

**DELIBERATION NO 23 OF THE CONSELHO SUPERIOR DE ESTATÍSTICA (STATISTICAL COUNCIL)
GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF THE DISSEMINATION OF OFFICIAL STATISTICS WITHIN THE
NATIONAL STATISTICAL SYSTEM**

Whereas within the scope of its powers, the *Conselho Superior de Estatística* (Statistical Council, hereinafter referred to as the Council) carries out a series of activities to oversee and coordinate the National Statistical System (NSS).

Whereas within the scope of the General Guidelines of National Statistical Activity for the 2008-2012 period, the Council approved as one of the measures of objective 1, "to define at the level of the Statistical Council the rules on which the dissemination of official statistics shall be based, as a contribution to effective coordination of the NSS".

Whereas in the NSS Interim Situation Assessment Report approved in June 2009 one of the priority actions to be developed within the scope of the Council was "to define the principles on which the dissemination of official statistics shall be based", this action being prioritised also in the Council Business Plan for 2011.

Pursuant to Article 3 (2) and Article 13 (f) of Law No 22/2008 of 13 May, after a favourable opinion of the Standing Section of Statistical Coordination (*Secção Permanente de Coordenação Estatística* in Portuguese), **the Statistical Council, at the plenary meeting on 21 September 2011, decided to approve the "Guiding principles of the dissemination of official statistics within the National Statistical System", as an annex to this deliberation.** This matter shall be covered by a press release.

Lisbon, 21 September 2011

The Vice-Chairman of the Statistical Council, *Alda de Caetano Carvalho*

The Executive Secretary of the Statistical Council, *Maria da Graça Fernandes Caeiro Bento*

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A. CONTEXT

Statistical data are a key asset in society nowadays, being therefore pivotal to the conduct of research and analyses and providing an important support to the most relevant decision-making processes, both at the public and private level, paving the way for all individuals to gain more awareness of their citizenship.

“**Official statistics**” are defined as **statistical data** produced, as a rule, within the scope of statistical activity programmes of the National Statistical System (NSS) under the responsibility of statistical authorities¹ and appraised by the Council and international organisations of which Portugal is a member, in compliance with national and international technical standards and fulfilling the basic NSS principles.

Official statistics are a public good, which shall efficiently meet user needs and have a non-excessive burden on respondents, namely through a more intensive use of administrative data.

As a common good for society, **official statistics** shall be sufficiently comprehensive, accessible to all citizens and presented in such a way that the main results are understood with no need for specialised statistical knowledge.

Statistical dissemination is a key stage of **statistical activity**, aimed at meeting user needs for statistical data and ultimately implementing and highlighting strict compliance with the mission of statistical authorities.

Statistical dissemination shall cover official statistics directly or indirectly produced by statistical authorities within the scope of their missions and have as main reference the applicable basic NSS principles: professional independence, statistical confidentiality, commitment to quality and accessibility.

¹ In accordance with Law No 22/2008 of 13 May the following are statistical authorities: Statistics Portugal, Banco de Portugal, Regional Statistical Office of Azores, Regional Directorate of Statistics of Madeira, and entities with powers delegated by Statistics Portugal.

B. GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF THE DISSEMINATION OF OFFICIAL STATISTICS

The **guiding principles of the dissemination of official statistics** establish the guidelines to be pursued in the dissemination of statistical data, stemming from implementation of the provisions of Law No 22/2008, in particular Articles 5 and 8, the integration of the principles of the *European Statistics Code of Practice* and good practices for official statistics as advocated by international organisations and taken on board in the rules laid down in the NSS Law and the Statutory Laws of statistical authorities. Regardless of stemming from national or Community regulations, the following principles shall apply:

1. Official statistics are a public good, which shall meet user needs in a clear and understandable manner, as detailed as possible statistical wise, while complying with legal, confidentiality and quality requirements, produced in a context of efficient use of available resources.
2. Official statistics shall be accurate, reliable, coherent and comparable in space and time, and made available free of charge, in an impartial, accessible and objective manner to all users.
3. Official statistics shall be up-to-date and disseminated on a timely and punctual basis according to a pre-defined calendar released to the public, established on the basis of purely technical criteria, by striking a balance between quality and timeliness. Changes to the release calendar, when deemed absolutely necessary, are publicly announced in advance, as soon as materially possible.
4. The content, type and timing of statistical releases shall be defined with full autonomy and technical and professional independence, and they shall be published in Statistical Activity Plans available on the official websites of statistical authorities.
5. Statistical data are released autonomously and independently from any political intervention and shall comply with the principle of statistical confidentiality, pursuant to Article 6 of the NSS Law.
6. The dissemination of official statistics is accompanied by the respective metadata,² as well as other information, namely on quality, in accordance with recognised national and international criteria, to facilitate user interpretation. Such criteria are included in the respective Methodological Document.
7. Access to statistical data may be restricted when quality levels are deemed insufficient. Users shall be notified of any restraints to data access. On an exceptional basis, statistical data may be released only to specific user groups, and any privileged access to official statistics shall be duly publicised.

² Description of series and statistical data features, as well as the methods, procedures, concepts, variables, classifications and nomenclatures used.

8. There may be cases where prior access to official statistical data or complex statistical reports may be granted, subject to an embargo, for them to be analysed and understood at the time of dissemination. The decision on an embargo release is the responsibility of statistical authorities.
9. Possible errors detected are acknowledged and documented, and their corrections/revisions are duly, rapidly and clearly disseminated to users.
10. Statistical output may be made available as anonymised microdatabases for scientific purposes to researchers at universities or other legally recognised higher education establishments and renowned scientific investigation organisations, institutions or departments, pursuant to Article 6 of the NSS Law. Specific protocols shall be signed for this purpose.
11. Statistical authorities websites, available in Portuguese and English, are the main media for the dissemination of statistical data, by releasing first-hand all official statistics.
12. Re-dissemination of statistical data produced by statistical authorities is free, provided that the source is acknowledged.
13. Statistical authorities have a help line for users and a specific information service to the media.
14. Quality and accessibility of disseminated data are systematically assessed, with a view to continuously improving dissemination activity. User comments, suggestions and complaints, where relevant, shall be taken into consideration to improve the activity of statistical authorities.