

**DELIBERATION NO 31 OF THE CONSELHO SUPERIOR DE ESTATÍSTICA (STATISTICAL COUNCIL)  
ON THE GENERAL GUIDELINES OF OFFICIAL STATISTICAL ACTIVITY for the 2013-2017 period**

Whereas, within the scope of oversight and coordination of the National Statistical System (NSS) and pursuant to Article 13 (a) of Law No 22/2008 of 13 May, the *Conselho Superior de Estatística* (Statistical Council, hereinafter referred to as the Council) shall “define and approve the general guidelines of official statistical activity and relevant priorities”.

Whereas at the end of this year the General Guidelines of National Statistical Activity 2008-2012 implementation period will be completed and it is thus necessary to approve the General Guidelines of Official Statistical Activity for the next five years (2013-2017).

Whereas the various recommendations approved in the past few years by the Council aimed at consolidating and enhancing the NSS and in particular the priority actions identified in the NSS Situation Assessment Report for the 2008-2011 period approved by the Council in September 2011.

Whereas the need for official statistical activity to respond to national statistical needs and new European guidelines.

Whereas the relevance of the initiatives of the Council and national statistical authorities targeted at a more intensive and efficient use of already existing data and higher utilisation of administrative data for statistical purposes, with a consequent reduction in statistical production costs and the burden on respondents (citizens, enterprises and other entities).

Whereas the General Guidelines of Official Statistical Activity for 2013-2017 are a reference document on the strategic objectives of the National Statistical System for the years to come, particularly relevant for planning the statistical authorities' activities and communicating to society the main challenges posed to the NSS.

Whereas the Council placed special emphasis on preparing this strategic document that will guide its work in the next few years, thus setting up a Technical Group responsible for its preparation. This involved comprehensive and engaged work by all Council members, particularly of the specialised Section of Statistical Coordination.

Pursuant to Article 3 (2) and Article 13 (a) of Law No 22/2008 of 13 May, and following a favourable opinion of the Standing Section of Statistical Coordination (*Secção Permanente de Coordenação*

*Estatística* in Portuguese), and without prejudice to there being adjustments stemming from suggestions made by members throughout the meeting, which the Technical Group is expected to introduce in the wording of the text, **the Statistical Council, at its plenary meeting on 24 October 2012 decided the following:**

1. **To approve the General Guidelines of Official Statistical Activity for the 2013-2017 period**, in annex to this Deliberation and forming an integral part thereof.
2. **To recommend that statistical authorities** prepare strategic programmes targeted at implementing the Lines of Action incorporated in the General Guidelines for the next five-year period, which should frame the preparation of their annual Business Plans and allow for appropriate monitoring of implementation of the General Guidelines.
3. **To release the** General Guidelines 2013-2017 to the media.

Lisbon, 24 October 2012

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

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

## General Guidelines of Official Statistical Activity 2013-2017

---

### Context

The General Guidelines of Official Statistical Activity for 2013-2017 are a reference document on the strategic objectives of the National Statistical System (NSS) for the years to come, particularly relevant for planning the statistical authorities' activities and communicating to society the main challenges posed to the NSS.

The General Guidelines for 2013-2017 were prepared within the framework of Law No 22/2008 of 13 May (NSS Law), which considers the following entities as statistical authorities: Statistics Portugal, Banco de Portugal, the Regional Statistical Office of the Azores, the Regional Directorate of Statistics of Madeira and official statistics producers by delegation of Statistics Portugal. Simultaneously, the aforementioned legal framework led to a reinforcement of the statistical authority principle and the clarification of key concepts, such as official statistical activity and official statistics.

When preparing these General Guidelines, the Council took into consideration a series of other reference documents, notably:

- The European statistical programme for the same period;
- The European Statistics Code of Practice, that in its revised version (2011) reinforced aspects related to quality management, professional independence and the use of administrative data for statistical purposes;
- The Strategic Guidelines of Banco de Portugal within the scope of its statistical function;
- The Public Commitment on European Statistics by the European System of Central Banks.

When preparing the General Guidelines for 2013-2017 the Statistical Council also took into consideration the numerous actions and recommendations under its responsibility with a view to contributing to modernise, develop and consolidate the NSS, such as the actions identified in the NSS Situation Assessment Report for the 2008-2011 period. In addition, it has taken stock of the results achieved in terms of implementation of the actions envisaged in the General Guidelines of National Statistical Activity in force for the 2008-2012 period. This was particularly useful to identify gaps or shortages to be addressed in order to meet society's most urgent statistical needs for the coming years.

Finally, a series of factors that are both challenges and constraints have been taken into account:



- A constant increase in the demand for statistical data allowing for a timely and strict analysis of the economic, financial, social and environmental situation, well-founded decision-making by economic agents and a sustained assessment of the different policies;
- A call for confidence in the National Statistical System and the credibility of official statistics through the maintenance of a high quality level;
- The need to revise the NSS Law to reinforce its autonomy, independence and efficiency;
- A more intense use of administrative data — with special focus on the production of official statistics in the social sphere;
- Active promotion of statistical literacy;
- Optimisation of human and financial resource management to meet with efficiency and quality the existing obligations and the production of official statistics in emerging areas.

**National Statistical System's vision for 2017**

In 2017, official statistics follow the highest standards of statistical quality, and the National Statistical System meets Society's needs for information and knowledge independently and efficiently.

## Objective 1

To reinforce the quality of official statistics, ensuring the optimisation, improvement, flexibility, modernisation and efficiency of the statistical production process through their methodological, scientific and technological development.

### Lines of Action (LA) for objective 1

**LA1.** To implement the European Statistics Code of Practice and the European System of Central Banks Public Commitment on European Statistics and monitor compliance therewith.

**LA2.** To ensure intervention by Statistical Authorities from the inception of processes to design/revise administrative acts, so as to guarantee their use for statistical purposes.

**LA3.** To call the attention of entities under the State's direct and indirect administration holding administrative data to the importance of supplying these data for the production of official statistics and promote in those entities mechanisms to facilitate and develop the data utilisation process.

**LA4.** To trace and reinforce the use of administrative sources in the production of official statistics, so as to streamline allocated resources and reduce the burden on respondents.

**LA5.** To continue developing a new population and housing census model essentially focused on the use of administrative files.

**LA6.** To pursue a strategy of reengineering production and dissemination processes among the different statistical domains, promoting system and infrastructure integration and the development of multi-purpose statistics.

**LA7.** To foster development and innovation in information systems supporting the production of official statistics.

**LA8.** To integrate economic, social and environmental statistics, taking into account namely the recommendations from the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Report.

**LA9.** To continue to cut costs associated with the production of official statistics (statistical burden on respondents and financial costs) through the adoption of scientifically and technologically innovative methodologies guaranteeing the quality of produced results and incentives for households and enterprises to answer NSS surveys.

**LA10.** To promote implementation of flexible statistical production systems that allow for a swift and effective adaptation to changes in user needs and minimise costs.

**LA11.** To intensify the spatial dimension of official statistics through a growing integration of the Geographic Referencing Infrastructure into production and dissemination activities.

**LA12.** To streamline partnerships, notably with the scientific community, to develop research in different areas of official statistics.

**LA13.** To implement new methodologies as set out in the 2010 European System of Accounts Manual (ESA 2020) and the 6th edition of the IMF balance of payments and international investment position manual (BPM6), among others.

**LA14.** To ensure response by the National Statistical System to the new European Union legislation on the prevention and correction of macroeconomic imbalances, notably in public finances.

**LA15.** To pursue the development of the Portuguese National Accounts, notably by producing institutional sector balance sheets (in line with the conceptual framework of the European System of Accounts - ESA - 2010), and increase the information to be released.

**LA16.** To promote the studies deemed necessary to minimise the size and frequency of revisions of disseminated information.

**LA17.** To consolidate the production of economic and environmental statistics and improve the mechanisms to monitor the commitments Portugal has taken on at national and international level.

**LA18.** To produce and release data in new areas, or in areas lacking sufficient statistical coverage, particularly in the social area, making it possible to monitor emerging questions in the field of household living conditions, inequalities and well-being indicators.

**LA19.** To continue to widen the production of time series for the most relevant indicators.

**LA20.** To pursue the widening of the geographical breakdown for relevant indicators, assuring the balance between usefulness and costs.

## Objective 2

To meet efficiently and timely society's needs for statistical data, thereby contributing to reinforce confidence in official statistics and their better use, improving communication and promoting statistical literacy.

### Lines of Action (LA) for objective 2

**LA1.** To increase and improve the information released ensuring compliance with the principles, policies and quality criteria shaping official statistics, notably as regards observing pre-announced delivery dates (punctuality), maintaining long series, accessing data and the respective metadata (continuing effort to harmonise contents) and publicising data revisions.

**LA2.** To deepen instruments and speed up mechanisms allowing for an anticipation of new statistical production needs and permit timely response thereto.

**LA3.** To adopt differentiated communication strategies making it possible to meet the needs of the various user segments and seek to effectively respond to changes in how statistics are currently sought and accessed.

**LA4.** To enhance statistical communication and dissemination channels, reinforcing the use of those that most facilitate user interface.

**LA5.** To improve Statistical Authorities capacity to meet the growing and differentiated needs of statistical data users in terms of speed, efficiency and quality, while observing the confidentiality rules in force at national and European level.

**LA6.** To foster within the scope of the National Statistical System an integrated increase in statistical literacy and the removal of barriers hindering the use of official statistics, which includes citizens with special needs.

**LA7.** To regularly assess the satisfaction levels of users official statistics, as well as use of and demand for different statistical products.

**LA8.** To adopt a pro-active stance by anticipating changes that will tend to take place in society, gauging their impact on the production of official statistics and interacting where warranted at European level, given the trends identified in the production of European statistics.

**LA9.** To support research and studies based on official statistics in a proactive manner.

## Objective 3

To optimise the functioning of the National Statistical System, reinforcing and consolidating inter-institutional coordination and cooperation mechanisms at national and international level.

### Lines of Action (LA) for objective 3

**LA1.** To promote initiatives reinforcing institutional cooperation within the National Statistical System, favouring efficient and effective response to society's new demands and challenges, notably by sharing good practices and exchanging knowledge.

**LA2.** To stimulate and coordinate statistical production and dissemination actions, having as guiding principle to share and reuse functionalities and experiences already available within national and international statistical authorities.

**LA3.** To design and implement mechanisms allowing the Statistical Council, within its powers, to ensure compliance with the principles envisaged in the Law governing the National Statistical System (Statistical Authority, Technical Independence, Statistical Confidentiality, Quality, Statistical Accessibility and cooperation among Statistical Authorities) and monitor them in Statistical Authorities.

**LA4.** To create mechanisms enabling the Statistical Council to conduct audits and other actions with entities to which confidential statistical data are supplied, pursuant to the Law governing the National Statistical System.

**LA5.** To ensure and reinforce the Statistical Council's involvement in monitoring methodological changes in statistical operations of high economic and social impact, when involving breaks in series or discontinuity of variables.

**LA6.** To intensify recourse to statistical audits and other mechanisms to certify the quality of official statistics, so as to ensure confidence in the NSS and its credibility.

**LA7.** To call the attention of the Government to the importance of complying with the provision regarding prior consultation of the Statistical Council, as envisaged in Article 14 of Law No 22/2008 of 13 May (Law governing the National Statistical System), which will make it possible to eliminate possible redundancies in statistical production and increase opportunities to utilise administrative data to produce official statistics, thus reducing their cost to society.

**LA8.** To continue building and updating single files in the National Statistical System, which are key tools for harmonisation, rationalisation of means and the quality of official statistics.

**LA9.** To ensure active participation in international statistical fora, particularly as regards the strategic development of the National Statistical System, contributing to reinforce the country's international projection in the European Union and within the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP).

**LA10.** To contribute to the development and empowerment of other countries' statistical systems, reinforcing bilateral and multilateral relations particularly with Portuguese-speaking countries, within the scope of national cooperation policy priorities.

**LA11.** To guarantee technical training, improvement of skills, professional advancement and the creation of conditions for the permanence of employees in the National Statistical System, by promoting training courses in partnership with other institutions, notably higher education establishments.