



Empowering society by reusing privately held data for official statistics - A European approach

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The present paper is focused on the work of an expert group on 'Facilitating the use of new data sources for official statistics' created by Eurostat during March 2021 –May 2022. The main purpose of this expert group was to reflect on new opportunities riced once with our rapidly changing and increasingly data-driven society and make recommendations to enhance the reuse of private sector data in official statistics under the European strategy for data.

In this context the Data Documentation Initiative (DDI) standards could play their relevant role to re-use of data, transparency, data sharing respecting the legal framework and the principles described below.

The final report highlights the regulatory gaps, fragmentation of practices, and lack of clarity regarding businesses' rights and obligations. Voluntary partnerships between businesses and statistical authorities have recently been set up and rolled out, but they have rarely led to sustainable data reuse in the regular production of official statistics. To obtain the maximum benefit for society, the Expert Group proposes to prioritize action in four areas.

First, fair and effective partnerships between businesses and statistical authorities must be promoted on a systematic and regular basis. Such partnerships have to be based on a mutual recognition that it is legitimate for the different parties to have different roles and interests, based on trust, social responsibility.

Second, statistical authorities and private data holders should develop a partnership approach to maximize business incentives and minimize risk, based on mutually agreed operational modalities of data reuse.

Third, the legal framework should set out a clear set of requirements and safeguards for private data holders. Where it is necessary to collect data from private data holders, the data protection framework must be respected, and data subjects' rights must be ensured. The legal framework should also clarify businesses' rights and obligations regarding data sharing and reuse for statistical purposes, including issues related to ownership, intellectual property rights, and commercial confidentiality.

Fourth, the regulatory framework should enable statistical authorities to access privately held data for statistical purposes while ensuring the data protection framework is respected, data subjects' rights are ensured, and businesses' interests are protected. The report proposes a model based on the principles of transparency, accountability, proportionality, and risk management.

The expert group and the report have contributed in clarifying several issues related to the use of new data sources for official statistics. And, was used for the Proposal for a REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL amending Regulation (EC) No 223/2009 on European statistics. The proposal will be further discussed in the European Parliament and the Council following its journey in the EU legislative process.

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