

Official statistics serving the public good

Consultation on the code of practice

July 2008



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About the UK Statistics Authority

The UK Statistics Authority is an independent body operating at arm's length from government as a non-ministerial department, directly accountable to Parliament. It was established on 1 April 2008 by the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007.

The UK Statistics Authority's overall objective is to promote and safeguard the production and publication of official statistics that serve the public good. The Statistics Authority is also required to promote and safeguard the quality and comprehensiveness of official statistics; and good practice in relation to official statistics

The Statistics Authority has three main functions:

- oversight of the Office for National Statistics (ONS) – the executive office of the Authority
- monitoring and reporting on all official statistics, wherever produced, and
- independent assessment of official statistics

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Foreword

Sir Michael Scholar, Chair of the UK Statistics Authority

Official statistics are a vital resource for government and society. They influence many decisions in government, in the management of public services and in the private sector; and these decisions affect all our lives. They also provide the citizen with a window on the work and performance of government and in this way play a central role in the processes of democracy.

The *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007* established new arrangements under which the production and publication of these statistics are now governed. It created the UK Statistics Authority and it gave us, among other powers, the authority to determine a Code of Practice and specific powers to assess the compliance of official statistics against that Code.

The Code of Practice and the assessment of compliance will be among the most crucial tools in enabling us to pursue our statutory objective of promoting and safeguarding the production and publication of official statistics that serve the public good – and thus rebuilding trust in statistics. The Code will also be fundamental to defining the common principles that we expect to be observed by all the different bodies that produce official statistics.

The draft Code in Part 1 of this consultation document is broad in its coverage and is designed to apply not just to those involved in statistical work but to all who work within organisations that produce official statistics, including those who advise government ministers and press offices. This broad coverage reflects the pattern of international codes such as the United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and the European Statistics Code of Practice, and the draft is consistent with these. It is also consistent with the existing National Statistics Code of Practice which it will replace – there is no change in the essential values.

I believe our proposals are well thought-out and coherent. The Statistics Authority will, however, be happy to consider further changes or additions to the proposals if the response to the consultation suggests that this would help to promote confidence in the statistical service. Please let us know what you think.

Michael Scholar

Introduction

The UK Statistics Authority has the objective of ‘promoting and safeguarding the production and publication of official statistics that serve the public good’ (*Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007*, section 7(1)).

1. A consultation document published in 1998, *Statistics: A Matter of Trust*, described the Government’s aims for statistics in the following way: “Quality needs to be assured. Official statistics must be sufficiently accurate and reliable for the purposes for which they are required ... the production and presentation of official statistics needs to be free from political interference, and to be seen as such, so that the objectivity and impartiality of statistics is assured”.

2. A Government consultation document *Independence for Statistics: A Consultation Document*, published in March 2006, set out plans for legislation, reiterating that the objectives set out in 1998 remained the Government’s aim. The UK Statistics Authority endorses the aims but notes that the statistical service is more than just the numbers themselves. Of course, statistics must be as accurate and reliable as they reasonably can be, and free from any political interference, but they must also be planned to meet the future needs of society and communicated in ways that are as helpful as possible to those who rely on them to inform their decisions – and in some respects that is all of us. The draft Code of Practice in this consultation document reflects this broad interpretation of the aims.

3. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) is the United Kingdom’s central statistics office. However, ONS is just one part of the statistical system and, in practice, statistical production occurs across a wide range of government departments, the devolved administrations and other public bodies, covering all areas of activity (including the economy, employment, population, crime, education and health). This decentralised approach to the statistical system offers real benefits in terms of support to policy work in government, but it also creates challenges in organisation and management that are different from those faced by more centralised national statistical offices around the world. The draft Code of Practice has been developed with the UK’s decentralised system in mind.

4. *The Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007* requires that the UK Statistics Authority (referred to as the ‘Statistics Board’ in the Act) must consult on the content of a Code of Practice for Statistics and on the principles and procedures that it will adopt in exercising its duty to assess compliance against the Code.

5. More specifically, section 10 of the Act requires the Authority to ‘prepare, adopt and publish a Code of Practice for Statistics’. In preparing the Code, the Authority must consult Ministers in each of the devolved administrations and ‘such other persons as it thinks fit’.

6. Section 12 of the Act requires the Authority, at the request of Ministers in the Cabinet Office and the devolved administrations, to assess and determine whether the Code of Practice has been complied with in relation to any official statistics. Where the Authority determines that the Code has been complied with, it is required to designate the statistics as ‘National Statistics’. Otherwise it must decline to designate them.

7. Once statistics have been designated as ‘National Statistics’, the body responsible for their production is under a statutory duty to continue to comply with the Code. The Authority must re-assess from time to time whether those statistics continue to be Code-compliant. The Act states that the duty to comply with the Code rests with the ‘person producing the statistics’. In practice we interpret this to mean the producer organisation as a whole. The Code does not distinguish between statistics according to which officials are involved in their production.

8. The Code will play a central role in the fulfilment of the Authority’s statutory objective to ensure that official statistics serve the ‘public good’. Once the Code has been adopted, the Authority will keep its operation under review and propose amendments as necessary. Any material amendments to the Code will be subject to further consultation.

Principles and procedures

9. The Act requires the Authority, in carrying out the functions of assessment and designation, to prepare and publish a statement of:

- the principles to which it will have regard, and
- the procedures which it will adopt.

The Authority is further required in preparing this statement to consult Ministers in the devolved administrations and such other persons as it thinks fit.

10. This consultation document is in two parts:

Part 1 explains the background to the Authority’s proposals for the Code of Practice and sets out the draft text.

Part 2 sets out the draft Statement of Principles and Procedures relating to the assessment and designation functions.

11. The Annexes contain background information on the existing National Statistics Code of Practice and relevant international codes and on the Authority itself.

Open consultation

12. The UK Statistics Authority welcomes views on both the draft Code of Practice (Part 1) and on the principles and procedures for assessment (Part 2). You may wish to consider the following questions:

- i. Does the draft Code achieve the right balance between being concise and offering sufficient clarity in what is expected of bodies that produce official statistics?
- ii. Are the 10 main principles in the Code the right principles to emphasise and do the associated 'practices' support them adequately?
- iii. Are there any further aspects of good practice that should be considered for inclusion in the Code?
- iv. With reference to the discussion of departmental policy statements issued alongside statistical releases, at paragraph 33 below, should the Code include requirements on the lines of those suggested?
- v. Is the treatment, in Protocol 1 to the Code, of access to official statistics before their publication satisfactory, given the requirement that pre-release access to official statistics *in their final form* is specifically excluded from the coverage of the Code (see paragraph 37)?
- vi. Should Protocol 3 to the Code, concerning the use of administrative sources for statistical purposes be expanded to cover a wider range of issues (see paragraph 40)?

13. The consultation period begins with the publication of this document and will run for 12 weeks. Please ensure that your response reaches us by **30 September 2008**.

14. Responses to the consultation should be sent to:

Code of Practice Consultation
UK Statistics Authority
Statistics House
Myddelton Street
London
EC1R 1UW

Alternatively, responses can be sent by email to:
authority.consultations@statistics.gsi.gov.uk

15. This document can also be found on the UK Statistics Authority website at <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk>. The consultation is conducted in line with the Better Regulation Executive's *Code of Practice on Consultation*, which contains six key criteria governing written consultation. Further information about this is available online at <http://www.berr.gov.uk/bre/>

16. When responding, please state whether you are responding as an individual or representing the views of an organisation. If responding on behalf of an organisation, please make clear who the organisation represents and, where applicable, how the views of members were assembled.

17. All written responses will be made public on the Statistics Authority's website unless the author specifically requests otherwise. In the case of electronic responses, general confidentiality disclaimers that often appear at the bottom of e-mails will be disregarded for the purpose of publishing responses unless an explicit request for confidentiality is made in the body of the response.

18. Even where confidentiality is requested, if a request for disclosure of the consultation response is made in accordance with the *Freedom of Information Act 2000*, and the response is not covered by one of the exemptions in the legislation, the UK Statistics Authority may be obliged to disclose the response in whole or in part.

Part 1

Code of Practice for Official Statistics

19. There has been a formal code of practice for UK official statistics for more than ten years but it has evolved over that time. The most recent version, *the National Statistics Code of Practice*, was published in stages from 2002. That code took the form of a set of broad principles and 12 associated protocols. More information about it can be found at **Annex 1**.

20. In October 2007, the former Statistics Commission published a report, *Proposals for a Code of Practice of Official Statistics*.¹ This argued for a shorter and simpler Code more suited to supporting the assessment function provided for in the Act. The report built on proposals which the Commission had issued for consultation in December 2006, and which received some 16 substantive responses from national and international experts and organisations.

21. Respondents to the Commission's proposals were mostly positive. For example:

- 'We support the Code's central aim to strengthen public confidence in UK official statistics. We also strongly agree that longstanding public trust needs to be fostered through ... a statutory code which is seen to be respected.' (*Committee on Standards in Public Life*)
- 'The ESRC fully supports explaining the principles and practices of the Code in lay terms and recognises the extended usability of the Code that will ensue'. (*Economic and Social Research Council*)

1 http://www.statscom.org.uk/C_1213.aspx

22. A full account of the responses and the subsequent amendments made in response to them is given in the Statistics Commission's report *Proposals for a Code of Practice of Official Statistics*.

European statistical system

23. In 2005 the European Statistical System (ESS) – the partnership of Eurostat and the National Statistical Institutes (NSIs) of the Member States – endorsed a new European Statistics Code of Practice. This is reproduced at **Annex 2**. At the same time the European Commission member states outlined a strategy to implement and monitor compliance with that Code. This strategy, supported by the Statistical Programme Committee, is characterised by self-assessment (of compliance against the European Code) and NSI reporting, reinforced by peer reviews to help identify areas in which NSIs and Eurostat should take steps to improve their compliance. Economic and Finance Ministers of EU Member States endorsed the ESS's approach to improving the independence, integrity and accountability of the national and Community statistical authorities.

24. The first round of peer reviews is now complete, and all reports have been published by Eurostat. Further steps, possibly including a strengthening of the European Code of Practice, will be outlined in an implementation report from Eurostat to be presented to the European Parliament and to the Council of Ministers in November 2008.

25. This consultation document, a *Code of Practice for Official Statistics*, has been informed by, and is consistent with, the European Statistics Code of Practice. The UK Statistics Authority has adopted a structure broadly similar to the European Code, which sets out a number of high level principles, each of which is further amplified by a series of more detailed indicators. In the European context this approach has served the peer review process well, and the Authority believes that it will lend itself equally to the Authority's assessment function.

26. In developing the Code on behalf of the Authority, officials have held high level discussions with Eurostat experts, and we have taken into account the broad areas in which the European Code is likely to evolve.

The nature of the draft Code

27. The UK Statistics Authority agrees with the view expressed by the former Statistics Commission in its October 2007 report that the new statutory framework would require a code that, while covering much the same ground as the existing National Statistics Code of Practice, should be different in some respects. The Code should:

- Be shorter, simpler and more imperative in style – both so that individuals might find it easier to understand and remember, and also so that bodies that produce statistics are more readily able to establish whether their practices are Code-compliant.
- As far as possible, provide an unambiguous and structured basis for independent assessment.
- Benefit from being closer in style, structure and content to the European Statistics Code of Practice, compliance with which is expected of all producers of European statistics.
- Be drafted to apply to all bodies that produce official statistics, not just to statistical staff or to the statistics themselves.
- Not set out exceptions and exemptions in the text of the Code. Instead, another mechanism should be adopted for agreeing and documenting necessary exceptions and special cases. This change has the effect of substantially shortening the Code.

28. The draft Code presented below is based directly on an edited version of the existing National Statistics Code of Practice, so it is not fundamentally different in concept. There are, however, some additional principles and practices now included, mostly based on concepts in the European Statistics Code of Practice. Among the aspects which differ from the existing Code are:

- The requirement on producer bodies, under Principle 2 of the draft Code, to investigate and document the use made of official statistics and the types of decisions they inform, and the key areas of emerging demand and unmet need. Investigation of these issues serves as an important contribution to planning and quality assurance of statistics.

- The inclusion of a principle on resources (Principle 10). This follows the model of the European Code and is appropriate where the Code will apply to a number of largely autonomous organisations.
- The requirement that exceptions and exemptions to the application of the Code will be made only by agreement with the UK Statistics Authority.
- The inclusion of three new Protocols containing fuller guidance on (i) release practices, (ii) consultation, and (iii) the use of administrative sources for statistical purposes. The protocol on the use of administrative sources addresses an aspect of statistical work that is of growing importance, and it is desirable that the Code should set out how the UK Statistics Authority will seek to ensure that the use of such sources is being managed in the public interest.
- The removal of the 12 protocols to the existing Code which, other than where they are adequately covered in the revised Code, will be further developed and treated as supplementary guidance notes, but not as integral parts of the Code.

Structure and future revision

29. The draft Code consists of a preamble addressing the context within which the Code will apply, ten Principles, and the three Protocols referred to above. Each principle is in turn supported by a statement of related practices but where a practice supports several principles, it is not normally repeated.

30. The principles are expected to remain stable over time but the statements of practices and protocols may be revised from time to time. The UK Statistics Authority will consult publicly on any material revisions to the Code in the future. To indicate that the Code is subject to revision, it will carry an edition identifier when it is published.

31. The assessment process will not involve 'scoring' the work of producers of statistics against each part of the Code. Assessment will rather look at the work in the round and use the Code as a guide to what is expected. So there is no implicit order of precedence or priority among the elements of the Code and none should be inferred from the order of the principles or the number of associated practices.

32. The principles and practices of the Code are mostly not specific about what level of compliance will be regarded as sufficient. For example, the Code states that producers of statistics shall ‘investigate and document the needs of users’ (Principle 2, Practice 3), but is not specific about how this should be done. Further guidance about steps that would constitute satisfactory compliance will be prepared as the Assessment function develops experience of current practice. Initially, a measure of latitude will be allowed in matters of interpretation. Where Assessment identifies scope for improvement in such cases this will normally be reported as a recommendation for action rather than as a failure to comply.

Government statements issued alongside statistics

33. The draft Code requires that ministerial or policy statements – of the kind which government departments commonly issue separately from, but at the same time as, the release of statistics – should not precede the release of statistics to which they refer (Principle 1, Practice 1). The intention here is that the Code should preclude any such statement, including background verbal statements to journalists or embargoed press releases, before the statistics are in the public domain. This would apply whether the statement contained the actual figures or just speculative comment about what they might show.

34. However, the Statistics Commission suggested in its 2007 report *Proposals for a Code of Practice of Official Statistics* that consideration should be given to including in the Code some basic standards for departmental statements issued in parallel to the release of statistics.

35. **We are therefore inviting views** on whether the Code should include a requirement that government statements relating directly to statistics (and issued at or about the time of first release of those statistics) should:

1. Contain a prominent link to the statistical release.
2. Be clearly labelled as a policy statement (or ministerial statement) and be readily distinguished from a statistical release.
3. Should meet basic professional standards in the use of statistics within the policy statement (for example, statistics should be cited accurately, charts should be drawn in an accurate and impartial way).

Publication hub

36. The Office for National Statistics, working with colleagues from across the GSS, have developed a new website called the Publication Hub.² Protocol 1 to the Code requires (Practice 3) that all National Statistics should be released via the Publication Hub. The Hub has been developed as a portal to all releases of National Statistics, and serves both to improve accessibility – helping users find statistical releases from a single, central location – and to reinforce the separation of policy comment by government from statistical releases.

Pre-release access

37. Pre-release access is defined in the Act as ‘access to the statistics in their final form prior to publication’. Section 11 of the Act specifically prevents the Code of Practice from dealing with ‘any matter relating to the granting of pre-release access to official statistics’, which will instead be determined by Orders (secondary legislation) made under the Act. With this exception, there are no specific constraints on the content of the Code.

38. The Act states that ‘the Code shall apply in relation to any official statistic as if it included any rules and principles provided for in relation to those statistics’. What this means is that the Code has to be read as if the rules and principles relating to pre-release access were part of it – and thus the assessment process will take account of compliance with those rules regardless of the fact that they are not set out in the Code. This is explained further in Part 2 below.

39. Because pre-release access is defined in the Act to refer only to statistics in their final form prior to publication, the question of the treatment of statistics *before* they reach that final form remains a matter for the Code of Practice. Thus there are references in Protocol 1 to the Code to principles governing access to statistics before publication. These references do not apply to statistics in their final form.

2 <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/index.asp>

Administrative sources

40. A large and growing proportion of official statistics are produced from data originally collected for administrative purposes, such as school records, hospital records and payment of benefits. The draft Code includes, for the first time, a set of requirements (Protocol 3) concerning practical issues that arise from using such sources. **We would welcome views** on whether the protocol should be expanded to cover a wider range of issues and, if so, what it should require producer bodies to do in addition to the points already included.

Draft Code of Practice for Official Statistics

Preamble

- i. Official statistics are fundamental to good government, the delivery of public services and decision-making in all sectors of society. They are also essential to democracy, providing Parliament and public with a window on society and the economy, and on the work and performance of government.³
- ii. Such statistics are produced by a large number of public bodies. Observance of a common Code of Practice by all such bodies is central to maintaining a unified statistical service that meets the needs of government and the wider community and is both trustworthy and trusted.
- iii. The *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007* requires that the UK Statistics Authority (referred to as the 'Statistics Board' in the Act) prepares and publishes a Code of Practice and assesses compliance against the Code. Official statistics assessed as compliant with the Code are designated 'National Statistics'. The Act requires that bodies which produce National Statistics must ensure that the Code continues to be observed in relation to those statistics.

³ Official statistics are as defined in section 6 of the *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007*

- iv. This Code is consistent with the United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics⁴ and the European Statistics Code of Practice.⁵
- v. The Code applies to all public bodies that produce official statistics, some of which are outside the Civil Service. The Code is, however, consistent with the Civil Service core values of integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality.⁶ In relation to statistical work, these should be interpreted as follows:
- Integrity** – putting the public interest above organisational, political or personal interests
- Honesty** – being truthful and open about the statistics and their interpretation
- Objectivity** – using scientific method to collect statistics and basing statistical advice on rigorous analysis of the evidence
- Impartiality** – acting solely according to the merits of the statistical evidence, serving equally well all aspects of the public interest.
- vi. The Code contains ten principles and, in relation to each, a statement of associated practices. It also contains three more detailed protocols – on practice in relation to the release of statistics, on consultation, and on the use of administrative data for statistical purposes. The Code has been framed to support the assessment of compliance both by the bodies that produce the statistics and independently by the UK Statistics Authority.

4 United Nations Statistics Division *Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics* (2006)

5 Eurostat *European Statistics Code of Practice: For national and community statistical authorities* (2005)

6 Cabinet Office *Civil Service Code* (2006)
http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/propriety_and_ethics/civil_service/civil_service_code.aspx

- vii. The requirements of the Code are specific but there will often be a need for interpretation and professional judgement. The National Statistician and the Head of Assessment⁷ will provide supplementary advice and guidance to assist producers of statistics.
- viii. Some practices set out in the Code are relevant to more than one principle. In the interests of conciseness, the practices are not normally repeated under different principles. That does not mean they are less relevant where not cited explicitly.
- ix. Under some circumstances it may be appropriate for the UK Statistics Authority to agree exemptions or exceptions to the practices, though not the principles. Bodies that produce National Statistics and are aware of a need for an exemption should make a case to the Head of Assessment. Details of all exceptions and exemptions that are agreed will be made public.
- x. The Code has the effect of placing different obligations on different groups of officials within bodies that produce official statistics: those with direct responsibility for statistical functions have obligations in relation to professional independence and for quality assurance; other officials need to ensure an environment in which statistical production and professional independence are supported.
- xi. It is implicit in the Code that, within those bodies that produce official statistics, there will be sufficient managerial separation between officials responsible for National Statistics and other staff of the organisation to ensure clear lines of accountability for observance of the Code.
- xii. The Code employs the phrase 'production, management and dissemination of official statistics' to refer to the entire statistical process from the decision to collect or compile data through to providing advice to the user.

⁷ The National Statistician and Head of Assessment are statutory office holders with responsibilities set out in sections 30 to 32, and section 33 of the *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007* respectively.

Principle 1: Integrity

At all stages in the production, management and dissemination of official statistics, the public interest should prevail over organisational, political or personal interests.

Practices

1. Issue statistical reports separately from any other statement or comment about the figures and ensure that no statement or comment is issued to the press or published ahead of the statistics.
2. Ensure that those producing such reports are protected from any political pressures that might influence the presentation of the statistics.
3. Follow all statutory obligations and internationally endorsed guidelines governing the collection of data, confidentiality, privacy and release.
4. Release National Statistics in accordance with the Protocol on Release Practices (Protocol 1).
5. Produce, and make publicly available, assessments of user satisfaction in relation to key outputs and services.
6. Keep records of feedback from users, including complaints, and make these records available on request, together with what action was taken.
7. Inform the National Statistician and the Head of Assessment about complaints which relate to professional integrity, quality or standards, whether or not they can be resolved directly.

8. Implement controls to ensure that individuals do not abuse the trust placed in them for personal gain.
9. Enable statistical experts within each producer body to comment publicly on statistical issues.

Principle 2: Relevance

The planning, production and dissemination of official statistics should be managed so as to meet the requirements of informed decision-making by government, public services, business and the wider community. As far as possible, official statistics should be internally consistent, consistent over time, and comparable between producers.

Practices

1. Under the guidance of the UK Statistics Authority adopt systematic statistical planning arrangements, including transparent priority-setting, that reflect the obligation to serve the public good.
2. Report annually to the UK Statistics Authority on progress against statistical plans.
3. Investigate and document the needs of users of official statistics, the use made of existing statistics and the types of decision they inform, and the key areas of emerging demand and unmet need. Take these into account in the planning process and report the results.
4. When changes are being considered to official statistics, consult users effectively. Consultation should follow the Protocol on Consultation (Protocol 2).
5. Adopt common statistical sampling frames, questions, definitions, statistical units and classifications (including common geographic referencing and coding standards) to promote comparability across official statistics. Make the reasons for deviations from standard models publicly available.

6. Adopt international standards, concepts, definitions and classifications to promote international comparability wherever practicable and support the development of those standards through effective engagement with international organisations.
7. Where time series data are revised, or changes are made in methodology or coverage, consistent historical data should be produced wherever possible, taking into account user requirements.

Principle 3: Sound methodology and assured quality

Methods for the production, management and dissemination of official statistics should accord with scientific principles and internationally recognised best practice and be fully documented. Quality should be monitored and assured taking account of internationally agreed concepts of statistical quality.

Practices

1. Ensure that official statistics are produced according to scientific principles and to a level of quality that meets user needs. Make publicly available detail of the methodologies adopted, including explanation of why particular choices were made.
2. Adopt quality assurance procedures that assess each statistical product against user requirements, and in terms of how they harmonise with other products. In doing so, draw on all available sources of expertise.
3. Support centrally managed reviews of statistical products including reviews of standards and classifications.
4. Seek to achieve continuous improvement in the statistical and managerial processes underlying all statistical products.
5. Identify any potential sources of statistical bias in estimates and provide users with an evaluation of the extent and direction of bias wherever practicable.
6. Maintain back-up arrangements to minimise the risk of loss or corruption of statistical resources, proportionate to the importance of each resource.

7. Manage official statistics in accordance with relevant public records legislation and codes of practice on records management.

Principle 4: Value for money

The resources allocated to statistical work should be used optimally to deliver outputs that meet the needs of users inside and outside government.

Practices

1. Monitor expenditure against business plans and demonstrate effective stewardship of funds allocated to statistical work.
2. Seek to balance quality against costs (including both costs to government and providers), taking into account the expected uses of the statistics.
3. Make full use of shared statistical planning arrangements with other producers of official statistics both to minimise the risk of duplication in statistical production and to make it possible to use existing sources, in combination where appropriate, to meet user needs.
4. Plan statistical production in such a way that it adds value to other parts of the statistical system where possible.
5. Maximise opportunities for use of existing administrative data, cross-analysis of sources and for the exchange and re-use of data. Where possible, use common information technology and information management systems which facilitate the flow of information between producers of statistics. Where administrative sources are used for statistical purposes, follow the practices set out in Protocol 3.
6. Use project management techniques, risk management and business continuity planning in ways that secure value for money.

7. Ensure that the balance between resources committed to the production of statistics and resources for their presentation, dissemination and communication, is such as to encourage maximum use of official statistics in the public interest.

Principle 5: Communication

Official statistics, and information about statistical processes, should be published in a form convenient to users and in as much detail as is practicable and allowed by confidentiality constraints.

Practices

1. Make statistics available in as much detail as is reliable and practicable, subject to legal and confidentiality constraints, offering choice and flexibility in the format according to the level of detail required by the user.
2. Publish documentation on procedures followed in the production and dissemination of official statistics – in sufficient technical detail to allow users to understand how calculations have been made.
3. Announce substantial methodological changes well in advance of the release of statistics based on the new methods.
4. Provide a statement explaining the nature and extent of revisions at the same time that they are released.
5. Release statistical work in progress, in whole or in part, where justified and approved by the National Statistician, or Chief Statistician in a devolved administration. For example, ‘experimental statistics’⁸ may be published in order to involve users and other stakeholders in their development. They must be clearly marked as such and explained in both technical and lay terms.

⁸ Experimental statistics are official statistics undergoing evaluation. They are published in order to involve users and stakeholders in their development and as a means to build-in quality at an early stage.

6. Correct errors discovered in statistical outputs, and alert stakeholders via the relevant website or directly.

Principle 6: Presenting statistics

The style and content of statistical reports should be balanced and impartial, and meet the needs of users.

Practices

1. Present statistics impartially and in ways that users find helpful.
2. Provide full and helpful commentary on the relevance and reliability of statistics in relation to the range of potential uses.
3. Prepare and disseminate analyses which aid interpretation and provide context, including analysis of the main findings.
4. Where it will help users, include factual information about the policy context of official statistics. However, statistical text and interpretation should not be subject to approval by anyone other than those responsible for the statistical product.
5. Release datasets and reference databases in formats that are convenient to the widest range of users supported by documentation.
6. Adopt formats for the presentation of statistics in graphs, tables and maps that provide clarity and consistency.

Principle 7: Accessibility

Official statistics should be equally and readily accessible to all users.

Practices

1. Make official statistics equally available to all and at the same time, subject to any rights to pre-release access established under the Pre-Release Access to Official Statistics Orders made under the *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007*.
2. Make access to official statistics as straightforward as possible by providing easy-to-use entry points and exploiting all appropriate means of dissemination, working with other producers and with organisations outside government as appropriate.
3. Release all regular statistical reports on the internet without charge to the user.
4. For any supplementary statistical services for which a charge is made, adopt clear pricing policies that comply with legislation and government policy.
5. Ensure that official statistics are disseminated in forms which enable those with disabilities to access them, as far as possible.
6. Publicise official statistics in ways that enable users to identify and access information relevant to their needs.
7. Assess user satisfaction with the form and timing of official statistics outputs and the publicity provided, following the Protocol on Consultation (Protocol 2).

8. Ensure that official statistics are made publicly available in forms that enable and encourage re-use.
9. Deposit official statistics with the relevant national archive in accordance with relevant legislation. Deposits should be accompanied by information about their purposes, design and methodology to aid their re-use.

Principle 8: Confidentiality

Information identifying a particular person (including a body corporate) that is collected or used for statistical purposes should be strictly protected and not subsequently used for non-statistical purposes, except as provided for in legislation and authorised by the National Statistician or the Chief Statistician in a devolved administration.

Practices

1. Make a public commitment that no statistics will be released that reveal personal information (except as provided for in the *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007*, other legislation related to statistics or where specifically agreed with the individual). Notify all respondents to statistical surveys accordingly at the time of data collection.
2. Take into account the potential for indirect disclosure and the implications of that disclosure for the individuals concerned when deciding whether to release statistics.⁹
3. Inform respondents of the main intended uses and access limitations applying to the information they provide in response to statistical surveys.
4. Develop and apply methods for the management of data that are sufficient to maintain the guarantee of confidentiality to data providers, recognising users' needs for high quality statistical research and results.
5. Keep data (that identify personal information) collected for statistical purposes secure and ensure that they are used

⁹ In this context, 'indirect disclosure' refers to the possibility that otherwise non-disclosive material could reveal confidential information if subsequently put together with, possibly as yet unpublished, information from another source. For example, local crime statistics might be put together with information subsequently disclosed in court.

exclusively for statistical purposes.

6. Restrict access to data identifying personal information to the minimum number of staff necessary to the production of official statistics and ensure that they have been trained in their obligations to protect confidentiality. Require anyone to whom such access is provided to sign a declaration covering their obligations to protect confidentiality and to comply with this Code. Maintain records of these declarations.
7. Only allow access to confidential data by a third party (for example, a contractor) after a written agreement has been signed setting out how the data are to be processed and for what statistical purposes, and that the third party will follow all the requirements of this Code of Practice. Keep records of any such access.
8. Should a situation arise in which the law requires information identifying an individual, which has been collected for statistical purposes, to be made available for other purposes, the information may only be provided on the written authorisation of the National Statistician or a Chief Statistician in a devolved administration.

Principle 9: Proportionate burden

The cost burden on data providers should not be excessive and should be assessed relative to the benefits arising from the use of the statistics.

Practices

1. Report annually the estimated costs (for example, on businesses, service providers, the public) of responding to statistical surveys and strive to develop methods that will reduce the costs to individual organisations or people.
2. Seek participation in statistical surveys through informed consent wherever possible, and exercise statutory authority for data to be acquired by compulsion only when there are clear benefits in doing so.
3. Promote statistical purposes in the design of administrative systems so that maximum use can be made of them for statistical purposes, thus reducing the need to carry out separate data collections.
4. Carry out analysis of the costs of proposed new surveys to data providers against the potential benefits of conducting them, and repeat these analyses periodically for regular surveys.
5. Wherever possible draw on existing data sources (including in combination) and data estimation as alternatives to new surveys.

Principle 10: Adequate resources

The resources made available for statistical activities should be sufficient to meet the requirements of this Code.

Practices

1. Ensure that statistical services have the staff, financial and computing resources to produce and disseminate official statistics to the standards of this Code – and in doing so meet the needs of users.
2. If changes in resource allocation to particular statistical activities are under consideration, ensure that users are consulted before decisions are made. Include in budgets specific resources for user consultation.
3. Ensure that the allocation of resources matches the requirements of the work programme that emerges from the planning process, and that an adequate audit trail is maintained and made publicly available.
4. Use an appropriate competence framework to set the requirements of statistical posts and the development needs of staff.
5. Ensure that posts which require professional statistical skills (as set out in the relevant competence framework) are filled by individuals who have been appointed through external or internal schemes that specifically assess such skills to common standards.
6. Support staff in their continuing professional development to maintain and extend their statistical knowledge and skills.

Protocol 1: Protocol on release practices

The practices set out below are designed to ensure that statistical reports are released into the public domain in an orderly manner that promotes public confidence and gives equal access to all (subject to arrangements to be set out in forthcoming secondary legislation¹⁰ on pre-release access to official statistics).

1. Release statistics as soon as they, and any accompanying commentary and analysis, are judged ready so that there is no opportunity, or perception of opportunity, for the release to be withheld or delayed.
2. Maintain a rolling Timetable of Statistical Releases for twelve months ahead. This should state the month of release as early as practicable and the exact release date no less than four weeks in advance.
3. Release all National Statistics via the Publication Hub.¹¹
4. Issue statistical releases at the standard time of 9.30am on a weekday to maintain consistency and permit time to understand and respond to the information during normal working hours
5. Ensure that the responsibility for the format and content of statistical reports rests with the relevant statistical Head of Profession and ensure that the name of that person appears in each report for which s/he is responsible.

¹⁰ Pre-release access arrangements will be set out in Orders laid before the UK Parliament and Scottish Parliament.

¹¹ The aim of the Publication Hub is to provide a central place through which users of statistics will be able to access the new National Statistics published across Government, separate from any ministerial or political commentary. The Publication Hub is available online at <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/index.asp>

6. Draw public attention to any change to a pre-announced release date and explain fully the reasons for the change at the same time.
7. Limit access before public release to those persons essential to production and publication, subject to compliance with the rules and principles on pre-release access made under the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 (which may allow pre-release access to a wider range of people). Maintain records of all who have access prior to release.
8. Ensure that no indication of the content of a statistical report is made public, or given to the media or any other party not recorded as eligible for access before publication. Report to the National Statistician and the Head of Assessment immediately any accidental or wrongful release and initiate immediate investigation of the circumstances.
9. Do not give journalists, or others, embargoed access to statistical reports except where the UK Statistics Authority has authorised that to do so is in the public interest. Such embargo arrangements shall be regarded as exceptional and reported to Parliament or the relevant devolved legislature by the UK Statistics Authority.
10. Market-sensitive statistics – special arrangements apply to market-sensitive official statistics. Any attempt to profit from pre-release access to these statistics is liable to criminal prosecution. For the purposes of the Code the following are currently identified as market sensitive:
 - Index of production
 - Index of services
 - Producer prices
 - Consumer price indices
 - Labour market statistics
 - Retail sales
 - Public sector finances
 - UK trade
 - National accounts (all measures)
 - Balance of payments

11. In releasing market-sensitive statistics, producer organisations will:

- Provide the date of release at least six months in advance.
- Should the need arise, require anyone given pre-release access to make a signed declaration that they have only used the information for the specific purpose for which they were given such access, and that they have not passed any data or analysis on that data to anyone else.

Protocol 2. Protocol on consultation

1. Unless a specific agreement already exists, contact user groups and discuss with them the best means of obtaining views before consultation starts.
2. Alert users of statistics as information about consultations becomes available.
3. Balance the importance of the issue and the likely impact of user views against the time and resources available so as to obtain good value for money from the consultation process.
4. Inform the National Statistician and relevant Chief Statistician in the devolved administrations about any formal consultations in order to avoid duplication and to make widest possible use of ideas, comments and other materials that are offered in responses.
5. Work with other producers of official statistics to co-ordinate consultations in order to give participants the best opportunity for effective input and to minimise the burden placed upon them.
6. Make all consultation documents publicly available.
7. Be clear in the documentation about who is being consulted, about what, and for what purpose.
8. Express the issues as simply and concisely as possible; and in non-technical language where possible.
9. Make a timetable for each consultation publicly available and ensure that each part of the process is given sufficient time for those interested to participate fully and properly.
10. Offer a variety of means of participation including, as appropriate, web sites, email, telephone, written submissions and face-to-face meetings.

11. Follow relevant central guidance on how consultations should be conducted.
12. Exploit the many mechanisms available, including:
 - Formal consultation documents (which should set out and summarise the key issues);
 - Issuing a discussion paper to interested parties;
 - Listening events such as conferences, roadshows and seminars. Events held by professional bodies, user groups and other organisations can provide valuable opportunities;
 - Meetings, correspondence and phone calls with groups or individuals;
 - Internet mailing groups.
13. Put individual responses into the public domain unless anonymity is requested.
14. Make publicly available the records of decisions and actions following a consultation, together with explanations for them.

Protocol 3. Protocol on the use of administrative sources for statistical purposes

This guidance requires all public bodies that produce official statistics from administrative sources to observe certain general practices and to prepare an Administrative Sources Statement which should be subject to consultation with the National Statistician before finalisation. This will set out how a range of practical matters are to be handled. Further advice on the form of such statements will be issued by the UK Statistics Authority. In the interests of clarity, some statements of practice from elsewhere in the Code are repeated below.

1. Observe all statutory obligations and relevant codes of practice and codes of conduct in relation to the protection of confidentiality and the handling of personal data.
2. Observe the relevant requirements of the European Statistics Code of Practice:
 - “Where European statistics are based on administrative data, the definitions and concepts used for the administrative purpose must be a good approximation to those required for statistical purposes”
 - “Administrative sources are used wherever possible to avoid duplicating requests for information”
 - “Proactive efforts are being made to improve the statistical potential of administrative records and avoid costly direct surveys”
3. Maximise opportunities for use of existing administrative data, cross-analysis of sources and for the exchange and re-use of data. Where possible, use common information technology and information management systems which facilitate the flow of information between producers of statistics.

4. Promote statistical purposes in the design of administrative systems so that maximum use can be made of them for statistical purposes, thus reducing the need to carry out separate data collections.
5. Ensure that no action is taken within the producer body, or public statement made, that would tend to undermine confidence in the independence of the statistics when released.
6. Prepare an Administrative Sources Statement which identifies the following:
 - Details of the administrative systems currently used in the production of official statistics.
 - Procedures to be followed within the organisation to ensure that full account is taken of the implications for official statistics when changes to administrative systems are contemplated. Such changes should normally be subject to consultation with the National Statistician.
 - Information on other administrative sources that are not currently used in the production of official statistics but have potential to be so used.
 - Arrangements for providing statistical staff, whether inside the producer body or elsewhere in the statistical service, with access to administrative data for statistical purposes.
 - Arrangements for reviewing the quality of administrative data used for statistical purposes.
 - Arrangements to ensure the security of statistical processes that draw on administrative data.
7. Consult the National Statistician before finalisation of the Administrative Sources Statement and address any points raised so that the UK Statistics Authority may be assured that statistical work based on administrative sources is being conducted in ways that serve the public good.

Part 2

Draft Statement of Principles and Procedures for Assessment

Introduction

- i. Section 17 of the *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007* requires the UK Statistics Authority to prepare and publish a statement of –
 - (a) the principles to which it will have regard, and
 - (b) the procedures which it will adopt

in exercising its functions under sections 12(1) and 14(1) of the Act – these are the functions of assessment and re-assessment of statistics against the Code of Practice.
- ii. As was explained in the introductory sections of this consultation document, the assessment process will not involve ‘scoring’ the work of producers of statistics against each part of the Code. Assessment will rather take a balanced look at the procedures underlying the statistical work, using the Code as a guide to what is expected but also taking account of all the circumstances.
- iii. The draft statement, set out below for comment, sketches in the procedures that will be followed. It is likely that these will evolve as the Statistics Authority gains experience of carrying out assessments and the statement will be revised from time to time as required.

- iv. Any substantive changes will be subject to further consultation and the statement will carry an indication of which edition it is.

Comments are invited on the draft text which follows:

Draft Statement of Principles and Procedures for Assessment

1. This statement covers:

- the aims of the UK Statistics Authority's assessment function;
- the principles and standards which the Authority will adopt when assessing official statistics;
- the procedures and methods which the Authority will follow.

Aims of assessment

2. In accordance with section 7(3) of the *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007*, the aim of the assessment function is to promote and safeguard the quality of official statistics, good practice in relation to official statistics and the comprehensiveness of official statistics. Official statistics include those designated as National Statistics.

3. The assessment function will further aim (i) to identify and report publicly on matters of concern in relation to official statistics in pursuit of section 8(2) of the Act; and (ii) to enhance the quality of the statistical service over a period of time.

Principles of assessment

4. Assessments will be conducted in accordance with the following five principles:

- **Risk-based** – focusing assessment resources on those statistics which are seen to present the greatest risk to the reputation of official statistics.
- **Proportionate to need** – taking account of the concerns of users of statistics.
- **Cost-effective** – making use of existing documentation where available, and not placing unnecessary burdens on producers of statistics.
- **Transparent** – operating in an open manner which inspires confidence in the Authority's work.
- **Consistent** – applying the same principles and standards in all cases.

5. Assessment reports will also be:

- Prepared in accordance with the Civil Service core values of integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality.¹²
- Completed within a reasonable timescale.
- Informed and evidence-based – reflecting the views and needs of users of statistics and other external stakeholders, and taking account of all the available information, comparing the evidence against published standards and criteria.
- Aimed at producing proposals and recommendations which promote and support improvement.

12 Cabinet Office *Civil Service Code* (2006)

- Relevant and accessible – reporting findings and conclusions fairly, clearly, and openly and in a manner which is useful to, and understood by, producers, users and the public.

Procedures

6. Assessments will:

- Take place in accordance with a published programme, although *ad-hoc* assessments may be required from time to time in order to report on matters of public concern.
- Take account of correspondence and discussion with the managers responsible for the statistics.
- Take account of self-evaluation evidence from the relevant managers.
- Involve an opportunity for users of statistics and other stakeholders to contribute to the assessment, and explicitly consider any such contribution.
- Be shown to the relevant producer body in draft form prior to publication, in order to ensure factual accuracy.
- Be published as soon as possible after completion and include any substantive response from the producer body to the report in draft form.
- Present clearly the assessment team's conclusions in relation to the degree to which the statistics comply with the Code of Practice; the nature of any improvements needed; and a recommendation to the Authority as to whether the statistics should be designated as 'National Statistics'.

Evidence

7. Self-evaluations will be conducted using a standard template based on the Code of Practice and this will form the starting point for discussions between the assessment team and managers.

This information will be supplemented by:

- any previously published reviews of the statistics;
- any other relevant information acquired by the assessment team at any time;
- any information submitted by users or stakeholders.

8. The UK Statistics Authority's annual reports to the UK Parliament and devolved legislatures will list all of the assessments conducted in the previous year with their conclusions as well as those planned for the coming year.

Notification

9. Managers in the producer body will normally be notified at least three months in advance of a planned assessment by means of updates to the Programme of Assessment which the Authority will publish in accordance with the Act. Exceptions to this notification period will be explained publicly by the Authority.

Annex 1

National Statistics Code of Practice and Protocols

This annex lists for the purposes of comparison the main principles from the existing National Statistics Code of Practice.

The National Statistics Code of Practice contains 8 Key Principles which embody a further 51 high-level principles. The Code is also supported by 12 Protocols which include a further 31 principles.

Key Principles

1. Relevance

National Statistics will inform significant decisions in government, business and the wider community, and in so doing contribute to the quality of national life

2. Integrity

National Statistics will gain public trust through being produced using objective and transparent methods

3. Quality

National Statistics will be fit for purpose and of high quality

4. Accessibility

Access to National Statistics will be fair and open

5. Protecting confidentiality

Where data are collected or used for statistical purposes, we guarantee to protect confidentiality

6. Balancing the needs of users against the burden on providers

Costs of compliance will be kept to an acceptable level and data collected only when the benefits of a statistical survey exceed the cost to providers

7. Enhancement through integration, accumulation and innovation

National Statistics will emphasise coherence and common standards to maximise the value of available statistical and administrative sources

8. Efficiency in Costs, fairness in prices

National Statistics will strive to be efficient and to provide value for money in both its costs and its prices

Annex 2

European Statistics Code of Practice

***Adopted by the EU Statistical Programme Committee
on 24 February 2005***

Preamble

Definitions

For the purpose of this document:

European Statistics shall mean Community Statistics as defined in Council regulation (EC) No 322/97 of 17 February 1997 on Community Statistics, produced and disseminated by national statistical authorities and the Community's statistical authority (Eurostat) in conformity with Article 285(2) of the Treaty.

The *Statistical Authority* shall mean, at national level, the National Statistical Institute (NSI) and other statistical bodies in charge of producing and disseminating European Statistics and, at Community level, Eurostat.

The *European Statistical System*, hereinafter referred to as the ESS, shall mean the partnership comprising Eurostat, National Statistical Institutes and other national statistical bodies responsible in each Member State for producing and disseminating European Statistics.

In coherence with the Treaty establishing the European Community, and in particular Article 285(2) thereof, with the Council regulation (EC) No 322/97 of 17 February 1997 on Community Statistics, and with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics adopted by the United Nations Statistical Commission on 14 April 1994, the present Code of Practice has the dual purpose of:

- Improving trust and confidence in the independence, integrity and accountability of both National Statistical Authorities and Eurostat, and in the credibility and quality of the statistics they produce and disseminate (*i.e. an external focus*);

- Promoting the application of best international statistical principles, methods and practices by all producers of European Statistics to enhance their quality (*i.e. an internal focus*).

The Code is addressed for implementation to:

- *Governance authorities* (i.e. Governments, Ministries, Commission, Council)
 - to provide guidelines for them to ensure that their statistical services are professionally organised and resourced to produce credible European Statistics in a manner that guarantees independence, integrity and accountability;
- *Statistical authorities and their staff* – to provide a benchmark of statistical principles, values and best practices that should help them in producing and disseminating high quality, harmonised European Statistics.

It is addressed for information to:

- *Users* – to show that European and national statistical authorities are impartial and that the statistics they produce and disseminate are trustworthy, objective and reliable;
- *Data providers* – to show that the confidentiality of the information they provide is protected, and that excessive demands will not be placed on them.

The Code of Practice is based on 15 *Principles*. Governance authorities and statistical authorities in the European Union commit themselves to adhering to the principles fixed in this code and to reviewing its implementation periodically by the use of *Indicators of Good Practice* for each of the 15 Principles, which are to be used as references.

The Statistical Programme Committee established by Council Decision 89/382/EEC of 19 June 1989 will regularly carry out peer review monitoring of the implementation of the present Code.

Institutional Environment

Institutional and organisational factors have a significant influence on the effectiveness and credibility of a statistical authority 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 1: Professional Independence – *The professional independence of statistical authorities from other policy, regulatory or administrative departments and bodies, as well as from private sector operators, ensures the credibility of European Statistics.*

Indicators

- The independence of the statistical authority from political and other external interference in producing and disseminating official statistics is specified in law.
- The head of the statistical authority has sufficiently high hierarchical standing to ensure senior level access to policy authorities and administrative public bodies. He/She should be of the highest professional calibre.
- The head of the statistical authority and, where appropriate, the heads of its statistical bodies have responsibility for ensuring that European Statistics are produced and disseminated in an independent manner.
- The head of the statistical authority and, where appropriate, the heads of its statistical bodies have the sole responsibility for deciding on statistical methods, standards and procedures, and on the content and timing of statistical releases.
- The statistical work programmes are published and periodic reports describe progress made.
- Statistical releases are clearly distinguished and issued separately from political/ policy statements.
- The statistical authority, when appropriate, comments publicly on statistical issues, including criticisms and misuses of official statistics.

Principle 2: Mandate for Data Collection – *Statistical authorities must have a clear legal mandate to collect information for European statistical purposes. Administrations, enterprises and households, and the public at large may be compelled by law to allow access to or deliver data for European statistical purposes at the request of statistical authorities.*

Indicators

- The mandate to collect information for the production and dissemination of official statistics is specified in law.
- The statistical authority is allowed by national legislation to use administrative records for statistical purposes.
- On the basis of a legal act, the statistical authority may compel response to statistical surveys.

Principle 3: Adequacy of Resources – *The resources available to statistical authorities must be sufficient to meet European Statistics requirements.*

Indicators

- Staff, financial, and computing resources, adequate both in magnitude and in quality, are available to meet current European Statistics needs.
- The scope, detail and cost of European Statistics are commensurate with needs.
- Procedures exist to assess and justify demands for new European Statistics against their cost.
- Procedures exist to assess the continuing need for all European Statistics, to see if any can be discontinued or curtailed to free up resources.

Principle 4: Quality Commitment – *All ESS members commit themselves to work and co-operate according to the principles fixed in the Quality Declaration of the European Statistical System.*

Indicators

- Product quality is regularly monitored according to the ESS quality components.
- Processes are in place to monitor the quality of the collection, processing and dissemination of statistics.
- Processes are in place to deal with quality considerations, including tradeoffs within quality, and to guide planning for existing and emerging surveys.
- Quality guidelines are documented and staff are well trained. These guidelines are spelled out in writing and made known to the public.
- There is a regular and thorough review of the key statistical outputs using external experts where appropriate.

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 must be absolutely guaranteed.*

Indicators

- Statistical confidentiality is guaranteed in law.
- Statistical authority staff sign legal confidentiality commitments on appointment.
- Substantial penalties are prescribed for any wilful breaches of statistical confidentiality.
- Instructions and guidelines are provided on the protection of statistical confidentiality in the production and dissemination processes. These guidelines are spelled out in writing and made known to the public.
- Physical and technological provisions are in place to protect the security and integrity of statistical databases.
- Strict protocols apply to external users accessing statistical microdata for research purposes.

Principle 6: Impartiality and Objectivity – Statistical authorities must produce and disseminate European Statistics respecting scientific independence and in an objective, professional and transparent manner in which all users are treated equitably.

Indicators

- Statistics are compiled on an objective basis determined by statistical considerations.
- Choices of sources and statistical techniques are informed by statistical considerations.
- Errors discovered in published statistics are corrected at the earliest possible date and publicised.
- Information on the methods and procedures used by the statistical authority are publicly available.
- Statistical release dates and times are pre-announced.

- All users have equal access to statistical releases at the same time and any privileged pre-release access to any outside user is limited, controlled and publicised. In the event that leaks occur, pre-release arrangements should be revised so as to ensure impartiality.
- Statistical releases and statements made in Press Conferences are objective and non-partisan.

Statistical Processes

European and other international standards, guidelines and good practices must be fully observed in the processes used by the statistical authorities to organise, collect, process and disseminate official 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, non-excessive burden on respondents and cost effectiveness.

Principle 7: Sound Methodology – *Sound methodology must underpin quality statistics. This requires adequate tools, procedures and expertise.*

Indicators

- The overall methodological framework of the statistical authority follows European and other international standards, guidelines, and good practices.
- Procedures are in place to ensure that standard concepts, definitions and classifications are consistently applied throughout the statistical authority.
- The business register and the frame for population surveys are regularly evaluated and adjusted if necessary in order to ensure high quality.
- Detailed concordance exists between national classifications and sectorisation systems and the corresponding European systems.
- Graduates in the relevant academic disciplines are recruited.
- Staff attend international relevant training courses and conferences, and liaise with statistician colleagues at international level in order to learn from the best and to improve their expertise.
- Co-operation with the scientific community to improve methodology is organised and external reviews assess the quality and effectiveness of the methods implemented and promote better tools, when feasible.

Principle 8: Appropriate Statistical Procedures – *Appropriate statistical procedures, implemented from data collection to data validation, must underpin quality statistics.*

Indicators

- Where European Statistics are based on administrative data, the definitions and concepts used for the administrative purpose must be a good approximation to those required for statistical purposes.
- In case of statistical surveys, questionnaires are systematically tested prior to the data collection.
- Survey designs, sample selections, and sample weights are well based and regularly reviewed, revised or updated as required.
- Field operations, data entry, and coding are routinely monitored and revised as required.
- Appropriate editing and imputation computer systems are used and regularly reviewed, revised or updated as required.
- Revisions follow standard, well-established and transparent procedures.

Principle 9: Non-Excessive Burden on Respondents – The reporting burden should be proportionate to the needs of the users and should not be excessive for respondents. The statistical authority monitors the response burden and sets targets for its reduction over time.

Indicators

- The range and detail of European Statistics demands is limited to what is absolutely necessary.
- The reporting burden is spread as widely as possible over survey populations through appropriate sampling techniques.
- 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.
- Best estimates and approximations are accepted when exact details are not readily available.
- Administrative sources are used whenever possible to avoid duplicating requests for information.
- Data sharing within statistical authorities is generalised in order to avoid multiplication of surveys.

Principle 10: Cost Effectiveness – *Resources must be effectively used.*

Indicators

- Internal and independent external measures monitor the statistical authority's use of resources.
- Routine clerical operations (e.g. data capture, coding, validation) are automated to the extent possible.
- The productivity potential of information and communications technology is being optimised for data collection, processing and dissemination.
- Proactive efforts are being made to improve the statistical potential of administrative records and avoid costly direct surveys.

Statistical Output

Available statistics must 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 must meet the needs of users.*

Indicators

- Processes are in place to consult users, monitor the relevance and practical utility of existing statistics in meeting their needs, and advise on their emerging needs and priorities.
- Priority needs are being met and reflected in the work programme.
- User satisfaction surveys are undertaken periodically.

Principle 12: Accuracy and Reliability – *European Statistics must accurately and reliably portray reality.*

Indicators

- Source data, intermediate results and statistical outputs are assessed and validated.
- Sampling errors and non-sampling errors are measured and systematically documented according to the framework of the ESS quality components.
- Studies and analyses of revisions are carried out routinely and used internally to inform statistical processes.

Principle 13: Timeliness and Punctuality – *European Statistics must be disseminated in a timely and punctual manner.*

Indicators

- Timeliness meets the highest European and international dissemination standards.
- A standard daily time is set for the release of European Statistics.
- Periodicity of European Statistics takes into account user requirements as much as possible.
- Any divergence from the dissemination time schedule is publicised in advance, explained and a new release date set.
- Preliminary results of acceptable aggregate quality can be disseminated when considered useful.

Principle 14: Coherence and Comparability – *European Statistics should be consistent internally, over time and comparable between regions and countries; it should be possible to combine and make joint use of related data from different sources.*

Indicators

- Statistics are internally coherent and consistent (e.g. arithmetic and accounting identities observed).
- Statistics are coherent or reconcilable over a reasonable period of time.
- Statistics are compiled on the basis of common standards with respect to scope, definitions, units and classifications in the different surveys and sources.
- Statistics from the different surveys and sources are compared and reconciled.
- Cross-national comparability of the data is ensured 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.

Principle 15: Accessibility and Clarity – *European Statistics should be presented in a clear and understandable form, disseminated in a suitable and convenient manner, available and accessible on an impartial basis with supporting metadata and guidance.*

Indicators

- Statistics are presented in a form that facilitates proper interpretation and meaningful comparisons.
- Dissemination services use modern information and communication technology and, if appropriate, traditional hard copy.
- Custom-designed analyses are provided when feasible and are made public.
- Access to microdata can be allowed for research purposes. This access is subject to strict protocols.
- Metadata are documented according to standardised metadata systems.
- Users are kept informed on the methodology of statistical processes and the quality of statistical outputs with respect to the ESS quality criteria.

Annex 3

About the UK Statistics Authority

The UK Statistics Authority is an independent body operating at arm's length from government as a non-ministerial department, directly accountable to Parliament. It was established on 1 April 2008 by the *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007*.

The UK Statistics Authority's overall objective is to promote and safeguard the production and publication of official statistics that serve the public good. The Statistics Authority is also required to promote and safeguard the quality and comprehensiveness of official statistics, and good practice in relation to official statistics.

The Statistics Authority has three main functions:

1. oversight of the Office for National Statistics (ONS) – the executive office of the Authority;
2. monitoring and reporting on all official statistics, wherever produced; and,
3. independent assessment of official statistics.

Membership of the Statistics Authority comprises the Chair of the Authority, seven other non-executive members, and three executive members.

The Chair of the UK Statistics Authority is **Sir Michael Scholar KCB**. Sir Michael was appointed Chair of the Authority in September 2007 in open competition, and with parliamentary approval. Sir Michael is President of St John's College, Oxford. He has been a governor of the National Institute for Economic and Social Research since 2001. Previously Sir Michael was Permanent Secretary to the Department of Trade and Industry (1996 to 2001), Permanent Secretary to the Welsh Office (1993 to 1996) and Private Secretary to the then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher (1981 to 1983).

Seven other non-executive members (some appointed after consultation with the devolved administrations) were appointed through open competition.

The non-executive members are:

- **Lord Rowe-Beddoe of Kilgetty** (David Rowe-Beddoe), who occupies the Deputy Chair post with responsibility for the governance of the Office for National Statistics.
- **Professor Adrian Smith FRS**, who occupies the Deputy Chair post with responsibility for promoting and safeguarding the production and publication of all official statistics across the UK.
- **Professor David Rhind CBE, FRS, FBA** who was Chairman of the Statistics Commission and was Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the City University in London until July 2007. Professor Rhind is a non-executive director of the Bank of England's Court of Directors, and until 1998 was Director-General of the Ordnance Survey.
- **Partha Dasgupta** who is currently Chief Executive of the Pension Protection Fund and a former Managing Director at Barclays Global Investors.
- **Sir Alan Langlands FRSE** who is Principal and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Dundee. He was Chief Executive of the National Health Service in England 1994-2000.
- **Moira Gibb CBE** who is Chief Executive Officer of Camden Borough Council.
- **Professor Steve Nickell CBE, FBA** who is Warden of Nuffield College, Oxford. He was a member of the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee from June 2000 to May 2006.

The Authority has three executive members. They are:

- National Statistician, **Karen Dunnell**. The National Statistician is a Crown appointment as the Chief Professional Adviser to the Authority and to the Government on statistical matters. The National Statistician is Head of the Government Statistical Service. Ms. Dunnell is also the Authority's Chief Executive with responsibility for the Office for National Statistics.
- The Authority's Head of Assessment, **Richard Alldritt**. The Head of Assessment is a statutory post as the principal adviser to the Authority on the scrutiny of official statistics in pursuit of the Authority's objectives.
- **Steve Newman**, Finance Director, Office for National Statistics.