

54th UNSC Side Event

**History of creation of FPOS, relevance today,
missions for tomorrow - a message from the
creators**

History of the FPOS

Jean-Louis BODIN

Former IAOS and ISI President

Contents of my intervention

A few historical landmarks

Birth of the FPOS

What before 1989 in the statistical world?

The FPOS are of universal significance

Comments on some innovative Principles

Conclusion

A few historical landmarks

- 04 and 18 June 1989 First "free" elections in Poland: victory of Solidarność
- **12-15 June 1989: 37th Session of the CES**
- 18 October 1989: New Fundamental Law in Hungary
- September – October 1989: Adoption of the PHARE project by the European Economic Commission
- 9 November 1989: Fall of the Berlin's Wall
- **24 November 1989: Meeting at Eurostat on consequences of PHARE for statistical co-operation**

A few historical landmarks (cont'd)

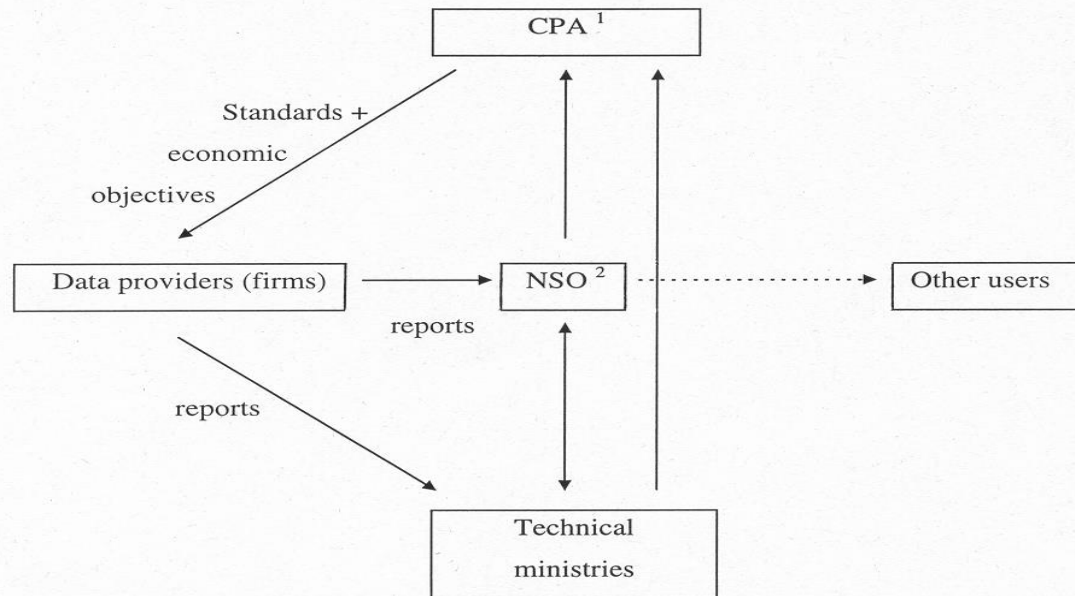
- 18 November 1989: Starting of the "Velvet revolution" in Czechoslovakia
- 10 December 1989: Demonstrations in Sofia
- 21 December 1989: Insurrection in Bucharest - Nicolae Ceaucescu runs away
- 29 December 1989: Vaclav Havel becomes President of Czechoslovakia
- **23 February 1990: Consultation of the CES**
- **22-23 May 1990: Workshop on transition and its consequences for statistics organised by the statistical division of the UN/ECE**

Implications for NSS

1. ECO countries recognized that free access to statistical data for all information is essential for all to respect the citizens' Right to Information.
2. The confidence in official statistics of all categories of users can be reached only if all stakeholders accept certain ethical rules and good practices.
3. Accordingly, ECO countries were looking for new references, new landmarks, to serve as a framework in which to fulfil their duties. Such references were maybe not so different from a strictly technical point of view, but totally different where the concept itself of the role of statisticians in the society was concerned.
4. Important differences in data flows between centrally planned economies and market economies

Data flows in

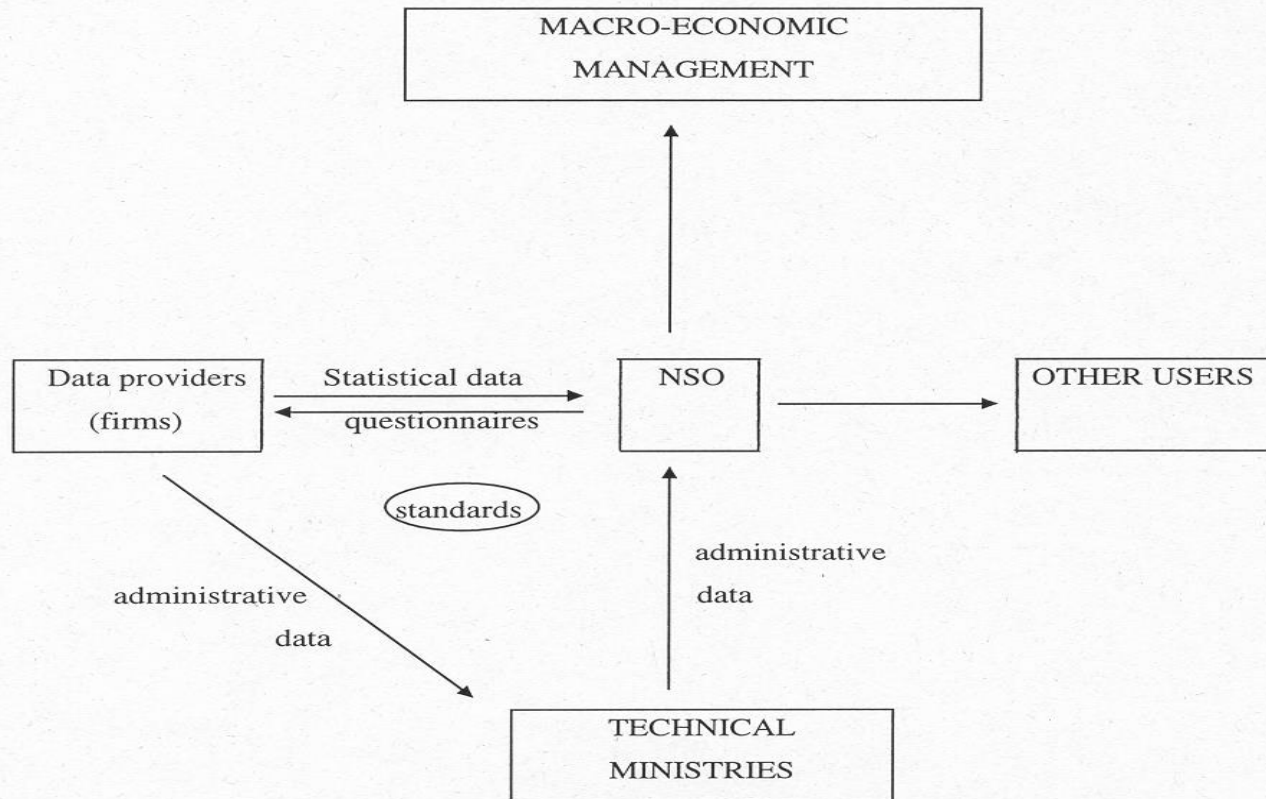
1. Centrally Planned Economies



¹ Central Planning Authority
² National Statistical Office

Data flows in ...

2. Market economics



What before 1989 in the statistical world?

1945 - 1965:

no real negotiations between producers and users about statistical programmes; statistical legislation takes into account confidentiality and protection of individual data and co-ordination of statistical systems

1965 - 1989:

- statistical offices gradually shifted from a supply-driven strategy for providing statistics to a demand-driven statistical strategy ; creation of National Statistical Councils
- discussions on the role of statistics at the service of the society
- implementation of commissions or ombudsmen for the protection of the privacy and confidentiality of individual data (as a reaction of the society in front of the EDP strides)

But also ...

National and international statistical learned societies had organised discussions to promote a set of ethical principles and good practices:

1979: ASA Code of Conduct for Statisticians → 1989 ASA Ethical Guidelines for Statistical Practice

1985: ISI Declaration on Professional Ethics

Three specific characteristics of official statistics:

- Official statisticians do not work for a specific consumer or a small group of users; they receive public funds to be at the service of the society at large and to contribute in their domain to the Citizens' Right to Information
- The individuals' Right to Privacy very often conflicts with the Society's Right to Information (in order to know its collective characteristics)
- The bodies responsible for official statistics have a dual authority: a scientific authority and an administrative one

38th plenary session of the CES held on 11-15 June 1990

Josef Olenski (Polish delegation) presents a very preliminary draft for a "*Statistical Convention*". The CES decides to create a working group, with Poland as the lead country, and participation of Bulgaria, France, Romania, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey, Eurostat and the ISI.

This group is asked to prepare a final document to be submitted to the 39th session of the CES, taking into account "*relevant results obtained by other international institutions, in particular the work done by the ISI on ethical guidelines for statisticians*". The working group is also asked to look carefully at the legal status of the document and to prepare accordingly "*a text that would be located as high up in the hierarchy of instruments as possible, without necessarily being a legally binding instrument*".

Birth of the FPOS

- 13-14 September 1990: 1st Meeting of the Working Group in Paris
- 9-11 January 1991: 2nd Meeting of the Working Group in Warsaw
- 11-14 March, 1991: Seminar of the CES in Budapest : discussions between the working group with some members of the Bureau of the CES (Carlo Malaguerra and Sten Johansson) and some “Friends of the Chair”; it is decided to insist on the fundamental values and principles more than on technical statistical tools and products and to present these principles in the form of a Preamble and “Ten Commandments”.
- 19 March 1991: meeting of a drafting subcommittee (Eurostat, France, Switzerland) in Paris
- 17-21 June 1991: 39th Session of the CES: adoption of the FPOS

The FPOS are of universal significance

In June 1992, during its 40th session , the CES "*expressed its satisfaction with the approval of the ECE decision C(47)*" and "*reiterated its views that this decision can be considered as one of the major results of co-operation in recent years*"; it "*hoped that the decision would further strengthen the production of impartial statistics in the region*" and "*was of opinion that decision C(47) is of universal significance*". It therefore "*expressed the wish that the contents of the decision be communicated by the chairman of the Conference to the UN Statistical Commission and to the other Regional Commissions of the UN*".

1992-93: on the request of the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Co-ordination, the FPOS are circulated to all UN member countries by the UN regional statistical divisions (Addis Abeba, Bangkok, Beyrouth, Santiago)

13-15 September 1993: The WGISPC met in Geneva and decided to submit the resolution to a special session of the UN Statistical Commission in 1994, with just some amendments (to the preamble only, and not to the Principles themselves) aimed at deleting any reference to the European context

Globalisation of the FPOS

April 11-14, 1994: The FPOS are adopted at the global level in New-York during a special session of the UN Statistical Commission

.....

20 years after, on January 29, 2014, the UN General Assembly endorses the FPOS by its Resolution A/RES/68/261

FPOS in 10 key words

<u>Principle 1:</u>	Relevance, impartiality and equal access
<u>Principle 2:</u>	Professionalism
<u>Principle 3:</u>	Accountability
<u>Principle 4:</u>	Prevention of misuse
<u>Principle 5:</u>	Cost-effectiveness
<u>Principle 6:</u>	Confidentiality
<u>Principle 7:</u>	Legislation
<u>Principle 8:</u>	National co-ordination
<u>Principle 9:</u>	International co-ordination
<u>Principle 10:</u>	International statistical co-operation

(Proposed by , Wilhem de Vries (CBS, the Netherlands) during a follow-up seminar held in Jachranka (Poland) on 27-29 September 1993)

Comments on some innovative Principles

The first principle

clearly insists on the necessity to serve all categories of users “*on an impartial basis*” and also on the fact that the programme of official statistics should “*meet the test of practical utility*”. This means that official statisticians do not have the authority to collect a given element of information simply because they have chosen to do so, or because they consider that producing such data would be “useful to society”. It is up to the society itself, and its different groups, to decide which data and information it actually needs. National Statistical Councils may be very helpful in making such decisions.

Comments on some innovative Principles (cont'd)

The second, third, and seventh principles

give the underlying principle of what the scientific approach of a statistician should be. This is to honour impartiality, reliability, relevance and transparency.

The fourth principle

confers a difficult duty to statisticians : it gives them the protection of some kind of administrative immunity when they refer to this principle for guidance on how to comment on the misuse of statistics.

Bibliography

50 Years of the Conference of European Statisticians

UNECE, Geneva, 2003

Chapter 5: The FPOS; the Breakthrough of a New Era (author: Jean-Louis Bodin)

Chapter 6: From the Planned to the Market Economy: the role of the CES in the Transition Period (author: Josef Olenski)

<https://unece.org/statistics/publications/>

Thank you for your attention