

**Debate organised by the Krakow Working Group**

**Sharing experiences among official statistics producers  
on their interactions with the diversity of non-official data providers**

9 May 2023, 14:00 -16:00 CEST - via Zoom

The aim of this discussion organised by the IAOS Krakow Working Group is to share experiences among official statistics providers on the various interactions and collaborations with data providers from outside official statistics based on specific case studies, and to discuss the question of how to approach the issues of private data quality, validation, protocols, and more generally sound statistical principles in a systematic way. Is it realistic to ask non-official data providers (and the data scientists they employ) to structure their data so that they contribute to the public good? Should we aim at a one-size fit all approach? Or should we develop a more pragmatic approach that recognizes the diversity of actors, contexts, and issues, while taking into account the fact that official statistics have to satisfy sound statistical principles that ensure quality, guard against misuse and guarantee continued trust in official statistics.

The IAOS, as an independent association that is not bound by a specific institutional mandate, brings together a diversity of actors from the data ecosystem and is thus well placed to exchange views, advance possible solutions and add specific value to make progress on these issues.

This conversation is part of a series that will provide inputs for recommendations on trust, misuse and ethics that the IAOS will present at a later stage. These recommendations should be for the benefit of all the actors in the data-ecosystem that aim to contribute to quality information for the common good.

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To deliver on their two main long-standing basic missions of informing public policies and informing the public debates official statistics are increasingly tapping into the diversity of privately-held data sources to fill statistical information gaps or to complement standard sources (such as surveys or administrative data). There have been many interesting initiatives in recent years, at both national and international levels, and a number of Working Groups have or are currently reflecting on relevant issues such as availability and access to data, relevance and sustainability, integration and coherence.

However, when looking at the current landscape, characterised by a myriad of projects with their own specificities, strengths and weaknesses, one observes that there is no standardised approach to deal with quality issues related to the use of private data for the production and dissemination of official statistics along sound processes. NSOs and other national and international official producers have tended to follow diverse approaches and there is a diversity of experiences (from the identification of potential data sources to the dissemination and use of data and statistics).

When interacting with non-official partners that own potentially relevant data, some official producers have positioned themselves as data stewards by establishing partnerships such that the data that are shared already follow validated methodologies and protocols corresponding to sound statistical principles, in particular regarding data documentation and data quality. At the other end of the spectrum, other official producers have only engaged in legal and technical agreements with private providers to secure access to their data (along with legitimate protective guarantees for data owners and subjects included in the data files) without any reference to quality. There are multiple 'in-between' cases, depending on opportunities, objectives and needs.

When the objective is to access and use private data in order to improve established statistics in a long-term perspective (for timeliness, completeness, relevance or accuracy, e.g. prices, income distribution, environmental indicators), official producers have more likely tended to enter into a pro-active relationship with data owners, sharing knowledge and providing assistance to make their data relevant for statistical purposes.

When the need for private data is more ad-hoc (e.g. to answer a specific, sectoral or non-recurrent policy issue), or to produce experimental statistics, official producers have been more inclined to focus on the legal/regulatory/technical conditions to get the data, while taking care themselves of their treatment, in particular as regards quality. If and when experimental statistics are turned into official statistics, the terms and duration of the partnership may call for revision.

When NSOs (in particular in less developed countries) have limited capacity to produce a range of essential official statistics (whether established, experimental, specific or non-recurrent), privately-held data can critically contribute to produce basic information, and international organisations have been playing a key role in helping with the legal, technical and governance aspects of collaborations, as well as with the data treatment and use for specific needs according to sound quality principles. International organisations have also acted in a similar way to produce international indicators when there are gaps at national level or to mutualize costs and increase efficiency.

During recent periods of crises (e.g. Covid-19, manifold consequences of the war in Ukraine, environmental disasters), there have typically been crucial information gaps and official statisticians have had to establish quick collaborations with a diversity of owners to access their relevant data. This has allowed them to produce 'proxies' that have helped fill gaps and respond to public needs. Responsiveness and agility are key in this context, and an important element has been the capacity for official statisticians to assess the quality of the (experimental) statistics produced. Here, dialogue and mutual trust between official statistics and the diversity of data owners are key. Having a common space for discussion and collaboration already in place in normal times is an asset for fast reaction in times of crisis. This requires a forward-looking approach to anticipate needs and put in place different types of frameworks for partnering with private data providers.

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The guest panellists will present concrete cases of interactions and collaborations between official producers and data owners aimed at complementing and filling in information gaps for policy making and the public debate, with a focus on quality concerns and trust issues when using private data for the common good.

**Chair:** Martine Durand, IAOS Krakow Working Group co-Chair,  
Member of the European Statistics Governance Advisory Board  
and of the French Official Statistics Authority, Former (retired) OECD Chief Statistician

**Panellists:**

Nadim Ahmad, Deputy Director of the Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities, OECD  
Ola Awad, President, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics  
Emanuele Baldacci, Director of Resources and CIO, Eurostat  
Romain Lesur, Head of French Official Statistics Data Science Lab, INSEE  
Dominik Rozkrut, President of Statistics Poland, IAOS President-elect

**Rapporteur:** Jan Robert Suesser, IAOS Working Group co-Chair,  
Member of the IAOS Executive Committee and of the ISI Advisory Board on Ethics