Towards Better Governance and Ethics in Statistics and Data

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A fast-evolving landscape for Official Statistics

- A 'datafied' society: data has become a global commodity produced, used and shared by a myriad of actors

- Data revolution facilitated by technology, IoT, AI

- Increased demand for and use of data in public debate; strong appetite for data-driven and evidence-based decisions

- New actors that have entered the data ecosystem are perceived as more agile, more responsive and more innovative

- But these actors may not be aware, or be at odds with Official Statistics' long-established rules and ethics principles

- This raises questions about independence, integrity, quality, transparency and privacy of data and statistics and the governance of data

- With increased risks of misuse, mis-information and distrust in data and statistics

Bottom line

Official statistics have lost their quasi-monopoly in the production and dissemination of information to inform the public debate

They have become less authoritative : the once prevailing 'statistics logic' has been (partly) replaced by a 'data logic'

➡ **Need to rethink the global governance and ethics of data**

Data governance requires improvements

- Weak institutional frameworks governing the data ecosystem at national and international levels

- Inadequate laws and regulations

- Lack of frameworks for the use, re-use, repurposing and sharing of various kinds of data

- Lack of clarity regarding accountability and responsibility of different data producers and data science actors (AI)

- Weak role of NSOs in data ecosystem

- Insufficient financing of NSOs (in many countries)

Data ethics are being challenged

Fundamental Principles of National Official Statistics

EUROPEAN STATISTICS CODE OF PRACTICE

For the National Statistical Authorities and Eurostat (EU statistical authority)

RECOMMENDATION OF THE OECD COUNCIL ON **GOOD STATISTICAL PRACTICE**

National Statistical Laws

DECLARATION ON PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

Principles Governing International Statistical Activities

- ➡ **Existing sources of ethics for statistics …**
  - ➡ National constitutions; Statistical laws; Fundamental principles of official statistics; Codes of practice, conduct, and ethics; International Statistical Institute Declaration on Professional Ethics, etc.

- ➡ **… are challenged by new data environment, digitalisation, artificial intelligence, role of social media**
  - ➡ Different players (e.g. private providers, data scientists) may not be following specific codes of ethics w.r.t. quality, independence, transparency, privacy, confidentiality, etc.
  - ➡ Or some may be in the process of developing their own rules which may interfere/be in contradiction with Official Statistics' principles
  - ➡ Emotions are taking prominence over facts, with social media acting as echo chambers and complying to few or no ethical principles
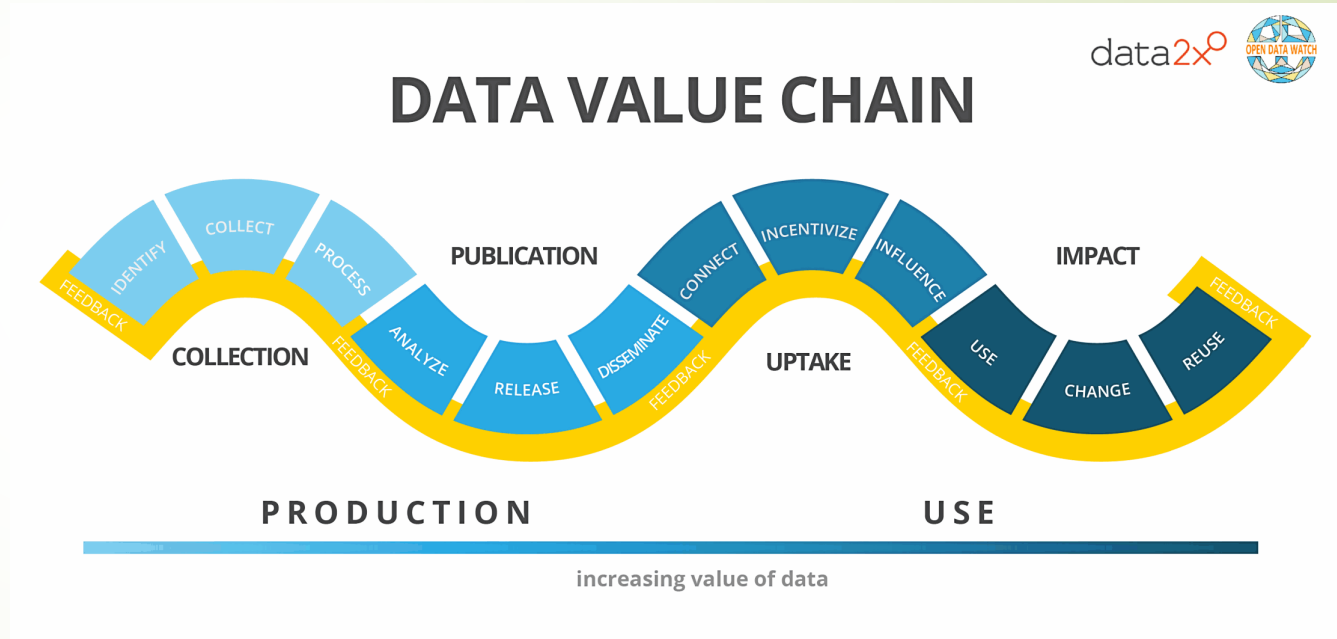
How can Official Statistics best respond ?

Official Statistics have strong assets

- Strong legal base
- Strong methodological standards
- Quality of data produced and disseminated
- Codes of professional ethics
  - Independence
  - Objectivity, Impartiality, Relevance
  - Privacy, Confidentiality
  - Etc.

But they should not act alone

- **Need to involve all actors through the whole data value chain**

- **Build long-term, viable frameworks, regulations, partnerships and business models**

DATA VALUE CHAIN

increasing value of data

Towards better Governance arrangements …

**Clarify
respective roles
and responsibilities
of different actors**

**Ensure strong institutional
frameworks and
adequate financing**

**Establish/promote
the NSO as
data steward where relevant**

**Establish arrangements for
sharing of knowledge and
know-how**

Promote statistical literacy

**Set up long-term partnerships and business
models for data access and sharing**

**Foster co-investment, co-innovation
and co-production**

… And new ethical codes for a 'datafied' society

- **Should we aim for a new International Data Convention/Charter?**

- **Set up an International Forum involving all relevant actors**

  - **Agree on a set of universal ethical data principles, based on existing frameworks, to be developed and endorsed by public and private actors from the whole data community (including users)**

    - Including regulations encompassing professional independence; responsibilities and accountability; methodological excellence; protection of personal data; data accessibility; data sharing and exchange; data interoperability; etc.

    - As well as prevention of abuse and misuse of data

- **Promote the creation of an independent mechanism to monitor compliance with the agreed principles by all signatories to the Charter**

  - Through regular assessments containing recommendations

  - Making the findings public

Official statisticians have a key role to play!

Thank you!

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