences in concepts between statistical and administrative data are thoroughly studied and measures to deal with these differences are taken, when appropriate.

Indicator 8.2: In the case of statistical surveys, questionnaires are systematically tested prior to the data collection.

Methods at institutional level

1. **A procedure to assess and validate questionnaires.** A procedure is in place to assess and validate questionnaires and involves relevant experts (i.e. in the statistical domain and in questionnaire design).

Methods at product/process level

2. **Testing of questionnaires.** Prior to data collection, survey questionnaires are tested by appropriate methods (questionnaire pretest, pilot in real situation, in depth - interviews, focus groups, interviewer support, etc).The response time (the interview length) is estimated at this stage, if necessary.
3. **Use of the test results.** The test results are taken into account in the process of implementing the final questionnaire, and documented in a report.

Indicator 8.3: Survey designs, sample selections, and estimation methods are well based and regularly reviewed and revised as required.

Methods at institutional level

1. **An organisational structure for guidelines, methodologies and examination of the methods used.** An appropriate organisational structure provides guidelines, recommends appropriate methodologies and periodically examines the methods used for survey sampling, sample selections and estimation methods.
2. **Reporting on methods to the public.** The statistical authority reports publicly on sample selection and estimation methods.

Methods at product/process level

3. **Compliance of survey designs and sample selections with standards.** Survey designs and sample selections are developed according to standard methods.
4. **Renewal of sample designs.** Sample designs are periodically renewed for recurrent surveys.
5. **Comparable methods for calculating accuracy.** Methods for calculating the accuracy of statistical data allow for the accuracy of European Statistics to be compared.
6. **Measurement and reporting of sampling precision.** Estimations of sampling precision are properly measured and adequately reported to users.
7. **Methodological rules applied in estimation.** Estimation methods, including the correction of non-response, data calibration and seasonal adjustment follow transparent methodological rules.

Indicator 8.4: Data collection, data entry, and coding are routinely monitored and revised as required.

Methods at institutional level

1. **An organisational structure for guidelines, methodologies and examination of the methods used.** An appropriate organisational structure provides guidelines, recommends appropriate methodologies and periodically examines the methods used for data collection, data entry and coding.

Methods at product/process level

2. **Optimization of data collection.** Data collection is optimized in order to reduce costs and response burden, to improve accuracy and to reduce non-sampling errors.
3. **Provision of documents to respondents.** Respondents are provided with all necessary documents (i.e. letters, questionnaires, leaflets, especially in the case of self-administrated questionnaires and feedback if possible). These documents are reviewed regularly.
4. **A procedure to monitor data collection techniques.** Data collection techniques are periodically monitored.

5. **Training courses for interviewers.** Training courses are provided for interviewers. For each survey, an interviewer manual/handbook exists and the accompanying interviewer procedures are implemented.
6. **A procedure to follow-up non-response.** Follow-up procedures are in place and implemented in the case of non-response.
7. **Data coding methods.** The data coding methods are documented and stored.
8. **Revision of automatic coding methods.** Automatic coding methods are periodically reviewed and revised if necessary.
9. **Quality indicators related to data collection and coding.** Quality indicators related to data collection and coding are produced and analysed according to a quality assurance plan or any other similar scheme.
10. **Support to respondents.** Respondents are given support with filling in the questionnaires (help on-line, toll-free number, support from statisticians). Procedures are in place to answer to respondents' requests and complaints.

Indicator 8.5: Appropriate editing and imputation methods are used and regularly reviewed, revised or updated as required.

Methods at institutional level

1. **An organisational structure for guidelines, methodologies and examination of the methods used.** An appropriate organisational structure provides guidelines, recommends appropriate methodologies and periodically examines editing and imputation methods.
2. **Promotion and sharing of procedures for editing and imputation.** Procedures for editing and imputation techniques are promoted and shared in order to encourage their harmonization.

Methods at product/process level

3. **Analysis of the editing and imputation.** Analysis of the effect of editing and imputation is undertaken as part of assessing the quality of data collection and processing.
4. **Compliance of editing and imputation techniques with standards.** Editing and imputation techniques follow standard methodological rules and are documented.

Indicator 8.6: Revisions follow standard, well-established and transparent procedures.

Methods at institutional level

1. **Guidelines and principles related to revisions.** Guidelines and principles relating to the revision of published statistics exist, are routinely applied and made known to users.
2. **Promotion of methodological improvements.** Methodological improvements of revision procedures are promoted through regular and permanent actions (i.e. committees, task forces, working groups, seminars on methodology or expert meetings which are in charge of periodically discussing methods to improve revision procedures; self assessments; audits etc).

Methods at product/process level

3. **Explanation of revisions.** Revisions are accompanied by all necessary explanations and made available to users.
4. **Quality indicators on revisions.** Quality indicators on the revisions made are regularly calculated in accordance with current standards and made known to users.

Indicator 8.7: Statistical authorities are involved in the design of administrative data in order to make administrative data more suitable for statistical purposes.

Methods at institutional level

1. **A procedure to monitor regulations/legal acts regarding administrative data.** A procedure is in place to monitor developments concerning regulations/legal acts which involve the use of administrative data.
2. **Consultation and involvement of the statistical authority.** The statistical authority is consulted when administrative forms or files are created, reviewed or revised and is involved in changes to the design or processing in order to assess the continuity of the series.
3. **A procedure to investigate the potential of administrative sources.** A procedure is in place to investigate the potential for statistical purposes of available administrative data sources.

Methods at product/process level

4. **Discussions and meetings with the owners of administrative data.** Regular discussions or meetings take place between the statistical authority and the owners of administrative data in order to be kept informed about amendments to the administrative data (contents, production process, etc.).

Indicator 8.8: Agreements are made with owners of administrative data which set out their shared commitment to the use of these data for statistical purposes.

Methods at institutional level

1. **Arrangements with owners of administrative data.** Arrangements between statistical authorities and owners of administrative data are in place to facilitate the use of administrative data for statistical purposes.

Methods at product/process level

2. **Documentation about administrative data.** Documentation about the contents of the administrative data and the production process of the data (such as a methodological document, concepts and definitions and populations) is available to the statistical authority.
3. **Joint agreements with the owner of administrative data.** Agreements concerning the security of the data, the provision of files of individual data and the delivery deadlines are jointly developed by the statistical authority and the owner of administrative data.

Indicator 8.9: Statistical authorities co-operate with owners of administrative data in assuring data quality.

Methods at institutional level

1. **Informing the administrative data owner.** The administrative data owner is kept informed about the way administrative data are used for statistical purposes, and related quality issues.
2. **Assessment of administrative data quality.** The statistical authority makes sure that arrangements with administrative data owners are in place and, where possible, provides tools to assess the quality of the administrative data, while respecting confidentiality¹².

Principle 9: Non-excessive Burden on Respondents.

The reporting burden is proportionate to the needs of the users and is not excessive for respondents. The statistical authorities monitor the response burden and sets targets for its reduction over time.

Indicator 9.1: The range and detail of European Statistics demands is limited to what is absolutely necessary.

Methods at institutional level

1. **Priorities for European Statistics.** Priorities for European Statistics are set at ESS level taking burden on respondents into account.
2. **Verification of the response burden and level of details.** Analysis of EU regulations on European statistics is undertaken in order to verify the response burden and level of details of variables foreseen by the regulations.
3. **Assessment of the statistical work programme.** The content of the statistical work programme is assessed to eliminate duplication or redundancy across the statistical authority.

Methods at product/process level

4. **Analysis of the needs of statistical information.** European and national needs of statistical information and level of detail by domain are analysed.
5. **Measurement of response burden.** Response burden is measured regularly and in a standardised way.
6. **Justification of each collected variable.** Each collected variable is duly justified.

¹² Data received from administrative authorities and used for statistical purposes usually undergo statistical validations. Quality problems and errors detected through those controls should be communicated, respecting the principle of statistical confidentiality as appropriate, to the administrative data owners in order to improve future data sets delivered by them to the statistical authority (e.g. by the provision of validation programmes which detect errors, outliers or even impute data before the data file is sent by the administrative data owners). Additional information which might endanger statistical confidentiality should not be provided to the administrative data owners.

7. **Consideration of alternative data sources.** To minimize data collection there is explicit consideration of alternative data sources, including the availability and suitability of existing survey and administrative data.

Indicator 9.2: The reporting burden is spread as widely as possible over survey populations.

Methods at institutional level

1. **Reviews of reporting burden.** Reviews of reporting burden are undertaken on a regular basis.
2. **Action plans for simplification/modernisation.** Action plans for simplification/modernisation to decrease burden on respondents are developed, implemented and monitored.
3. **Performance indicators on reporting burden.** Performance indicators on reporting burden are produced and analysed periodically by senior management.
4. **Use of statistical sampling methods.** Statistical sampling methods are used to ensure the reporting burden does not fall on particular categories of respondents unnecessarily.

Methods at product/process level

5. **Reduction of reporting burden.** Reporting burden is reduced by appropriate sampling design, using for example coordinated sampling.
6. **Calculation of the reporting burden.** The reporting burden is calculated for the time needed to answer the questionnaire, to retrieve the required information, to obtain internal or external expertise and to handle sensitive information.
7. **Limitation of questions.** Questions used to collect information which will not be published are limited and justified.

Indicator 9.3: The information sought from businesses is, as far as possible, readily available from their accounts and electronic means are used where possible to facilitate its return.

Methods at institutional level

1. **Manuals and technical tools.** Manuals and technical tools (e.g. software) are developed to increase the use of electronic means for data collection.
2. **A plan for electronic data collection for businesses.** A plan for implementing or expanding electronic data collection for businesses exists.
3. **A web site for business data collection.** A common web site for business data collection is in place.

Methods at product/process level

4. **Use of business accounting concepts and IT systems.** Business accounting concepts and standardised IT systems such as XBRL are used in data collections from businesses.

5. **Methods to extract data from business accounting systems.** Software methods to directly extract data from business accounting systems are available.
6. **Cooperation with the business community.** Survey managers work together with the business community in order to find adequate solutions for potential difficulties in obtaining information.
7. **Informing the businesses of the survey results.** To give thanks for their participation in surveys and to promote their importance in the statistical system, businesses are kept informed of the results of surveys.

Indicator 9.4: Administrative sources are used whenever possible to avoid duplicating requests for information.

Methods at institutional level

1. **Tools to increase the use of administrative sources.** European collaborative networks develop tools to increase the use of administrative sources.
2. **Plans to explore and use administrative sources.** Planning actions at national level are developed in order to explore and use administrative sources for statistical needs (e.g. appropriate arrangements, development of modules to be used in a coordinated way reducing/limiting response burden, national legislation or agreements if necessary).
3. **Legal obligation to provide administrative data.** Legal access to the administrative sources is granted and the administrative authorities have the obligation to provide the administrative data if requested.

Methods at product/process level

4. **Guidance on the availability and quality of administrative sources.** Guidance on the availability and quality of administrative sources is available to survey managers.
5. **Applications for the collection of administrative data.** Applications for the collection of administrative data to be used for statistical purpose are developed and implemented.

Indicator 9.5: Data sharing within statistical authorities is generalised in order to avoid multiplication of surveys.

Methods at institutional level

1. **Technical tools for data sharing.** Technical tools for data sharing within the National Statistical System¹³ (e.g. formal agreements, web services, common data bases) exist.

Methods at product/process level

2. **Documentation of repositories for data.** Documentation of repositories for production and archived data exists.

¹³ For the purpose of the production of European Statistics, the National Statistical System is made up of the NSI and the authorities listed in the official list of Other National Authorities (ONAs) published by Eurostat. ONAs are organisations identified as developing, producing and disseminating European statistics as designated by the Member States (Article 4 of Regulation (EU) No 223/2009 on European statistics).

3. **Sharing of data archives.** Data archives are shared within statistical authorities when useful and in compliance with confidentiality policies.

Indicator 9.6: Statistical authorities promote measures that enable the linking of data sources in order to reduce reporting burden.

Methods at Institutional level

1. **Key variables to be shared.** The statistical authority defines the key variables that need to be shared between statistical processes in accordance with confidentiality rules.

Methods at product/process level

2. **Documentation on the data file structures and transmission formats.** Documentation is available on the data file structures and transmission formats required for linking data sources.

Principle 10: Cost effectiveness.

Resources are used effectively.

Indicator 10.1: Internal and independent external measures monitor the statistical authority's use of resources.

Methods at institutional level

1. **Monitoring and reporting indicators of human and financial resources.** Indicators of human and financial resources are monitored centrally and regularly reported to management.
2. **Allocation of resources to statistical processes.** Accounting systems allow allocation of resources to statistical processes.
3. **Evaluation of human resources.** Human resources are evaluated annually in line with office-wide guidelines. The evaluation covers allocation, performance and training needs of staff.
4. **Staff opinion surveys.** Staff opinion surveys are conducted regularly.
5. **Reviews of IT infrastructure.** IT infrastructure is reviewed regularly.
6. **Procedures to calculate ex-ante costs.** Ex-ante cost calculation procedures are available for statistical processes.

Indicator 10.2: The productivity potential of information and communications technology is being optimized for data collection, processing and dissemination.

Methods at institutional level

1. **Pooling of resources, investments and the identification of innovation/modernisation potential.** Centralised IT and methodological units provide for pooling of resources and investments and the identification of innovation/modernisation potential.

2. **IT architecture and strategy.** An appropriate IT architecture and strategy exists and is regularly updated.
3. **Policies, procedures and tools to promote automatic processing techniques.** Policies, procedures and tools exist to promote automatic techniques for data capture, data coding and validation.

Methods at product/process level

4. **Review of the use of automated processing techniques.** The use of automated processing techniques is regularly reviewed.

Indicator 10.3: Proactive efforts are made to improve the statistical potential of administrative data and to limit recourse to direct surveys.

Methods at institutional level

1. **Arrangements with owners of administrative data.** Appropriate arrangements (e.g. Service Level Agreements or National legislation) are signed with owners of administrative data and regularly updated. The statistical authority seeks to be involved at the design of administrative data collections.
2. **Assessment of possible administrative data sources.** An assessment of possible administrative data sources is carried out prior to launching any new survey.

Methods at product/process level

3. **Data linking and integration methods.** Data linking and integration methods are pro-actively pursued subject to data security considerations.
4. **Quality indicators to improve the use of administrative data.** Quality indicators are developed and compiled to improve the methods for using administrative data for statistical purposes.

Indicator 10.4: Statistical authorities promote and implement standardised solutions that increase effectiveness and efficiency.

Methods at institutional level

1. **Standardisation programmes and procedures for statistical processes.** Standardisation programmes and procedures are defined and implemented in the main stages of statistical production areas, for example sampling, registers, data collection and data exchange, according to the business process model.
2. **A strategy to adopt or develop standards.** There is a strategy to adopt or develop standards in various fields e.g. quality management, process modelling, software development, software tools, project management and document management.

Methods at product/process level

3. **A statement in the methodological documentation.** A statement explaining steps taken to move gradually towards or to comply with standardisation is part of the reference metadata (e.g. quality reports).

Statistical output

Available statistics meet users' needs. Statistics comply with the European quality standards and serve the needs of European institutions, governments, research institutions, business concerns and the public generally. The important issues concern the extent to which the statistics are relevant, accurate and reliable, timely, coherent, comparable across regions and countries, and readily accessible by users.

Principle 11: Relevance.

European Statistics meet the needs of users.

Indicator 11.1: Processes are in place to consult users, monitor the relevance and utility of existing statistics in meeting their needs, and consider their emerging needs and priorities.

Methods at institutional level

1. **Legislation on user consultation.** The statistical laws (National and European) include an obligation to consult users.
2. **User consultation activities.** Regular and structured activities for the consultation of users, including for instance a users' Committee, are in place focusing on both, the content of the statistical programme and the product quality of the statistics.
3. **Analysis of the data on the use of statistics.** Data on the use of statistics (e.g. evaluation of downloads, subscribers of reports) are analysed to support priority setting and user consultation.

Methods at product/process level

4. **A classification of users.** A classification of users of a given product is regularly updated and made available.
5. **A list of key users and their data uses.** A list of key users and their data uses, including a list of unmet user needs, is regularly updated and made available.
6. **User consultation procedures.** Procedures for user consultation on the statistics are in place.
7. **Relevance measurement and assessment.** Quality indicator(s) on relevance are regularly assessed.

Indicator 11.2: Priority needs are being met and reflected in the work programme.

Methods at institutional level

1. **Work programme priorities.** Procedures are implemented to prioritise different user needs in the work programme.
2. **Strategic goals and programme plans.** Strategic goals and programme plans are elaborated and published regularly. User needs are taken into account following cost/benefit considerations.
3. **Agreements with most important users.** Service Level Agreements or similar arrangements defining the terms of the service provided by the statistical authorities (e.g. description of the statistical information delivered and some aspects of the quality of the information, such as their timing, accuracy, format for data exchange, conditions of use) are established with the most important users.
4. **Evaluation of the work programme.** Periodic evaluation of the work programme is carried out to identify negative priorities and emerging needs.

Indicator 11.3: User satisfaction is monitored on a regular basis and is systematically followed up.

Methods at institutional level

1. **User satisfaction surveys.** User satisfaction surveys (including e.g. compilation of quality indicators on user satisfaction) or similar user studies are carried out and assessed regularly with an office-wide scope.
2. **Improvement actions arising from the user satisfaction surveys.** Improvement actions arising from the user satisfaction surveys are defined and scheduled for implementation.

Methods at product/process level

3. **Assessment of satisfaction of key users.** Measures to assess satisfaction of key users with particular products are in place (e.g. specific user satisfaction survey/indicators on product level). The results of this assessment are published, e.g. in quality reports.

Principle 12: Accuracy and Reliability.

European Statistics accurately and reliably portray reality.

Indicator 12.1: Source data, intermediate results and statistical outputs are regularly assessed and validated.

Methods at institutional level

1. **Systems for assessing and validating data.** Systems for assessing and validating source data, intermediate results and statistical outputs are developed, implemented and managed.
2. **Procedures and guidelines for data quality assessment.** Internal procedures and guidelines for data quality assessment exist and address accuracy and reliability issues.

Methods at product/process level

3. **Comparison of results with other sources.** Results are compared with other existing sources of information in order to ensure validity.

Indicator 12.2: Sampling errors and non-sampling errors are measured and systematically documented according to the European standards.

Methods at institutional level

1. **Procedures and guidelines to measure and reduce errors.** Internal procedures and guidelines to measure and reduce errors are in place and may cover activities such as:
 - Identification of the main sources of error for key variables;
 - Quantification of sampling errors for key variables;
 - Identification and evaluation of main non-sampling error sources in statistical processes;
 - Identification and evaluation in quantitative or qualitative terms of the potential bias;
 - Special attention to outliers as well as their handling in estimation;
 - Quantification of potential coverage errors;
 - Quantification of potential measurement errors (comparison with existing information, questionnaire design and testing, information on interviewer training, etc.);
 - Quantification of non-response errors, including systematic documentation for technical treatment of non-response at estimation stage and indicators of representativeness;
 - Quantification of processing errors;
 - Analysis of the differences between preliminary and revised estimates.

Methods at product/process level

2. **Quality reporting on accuracy.** Periodic quality reporting on accuracy is in place (serving both producer and user perspectives).
3. **ESS recommendations on quality reporting.** Quality reporting on accuracy is guided by ESS-recommendations e.g. ESS handbook for quality reports.

4. **Methods and tools for preventing and reducing errors.** Methods and tools for preventing and reducing sampling and non-sampling errors are in place.

Indicator 12.3: Revisions are regularly analysed in order to improve statistical processes.

Methods at institutional level

1. **A Revision Policy.** A Revision Policy stating principles and procedures is spelled out in writing and made public according to European requirements.
2. **Explanations on revisions.** The timing of revisions, their reasons and nature are explained publicly.

Methods at product/process level

3. **Compliance of the Revision Policy with standard procedures.** The Revision Policy follows standard and transparent procedures in the context of each survey.
4. **Information on the size and direction of revisions for key indicators.** Information on the size and direction of revisions for key indicators is provided and made public.
5. **Use of analysis of revisions.** Regular analysis of revisions is used to improve the statistical process, incorporating lessons learnt to adjust the production cycle.

Principle 13: Timeliness and Punctuality.

European Statistics are released in a timely and punctual manner.

Indicator 13.1: Timeliness meets European and other international release standards.

Methods at institutional level

1. **Compliance with international standards on timeliness.** There is compliance with international standards on timeliness.
2. **Publication of a release calendar.** A release calendar is published covering all statistics, for which timeliness standards are established within European regulations or agreements at international level.
3. **A procedure to monitor and follow-up divergences from timeliness targets.** Divergences from European and international timeliness targets are regularly monitored and an action plan is developed if these targets are not met.

Methods at product/process level

4. **Quality indicator(s) on timeliness.** Quality indicator(s) on timeliness are regularly calculated and published.
5. **Analysis and assessment of quality indicator(s) on timeliness.** Quality indicator(s) on timeliness are regularly analysed and assessed to improve the statistical process, if relevant.

Indicator 13.2: A standard daily time for the release of European Statistics is made public.

Methods at institutional level

1. **A release policy¹⁴.** A release policy is defined and published. The release policy distinguishes between different kinds of publications (e.g. press releases, specific statistical reports/tables, general publications) and their corresponding release procedures.
2. **Publication at a standard daily time.** Releases are published at a standard daily time.

Indicator 13.3: The periodicity of statistics takes into account user requirements as much as possible.

Methods at institutional level

1. **Consultation of users on periodicity.** The statistical authority consults users regularly on periodicity.

Indicator 13.4: Divergence from the dissemination time schedule is publicized in advance, explained and a new release date set.

Methods at institutional level

1. **Publication of a release calendar.** A release calendar is regularly published.
2. **A procedure to monitor and assess punctuality.** Punctuality of every release is regularly monitored and assessed.
3. **Publication of divergences from the pre-announced time, the reasons for divergence and a new release time.** Divergences from the pre-announced time are published in advance, the reasons are explained, and a new release time is announced.

Methods at product/process level

4. **A procedure to calculate, monitor and disseminate quality indicators on punctuality.** Quality indicator(s) on punctuality for preliminary and final results are regularly calculated, monitored and disseminated.

Indicator 13.5: Preliminary results of acceptable aggregate accuracy can be released when considered useful.

Methods at product/process level

1. **Review of the possibility of disseminating preliminary results.** The possibility of disseminating preliminary results is reviewed regularly taking into account the data accuracy.

¹⁴ A release policy is a specific part of an overall dissemination policy. Dissemination covers all aspects – format, layout, archiving, metadata etc. Release refers specifically to the timing and procedures for publication.

2. **Reporting of the quality of preliminary results.** When preliminary results are released, appropriate information is provided to the user about the quality of the published results.
3. **A policy for scheduled revisions.** Key outputs, or groups of key outputs, which are subject to scheduled revisions have a published policy covering those revisions.

Principle 14: Coherence and Comparability.

European Statistics are consistent internally, over time and comparable between regions and countries; it is possible to combine and make joint use of related data from different sources.

Indicator 14.1: Statistics are internally coherent and consistent (i.e. arithmetic and accounting identities observed).

Methods at institutional level

1. **Procedures and guidelines to monitor internal coherence.** Procedures and guidelines to monitor internal coherence are developed and carried out in a systematic way. Where appropriate they should deal with consistency between preliminary and final data (i.e. continuity), between microdata and aggregated data, between annual, quarterly and monthly data, between statistics and National Accounts and also with non-deterministic consistency (e.g. consistency between economic growth and employment, also called plausibility).

Methods at product/process level

2. **Procedures and guidelines to ensure combination of outputs from complementary sources.** Process specific procedures and guidelines ensure that outputs obtained from complementary sources are combined so as to assure internal coherence and consistency.

Indicator 14.2: Statistics are comparable over a reasonable period of time.

Methods at institutional level

1. **Changes to concepts.** Significant changes in reality are reflected by appropriate changes to concepts (classifications, definitions and target populations).

Methods at product/process level

2. **Identification and measurement of changes in methods.** Changes in methods are clearly identified and their impact measured to facilitate reconciliation.
3. **Publication and explanation of breaks in time series.** Breaks in the series are explained and methods for ensuring reconciliation over a period of time are made public.

Indicator 14.3: Statistics are compiled on the basis of common standards with respect to scope, definitions, units and classifications in the different surveys and sources.

Methods at institutional level

1. **A mechanism to promote coherence and consistency.** A common repository of concepts or a mechanism to promote coherence and consistency is used.

Methods at product/process level

2. **Assessment of compliance with standards.** Periodic assessments of compliance with standards on definitions, units and classifications are carried out and reflected in quality reporting.
3. **Explanation of deviations from standards.** Deviations from standards on definitions, units or classifications are made explicit and the reasons for deviating are explained.

Indicator 14.4: Statistics from different sources and of different periodicity are compared and reconciled.

Methods at product/process level

1. **Comparison of statistical output with related data.** Statistical outputs are compared with other statistical or administrative data that provide the same or similar information on same domain/phenomenon.
2. **Identification and explanation of divergences.** Divergences originating from different sources are identified and reasons clearly and publicly explained.
3. **Reconciliation of statistical outputs.** Statistical outputs are reconciled whenever possible.

Indicator 14.5: Cross-national comparability of the data is ensured within the European Statistical System through periodical exchanges between the European Statistical System and other statistical systems. Methodological studies are carried out in close co-operation between the Member States and Eurostat.

Methods at institutional level

1. **Institutionalisation of assessment of comparability.** Periodic assessments of comparability are institutionalised.
2. **Collaboration in methodological studies.** Methodological studies are conducted in collaboration between Member States and Eurostat.
3. **Assessment by Eurostat of the comparability of data.** Eurostat assesses the comparability of data from the quality reports requested from Member States.

Methods at product/process level

4. **Analysis of asymmetries.** An analysis of asymmetries is carried out where possible and reports on mirror statistics between Member States are made public.
5. **Identification and corrections of discrepancies in mirror statistics.** Discrepancies in mirror statistics are identified and corrected whenever possible.

Principle 15: Accessibility and Clarity.

European Statistics are presented in a clear and understandable form, released in a suitable and convenient manner, available and accessible on an impartial basis with supporting metadata and guidance.

Indicator 15.1: Statistics and the corresponding metadata are presented, and archived, in a form that facilitates proper interpretation and meaningful comparisons.

Methods at institutional level

1. **A Dissemination Policy¹⁵.** A Dissemination Policy, defining dissemination practices, is in place and is made public. Procedures (e.g. a working group or a similar structure to systematically and periodically review the dissemination standards, assessing whether they are up-to-date and adequate) are in place to review the standards for the dissemination of statistical results.
2. **Consultations of users about dissemination.** Users are consulted about the most appropriate forms of dissemination (e.g. Focus groups, Customer Satisfaction Surveys) on a regular basis.
3. **Training courses for writing interpretations and press releases.** Training courses for interpretation of statistics and writing press releases are conducted.
4. **A policy for archiving statistics and metadata.** A policy for archiving statistics and metadata is in place.

Methods at product/process level

5. **Comparisons included in publications.** Meaningful comparisons are clearly included in publications, when appropriate.

Indicator 15.2: Dissemination services use modern information and communication technology and, if appropriate, traditional hard copy.

Methods at institutional level

1. **Website and statistical databases' conformity with universal guidelines.** The website and statistical databases conform as far as possible to universal web content accessibility guidelines (e.g. Web Content Accessibility Guidelines WCAG).
2. **Website, statistical databases and self-tabulation.** The website and statistical databases are the main means for disseminating statistical results and facilitate self-tabulation in the most appropriate formats (e.g. XLS, HTML).
3. **An information service/call centre service.** An information service/call centre service composed of knowledgeable staff is available for answering requests and clarifications of statistical results.
4. **A publication catalogue.** A publication catalogue is available to users.

¹⁵ Dissemination policy covers all aspects – format, layout, archiving, metadata etc. Release refers specifically to the timing and procedures for publication. A release policy is a specific part of an overall dissemination policy.

5. **Facilitating re-dissemination.** Statistical results are disseminated using tools and formats that facilitate re-dissemination by the media by means of, for example press releases, ready-made tables, charts, maps connected to statistics, metadata.

Methods at product/process level

6. **Consideration of various forms of dissemination.** Various forms of dissemination are considered (e.g. optical discs, web-based tools and applications, hard copies) that would allow for better understanding and comparisons of particular results and better facilitate their use in decision making.

Indicator 15.3: Custom-designed analyses are provided when feasible and the public is informed.

Methods at institutional level

1. **Communication about the possibility and terms of custom-designed analyses.** The possibility and terms of custom-designed analyses are clearly communicated.
2. **Provision of custom-designed outputs.** Custom-designed outputs are provided on request.
3. **Publication of custom-designed analysis.** Custom-designed analyses are made public where possible.
4. **An information service for making requests for custom-designed analyses.** An information service is available to enable users to make requests for custom-designed analyses.

Indicator 15.4: Access to microdata is allowed for research purposes and is subject to specific rules or protocols.

Methods at institutional level

1. **Consultation of researchers.** Researchers are regularly consulted about the rules or protocols to access microdata, about their effectiveness and about the effective access.
2. **Publication of the rules or protocols to access microdata.** The rules or protocols to access microdata are made public.
3. **Facilities to access microdata in a secure environment.** Researchers are able to access microdata in a secure environment (e.g. Safe Centers).
4. **Remote access facilities.** Remote access facilities are available with appropriate controls.

Indicator 15.5: Metadata are documented according to standardised metadata systems.

Methods at institutional level

1. **Dissemination of statistical results and metadata.** All statistical results are disseminated together with the respective metadata allowing for a better understanding of the results.

2. **Metadata linked to the statistical product.** Metadata are available and, if separate to the statistical product, clear links are presented.
3. **Accordance of metadata with European Standards.** Metadata are structured and disseminated in accordance with European Standards (e.g. SIMS).
4. **Metadata independent of the format of publication.** Metadata of statistical results are available independently of the format of publication (e.g. web, hard copies).
5. **Procedures to update and publish metadata.** Metadata is regularly updated and procedures to ensure the updating are available.
6. **Ability to clarify metadata issues.** An information service/ call centre service is able to clarify metadata issues.
7. **Training courses for staff on metadata.** Training courses on metadata are provided for the staff.

Indicator 15.6: Users are kept informed about the methodology of statistical processes including the use of administrative data.

Methods at institutional level

1. **Planning of the production of quality reports.** The regular production of standardised up-to-date user oriented quality reports and methodological documents are planned in the work programme of the statistical authority.

Methods at product/process level

2. **Publication of quality reports and methodological documents.** User-oriented quality reports and methodological documents are made public.

Indicator 15.7: Users are kept informed about the quality of statistical outputs with respect to the quality criteria for European Statistics.

Methods at product/process level

1. **Publication of quality reports.** User oriented quality reports are made public.
2. **Compliance of quality reports with ESS standards and guidelines.** User oriented quality reports are defined according to ESS standards and guidelines for quality reporting.

Annex. Reference documentation

The table below contains a list of selected references in English publicly available, which are considered a good source of guidance for the application of the ESS QAF principles and indicators. Numbers in the table show the principle (number before the dot) and the indicator (number after the dot) to which the reference is closely related. Please note that this reference documentation is based on V1.1 of the QAF and has not been updated for the V1.2.

A list of other quality assurance frameworks can be found after the table of references.

	Commitment to Quality	Soundness of Methodology	Appropriate Stat. Procedures	Non-excessive Burden	Cost Effectiveness	Relevance	Accuracy and Reliability	Timeliness and Punctuality	Coherence and Comparability	Accessibility and Clarity
References	4	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Austria										
Statistics Austria. (webpage). <i>Response Burden Barometer for mandatory business statistics</i>				9.2						
Canada										
Statistics Canada. (webpage). <i>Statistics Canada Integrated Business and Human Resources Plan 2010 to 2013.</i>		7.5								
Statistics Canada. (webpage). <i>Statistics Canada. Internal audit reports</i>	4.3									
Statistics Canada. (webpage). <i>Statistics Canada quality guidelines</i>	4.1						12.1			
Committee on monetary, financial and balance of payments (CMFB)										
Committee on monetary, financial and balance of payments (CMFB). (2007). <i>Guidelines on communication of major statistical revisions in the European Union.</i>			8.6							
Estonia										
Estonian official statistics act. (2010). <i>Announced with the President of the Republic Resolution No 703 of 21 June 2010.</i> Estonia			8.7 8.8 8.9							
Statistics Estonia. (n.d). <i>Dissemination policy.</i> Estonia						11.1 11.2 11.3		13.2 13.3 13.4		15.3 15.4
Statistics Estonia. (webpage).						11.1		13.2		15.3

	Commitment to Quality	Soundness of Methodology	Appropriate Stat. Procedures	Non-excessive Burden	Cost Effectiveness	Relevance	Accuracy and Reliability	Timeliness and Punctuality	Coherence and Comparability	Accessibility and Clarity
References	4	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
<u>Standards of services</u> . Estonia						11.2 11.3		13.3 13.4		15.4
Statistics Estonia. (webpage). <u>Statistics training courses</u> . Estonia										15.1
European foundation for quality management (EFQM)										
European foundation for quality management - EFQM. (webpage). <u>EFQM model</u>	4.1									
European institute of public administration (EIPA)										
European institute of public administration - EIPA. (webpage). <u>CAF: Common assessment framework</u>	4.1									
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	Commitment to Quality	Soundness of Methodology	Appropriate Stat. Procedures	Non-excessive Burden	Cost Effectiveness	Relevance	Accuracy and Reliability	Timeliness and Punctuality	Coherence and Comparability	Accessibility and Clarity
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