



# Explanatory Notes on the General Statistics Law Project

الهيئة العامة للإحصاء  
General Authority for Statistics







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## Introduction:

The statistics law project was prepared based on international guidelines and principle for statistics and countries with leading statistical systems. The proposed law would replace the current statistics law that was approved in 1959.

The law project is drafted under the Saudi legislative system context and taken into consideration related laws, by-laws and international agreements..

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## Law name:

This law is called “statistics law”, and it is a development of the general statistics law of the country issued by a Royal Decree no. (23) dated 7/12/1379 H, about sixty years ago.

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## Regulatory prerequisite:

1. Royal Decree no. (64283) dated 26/12/1436H, that includes the approval on transforming (the Central Department of Statistics and Information) into an independent general authority called (the General Authority for Statistics GASTAT) that enjoys a legal personality which is financially and administratively independent.
2. The Ministers Cabinet Resolution no. (11) dated 13/1/1437H, that includes the approval on GASTAT regulation, stated in paragraph four that GASTAT 's Board of Directors shall review the general statistics law in the country, issued by a Royal Decree no. (23) dated 7/12/1379H, suggesting what is necessary in this regard and report about according to the followed procedures.



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## Objectives of the law:

1. Activate the statistical work and ensure its comprehensiveness.
2. Extend the impact of the statistical work on planning
3. Improve the mechanisms of statistical data flow
4. Organize and develop the relation between GASTAT and other entities
5. Activate the statistical sector and overcome the challenges it faces
6. Unify the sources of official data
7. Enhance the role of the statistical work in providing data
8. Enhance the statistical awareness

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## Law's main elements:

The law includes (24) articles:



## ▲ Statistics Law Project Draft

### Article 1:

**The following objectives and definitions - wherever they appear in this bylaw - have the meanings indicated before them, unless the context requires otherwise:**

1. The Authority: General Statistics Authority.
2. The Board: The Authority's Board of Directors.
3. President: The Authority's Head.
4. The Law: Statistics Law.
5. Statistics: Data, information and indicators that have been collected on the conditions of society and its activities using scientific methods, and can be classified and analyzed in order to reach results, expectations, and decisions according to specific variables.
6. Official Statistics: Statistics produced by the Authority as a public good, providing quantitative or qualitative information on the economy of the Kingdom, the social structure of the Kingdom, the development of the Kingdom, the living conditions of citizens and residents, health, education, and the environment in the Kingdom with the objective of informing the public about social and economic matters and assisting in the development and evaluation of public policy.
7. Data: A set of values of qualitative or quantitative variables about one or more people, an object, or a phenomenon.
8. Individual data: data that identify the statistical unit under study.
9. Statistical unit: the holder of statistical properties.
10. Statistical Domains: the three main statistical areas, social statistics (demographics, social conditions, education, housing, etc.), economic statistics (national accounts, business, industry, trade, etc.), and spatial statistics (environment, tourism, agriculture etc.).
11. Statistical Survey: An investigation of the characteristics of a particular group by collecting data from a sample of the surveyed category and estimating their characteristics through the systematic use of statistical methodology.
12. Census: An inventory conducted on all statistical units belonging to a specific community or universe.
13. Administrative data: A set of units and data derived from an administrative source and which contains information that has been collected and maintained for the purpose of implementing one or more administrative regulations.
14. Big data: data from transactions, sensors, or technology, use by companies or individuals. Big data exhibits the following characteristics: large size (amount of data), diversity (type and nature of data), speed (speed at which data is created and processed), accuracy (data quality can greatly vary).



15. Dissemination/Publishing: the activity of making official statistics, statistical analyses, statistical services and metadata available to users.
16. Metadata: Data and other documents that describe statistical data and statistical processes in a unified manner by providing information on data sources, methods, definitions, classifications, and data quality.
17. Public Entities: All ministries, entities, centers, and institutions that form part of the government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, whether at the national, local or regional level, including companies in which the government has a majority or a controlling stake that performs or provides services of a public nature.
18. Private institutions: all non-public entities.
19. Respondents: Any person, household, private or public entity that is requested or required to provide information about themselves, including their activities, through data collections carried out by Producers of Official Statistics.

## Article 2:

### **The law aims to regulate statistical activity, in particular the following: -**

1. Providing official statistics to provide public authorities and private institutions with data on the economic, demographic, social and environmental situation.
2. Developing the production and dissemination of official statistics in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
3. Issuing Official Statistics in accordance with the international obligations of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, such as those stipulated in the United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and any other statistical standards that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has agreed to be a party of.

## Article 3:

### **The development, production and dissemination of statistics in Saudi Arabia shall be governed by the following statistical principles:**

1. 'professional independence', meaning that Statistics must be developed, produced and disseminated in an independent manner, particularly as regards the selection of techniques, definitions, methodologies and sources to be used, and the timing and content of all forms of dissemination, free from any pressures from political or interest groups or from national authorities.



2. 'impartiality', meaning that Statistics must be developed, produced and disseminated in a neutral manner, and that all users must be given equal treatment;
3. 'objectivity', meaning that Statistics must be developed, produced and disseminated in a systematic, reliable and unbiased manner; it implies the use of professional and ethical standards, and that the policies and practices followed are transparent to users and survey respondents;
4. 'reliability', meaning that Statistics must measure as faithfully, accurately and consistently as possible the reality that they are designed to represent and implying that scientific criteria are used for the selection of sources;
5. 'statistical confidentiality', meaning the protection of confidential data related to single statistical units which are obtained directly for statistical purposes or indirectly from administrative or other sources and implying the prohibition of use for non-statistical purposes of the data obtained and of their unlawful disclosure;
6. «Cost effectiveness», meaning the costs of producing statistics should be proportional to the significance of the desired results and benefits, and that resources must be used optimally, and the burden of response is reduced to a minimum. The information required should be, where possible, easily extractable from available records or sources.

#### Article 4:

1. The Authority enjoys a public legal personality and financial and administrative independence and is legally linked to the Minister of Economy and Planning, and the Authority's main headquarters shall be in Riyadh city, and its branches and offices may be opened anywhere in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
2. The Authority is the sole producer of official statistics in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and is responsible for coordinating all activities of developing, producing and publishing official statistics within the Kingdom.
3. The Authority shall have an independent budget that shall be issued by a Royal Decree.
4. The Authority shall grant a budget to ensure the availability of adequate human, financial, and technical resources to implement the statistical programs stipulated in this law, and to implement innovation in the production and dissemination of official statistics.

#### Article 5:

1. The Authority shall have a Board of Directors, appointed by decision of the Council of Ministers and comprising of H.E. the Minister of Economy and Planning, up to four additional members of the government, the Director of the National Information Center, two independent members recognized for their work and experience in the field of



Statistics and the Authority's President, chaired by H.E. the Minister of Economy and Planning, overseeing the work of the Authority. In addition to the authorities set out elsewhere in this law, the Board shall:

- a. appoint the President of the Authority and such Vice Presidents of the Authority as the board of directors determined are necessary.
- b. approve the multi-year statistical program of the Authority.
- c. approve the draft budget of the Authority.
- d. approve any material change to the organizational structure of the Authority.

2. The Board shall be considered as the dominant authority that manages and conducts the affairs of the Authority and takes all the necessary decisions to achieve its objectives, as set out in this Law, including the following:

- Adoption of the Authority's general policies, plans and operational programs.
- Adoption of the Authority's organizational structure.
- Adoption of internal and technical regulations, procedures, rules and standards that are related to the Authority's activities.
- Adoption and submission of the Authority's draft budget in accordance with statutory procedures.
- Adoption of the Authority's final accounts, auditor's report and annual report in preparation for submission and accordance with statutory procedures.
- Formation of the Statistical Advisory Council and Statistical Coordinating Committee and appointment of their members, as well as the adoption of relevant regulations.
- Adoption of the Authority's delegates and freelancers' bonuses in agreement with the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Civil Service.
- Adoption of executive working mechanisms with respect to financial costs of Statistical Work and Data provision in agreement with the Ministry of Finance.
- Acceptance of donations, grants, endowments, bequests and assistance provided to the Authority in accordance with statutory procedures.
- Appointment of an external auditor and an internal financial controller.
- Formation of committees to grant them the necessary powers to carry out specific tasks.

3. The Board may delegate some of these functions and tasks to the appropriate officials of the Authority as required to ensure the progress of work.

## Article 6:

1. The Authority shall have a President, who is considered the Chief Executive Officer of the Authority.

2. The President shall:

- a. decide, based strictly on professional statistical standards that he or she considers appropriate, the methods and procedures for carrying out statistical programs regarding:



- (i) the collection, compilation, analysis, abstraction and publication of statistical information that is produced or is to be produced by the Authority.
    - (ii) the content of statistical releases and publications issued by the Authority, and the timing and methods of Dissemination of Statistics compiled by the Authority.
  - b. advise on matters pertaining to statistical activities of Public Entities and confer with them to that end.
  - c. control the operations and staff of the Authority.
3. The President shall be accountable to the Board in accordance with the provisions of this Law subject to the statistical principles set out in Article Three.

## Article 7:

Public entities, when carrying out statistical work or a part of it for the benefit of a public entity, shall adhere to concepts, definitions, classifications, technical standards, statistical methods, and scientific methods set by the Authority. The regulations specified for this shall be issued by a decision of the Board, after consultation with the Statistical Coordination Committee.

## Article 8:

1. A board called the statistical advisory board is to be formed, and it is to be linked organizationally to the Board, and it shall consist of members not from the Board and not from the Authority's employees, and is concerned with providing all necessary advice to the president on issues of strategic importance to official statistics.
2. The statistical advisory board is composed of specialists whose number does not exceed ten members who have distinguished knowledge and experience in the field of statistics. The members of the statistical advisory board are appointed by the Board of Directors upon the proposal of the president, and they are chaired by one of its members. The president can attend meetings of the statistical advisory board. The term of membership of the statistical advisory board is three years and shall be renewable.
3. The statistical advisory board shall undertake the following tasks:
  - a. Provide advice on the strategic development of official statistics and ensure that the statistical program reflects the priority information needs of society.
  - b. Evaluate the implementation of the statistical program and follow up the implementation of the strategic development activities.
  - c. Evaluate the extent to which the Authority adheres to statistical principles.
  - d. Any other tasks as specified by the regulations issued by a decision of the Board.



## Article 9:

1. A committee called (the Coordination Committee) is formed - upon a decision by the Board - and it is linked organizationally to the Board, with a membership of representatives of the relevant public Authorities, and chaired by the President.
2. The committee shall undertake the following tasks:
  - a. Coordination between the Authority and public authorities participating in statistical activities.
  - b. Ensure the continuous flow of administrative data from entities to the Authority.
  - c. Supporting the Authority's efforts in developing statistical awareness.
  - d. Exchange of information between the Authority and public entities in the field of statistics.
  - e. Any other tasks as specified by the regulations issued by a decision of the Board.

## Article 10:

1. The Authority is responsible for producing Official Statistics, in particular in the three Statistical Domains of Social, Economic and Spatial Statistics. It must apply sound methodology in accordance with internationally recognized professional standards to the production of Official Statistics.
2. The Authority shall design and conduct Censuses, in addition to the other statistical products. The costs of Censuses shall be covered by extraordinary budget allocations. The following Censuses shall be carried out on a regular basis:
  - a. A population and housing Census every ten years. The Authority has the responsibility of implementing it, and publishing its results. The time of conduction is determined by resolution of the Council of Ministers;
  - b. A Census of non-agricultural Private Establishments every five years;
  - c. A Census of agricultural Private Establishments every ten years.

## Article 11:

1. The Authority shall prepare a multi-year statistical program and an annual statistical program as key instruments for the effective strategic and operational management of statistical activities in Saudi Arabia.
2. The statistical programs shall be prepared by the Authority in consultation with stakeholders, users of Statistics, respondents and administrative Data providers.
  - a. The multi-year statistical program shall define the strategic development of Official Statistics in Saudi Arabia, aiming at satisfying existing and emerging user needs. It



shall provide a vision and priorities for the development of Official Statistics for the next five years and establish the required deliverables and development actions.

b. The annual statistical program of the Authority shall be the operational translation of the multi-year statistical program. It shall contain all Official Statistics to be released and Statistical Surveys to be carried out, as well as cover the main development activities of Official Statistics.

c. Both the multi-year statistical program and the annual statistical program shall be made publicly available.

The Authority shall submit the multi-year and the annual statistical programs to the Statistics Advisory Board for opinion and subsequently to the Board of Directors for adoption.

## Article 12:

1. The Authority shall be entitled to select data sources based on professional considerations and collect the necessary data to compile Official Statistics directly from respondents. Data collection shall be designed with due consideration to quality of Statistics, costs of data provision and response burden. Data should be collected in electronic form in a mode and format decided by the Authority.
2. The Authority is entitled to:
  - a. Conduct surveys and censuses among households, individuals and establishments in all available modes. The participation in any statistical survey or census is compulsory unless otherwise determined by the Board.
  - b. Access all administrative records in the Kingdom considered relevant by the Authority for statistical production. Public Entities must grant the Authority with access to the Data on a Micro Data level, in electronically processable format on a continuous basis and without delay.
  - c. Use Big Data sources for the production of Official Statistics. Private Establishments must, upon request from the Authority, share their data with the Authority on a micro data level and on a continuous basis in electronically processable format free of charge.
3. The Authority shall keep all data collected confidential and must not share identifiable micro data with any party outside of the Authority. Owners of Administrative Data or Big Data are exempted from any confidentiality obligations when sharing data with the Authority.
4. The Authority is entitled to contract with external workforce to carry out data collection activities.

**Article 13:**

1. Official Statistics shall be disseminated in a timely and punctual manner respecting statistical confidentiality and ensuring equal access to data.
2. The Authority shall establish and make public an advance release calendar that indicates the planned dates and times for the releases of Official Statistics. Any expected divergence from the advance release calendar shall be communicated to the public before the planned release date. A new date for the release shall be set within a reasonable time and made public.
3. Releases of Official Statistics shall be accompanied by meta data and explanatory comments, and access shall be granted to all users free of charge in a user-friendly data base, allowing users to access time series and break downs and download the relevant data in different formats.
4. The Authority can grant access to anonymized micro data to authorized researchers in a protected environment, subject to conditions to be determined by resolution of the Board which shall include the requirement that any accessing research must sign confidentiality and non-disclosure agreements in advance in order to be granted access.
5. Official Statistics shall be clearly distinguished from any other Statistics when released.
6. Errors discovered in released Official Statistics shall be corrected, and the corrections shall be released and communicated to users at the earliest possible time.
7. Users are entitled to use Official Statistics and the related meta data in their own products with indication of the data source.

**Article 14:**

Except for Official Statistics which must be provided free of charge, the Authority may provide statistical products and services in a commercial manner in accordance with regulations issued by the Board for this purpose.

**Article 15:**

1. The Authority shall cooperate with International Organizations as well as with other National Statistical Organizations and Regional Organizations in the field of Statistics, in order:
  - a. to develop internationally comparable Statistics;
  - b. to design international standards and guidelines;
  - c. to exchange information on good statistical practice.



2. The Authority shall provide International Organizations with the required data, in compliance with international statistical standards agreed to by Saudi Arabia.
3. The Authority represents Saudi Arabia in international fora in the field of Statistics.

## Article 16:

1. The Authority shall be committed to high quality standards when producing Official Statistics, respecting internationally agreed statistical quality principles. To guarantee the quality of results, statistics shall be developed, produced and disseminated on the basis of international standards and of scientific methods.
2. In this respect, the following quality criteria shall apply:
  - a. 'relevance', which refers to the degree to which Statistics meet current and potential needs of the users.
  - b. 'accuracy', which refers to the closeness of estimates to the unknown true values;
  - c. 'timeliness', which refers to the period between the availability of the information and the event or phenomenon it describes.
  - d. 'punctuality', which refers to the fact that statistical releases should be published on the dates and times pre-announced in the statistical release calendar.
  - e. 'accessibility' and 'clarity', which refer to the conditions and modalities by which users can obtain, use and interpret data.
  - f. 'comparability', which refers to the measurement of the impact of differences in applied statistical concepts, measurement tools and procedures where Statistics are compared between geographical areas, sectoral domains or over time.
  - g. 'coherence', which refers to the adequacy of the data to be reliably combined in different ways and for various uses.
3. To maintain a high standard of quality of Official Statistics, the Authority is entitled to edit and validate data, combine data from different sources, carry out record linking and matching of individual data exclusively for statistical purposes and use statistical estimation techniques to fill gaps.
4. The Authority shall document sources and methods used in the production process, as well as the resulting data sets, in a standardized way. Users shall be kept informed about the sources and methods of statistical production and quality of statistical outputs through meta data.

## Article 17:

The Authority shall respect the principles of statistical confidentiality and not share confidential data with any third party, except as outlined in Article 13 (4) and Article 20 (1).



Confidential data are:

- a. Micro Data which allows natural or legal persons to be identified, either directly or indirectly
- b. Aggregates composed of no more than 1 to 3 units, when the unit is a natural or legal person, if one of these units could be identified indirectly, thereby disclosing individual data about this unit
- c. Classified Documents and Classified Information as defined in the Penal Law on Dissemination and Disclosure of Classified Information and Documents issued by Royal Decree No. M/35 dated 8/5/1432.
- d. Any other data which is designed as confidential data by the President of the Authority.

### Article 18:

Confidential data held by the Authority, shall not be used for any investigation, surveillance, legal proceedings, administrative decision making or other similar handling of matters concerning a natural or a legal person by any Public Entity except to the extent that such confidential data was already in the possession of the relevant Public Entity.

### Article 19:

1. The Authority shall protect a confidential data and take all necessary regulatory, administrative, technical and organizational measures to prevent access by unauthorized persons.
2. The Authority shall not disclose confidential data, except as outlined in Article 13 (4) and Article 20 (1).
3. It is prohibited to use confidential data obtained by the Authority's employees or delegates, or employees of Public Entities or their representatives for non-statistical purposes.

### Article 20:

1. The Authority may, upon request, grant access, in a protected environment, to anonymized micro data which is also Confidential Data, for independent scientific research projects in accordance with regulations issued by the Board.
2. The confidential data for research purposes must not include identifiers. The data provided shall be limited to the data necessary for the research purpose.
3. The regulations issued by the Board shall set a fee as a compensation for the additional costs incurred in preparing and providing the data. All access to micro data for research purposes shall be documented.



### Article 21:

The provisions of the system of penalties for publishing confidential information documents issued by Royal Decree No. M / 35 of 5/8/1432H shall apply to all confidential data and documents, and what is related to the following:

- a. All regular and temporary staff of the Authority.
- b. Persons from outside the Authority who are involved in survey or census operations.
- c. Any other persons who are authorized to access confidential data.

### Article 22:

The Authority may subcontract parts of tasks of statistical production to a third party only when the full protection of confidential data can be ensured. Third parties shall use and maintain the data exclusively for the operations and only for the duration defined in the subcontract.

### Article 23:

Without prejudice to any more severe punishment stipulated in any other law, anyone who violates the provisions of this law or regulations issued by the Board under this law shall be punished with a fine not exceeding one hundred thousand riyals.

The penalty shall be doubled if the violation is repeated.

If a violation is committed by a corporate entity, and it is proved that the violation was committed with the consent or connivance of any director, the manager or other similar officer or any person who was purporting to act in any such capacity, he as well as the corporate entity shall be guilty of that violation, and shall be liable to be proceeded against and punished accordingly.

### Article 24:

Specialized employees of the Authority - appointed by a decision of the President - shall monitor and prove violations of the provisions of this law, and they shall have the designation of judicial control officers.

### Article 25:

The law comes into effect after 180 days from the date of its publication in official gazette, and replaces the general statistics system issued by Royal Decree no. (23) dated 7/12/1379H, and the general population census system issued by Royal Decree no. M / 13 dated 23/04/1391H, and it repeals all provisions that contradict it.



## ▲ Laws impacted by the proposed law

- The General Statistics by-laws (attached).
- The Statistics Law 1959 (attached).
- The Census Law (attached).

## ▲ International agreements impacted by the proposed law

No international agreements will be impacted by the law.

## ▲ Financial, economic, and occupational impacts of the law

As stated in article two of the law's project: organize and activate the statistical work and its comprehensiveness, deepen its impact on planning and development, enhance the statistical awareness, and organize and develop the relation between GASTAT – as central body for statistics- and other entities, which means there is no direct impact whether financially, economically, or even occupationally. However, there is an indirect impact from implementing the law, provided as follow:

1. Applying the law on the statistical sector and the activation of the coordination committee - mentioned in Article 9 - will contribute to rationalizing the costs of statistical surveys and censuses, as a result of relying heavily on providing data from administrative records available with government agencies that contain information related to the entity's activities after converting them into statistical data and indicators.
2. The articles containing the organization of statistical work - especially in Article Thirteen - contribute to the development of statistical and economic awareness alike, which contributes to strengthening the economic behavior of individuals and institutions, especially since there is an urgent need for that, as the statistical work cannot continue far from keeping pace with The accelerating changes around it, with the increase in trade and investment operations and the push towards economic and social changes and the big data revolution, interest in statistics will be an important priority for the public and private sectors.
3. Article fourteen included confirmation of what was stated in the regulation about the authority's practice of providing its statistical services in a commercial manner to private enterprises, and the authority will benefit from the proceeds of this activity in financing and developing its statistical services. It is clear and according to the detail contained in the first article about the quality of the statistical services provided, the application of the system will provide a good financial return.



## ▲ Law Commentary

Article	Comment
<p><b>Article 1:</b></p> <p>The following objectives and definitions - wherever they appear in this bylaw - have the meanings indicated before them, unless the context requires otherwise:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Authority: General Statistics Authority.</li> <li>2. The Board: The Authority's Board of Directors.</li> <li>3. President: The Authority's Head.</li> <li>4. The Law: Statistics Law.</li> <li>5. Statistics: Data, information and indicators that have been collected on the conditions of society and its activities using scientific methods, and can be classified and analyzed in order to reach results, expectations, and decisions according to specific variables.</li> <li>6. Official Statistics: Statistics produced by the Authority as a public good, providing quantitative or qualitative information on the economy of the Kingdom, the social structure of the Kingdom, the development of the Kingdom, the living conditions of citizens and residents, health, education, and the environment in the Kingdom with the objective of informing the public about social and economic matters and assisting in the development and evaluation of public policy.</li> <li>7. Data: A set of values of qualitative or quantitative variables about one or more people, an object, or a phenomenon.</li> <li>8. Individual data: data that identify the statistical unit under study.</li> <li>9. Statistical unit: the holder of statistical properties.</li> <li>10. Statistical Domains: the three main statistical areas, social statistics (demographics, social conditions, education, housing, etc.), economic statistics (national accounts, business, industry, trade, etc.), and spatial statistics (environment, tourism, agriculture etc.).</li> <li>11. Statistical Survey: An investigation of the characteristics of a particular group by collecting data from a sample of the surveyed category and estimating their characteristics through the systematic use of statistical methodology.</li> <li>12. Census: An inventory conducted on all statistical units belonging to a specific community or universe.</li> <li>13. Administrative data: A set of units and data derived from an administrative source and which contains information that has been collected and maintained for the purpose of implementing one or more administrative regulations.</li> </ol>	<p>This Article includes the terms mentioned in the law with its definition taking into consideration the best international practices.</p> <p>The definitions explain the main concepts necessary for the interpretation and implementation of the Law. The list represents a deliberate choice of main definitions as the Law should not be overloaded with a long list of concepts. The definitions are meant to be self-explanatory, but if necessary, they may be further specified or extended (according to national legal practice).</p>



Article	Comment
<p>14. Big data: data from transactions, sensors, or technology, use by companies or individuals. Big data .exhibits the following characteristics: large size (amount of data), diversity (type and nature of data), speed (speed at which data is created and processed), accuracy (data quality can greatly vary).</p> <p>15. Dissemination/Publishing: the activity of making official statistics, statistical analyses, statistical services and metadata available to users.</p> <p>16. Metadata: Data and other documents that describe statistical data and statistical processes in a unified manner by providing information on data sources, methods, definitions, classifications, and data quality.</p> <p>17. Public Entities: All ministries, entities, centers, and institutions that form part of the government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, whether at the national, local or regional level, including companies in which the government has a majority or a controlling stake that performs or provides services of a public nature.</p> <p>18. Private institutions: all non-public entities.</p> <p>19. Respondents: Any person, household, private or public entity that is requested or required to provide information about themselves, including their activities, through data collections carried out by Producers of Official Statistics.</p>	
<p><b>Article 2:</b></p> <p>The law aims to regulate statistical activity, in particular the following: -</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Providing official statistics to provide public authorities and private institutions with data on the economic, demographic, social and environmental situation.</li><li>2. Developing the production and dissemination of official statistics in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.</li><li>3. Issuing Official Statistics in accordance with the international obligations of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, such as those stipulated in the United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and any other statistical standards that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has agreed to be a party of.</li></ol>	<p>This article states the objectives of the law.</p> <p>The Law applies to all activities for the development, production and dissemination of official statistics in the country. Article 4 defines the concepts of development, production and dissemination.</p> <p>The Law uses the term 'official statistics' and not the terms 'State statistics', 'national statistics' or 'government statistics' to emphasize the scope of the statistics concerned and quality requirements official statistics have to comply with. The term 'official statistics' provides users with information on the status and quality of the information provided to them.</p>



Article	Comment
<p><b>Article 3:</b></p> <p>The development, production and dissemination of statistics in Saudi Arabia shall be governed by the following statistical principles:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 'professional independence', meaning that Statistics must be developed, produced and disseminated in an independent manner, particularly as regards the selection of techniques, definitions, methodologies and sources to be used, and the timing and content of all forms of dissemination, free from any pressures from political or interest groups or from national authorities</li> <li>2. 'impartiality', meaning that Statistics must be developed, produced and disseminated in a neutral manner, and that all users must be given equal treatment;</li> <li>3. 'objectivity', meaning that Statistics must be developed, produced and disseminated in a systematic, reliable and unbiased manner; it implies the use of professional and ethical standards, and that the policies and practices followed are transparent to users and survey respondents;</li> <li>4. 'reliability', meaning that Statistics must measure as faithfully, accurately and consistently as possible the reality that they are designed to represent and implying that scientific criteria are used for the selection of sources;</li> <li>5. 'statistical confidentiality', meaning the protection of confidential data related to single statistical units which are obtained directly for statistical purposes or indirectly from administrative or other sources and implying the prohibition of use for non-statistical purposes of the data obtained and of their unlawful disclosure;</li> <li>6. "Cost effectiveness", meaning the costs of producing statistics should be proportional to the significance of the desired results and benefits, and that resources must be used optimally, and the burden of response is reduced to a minimum. The information required should be, where possible, easily extractable from available records or sources.</li> </ol>	<p>This paragraph is fundamental to defining what official statistics are, as it defines the principles they must meet. The principles are based on the United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and the Code of Good Practice in Statistics</p> <p>Professional independence from policy, regulatory or administrative authorities, as well as from private interests, is the prerequisite for producing high-quality statistics and securing trust of users and respondents. The credibility of the National Statistical System builds on users' trust in official statistics as an objective source of information that does not serve any interests.</p> <p>Professional independence requires a strong legal position of the National Statistical Office, appropriate administrative arrangements, use of scientific methods and internationally agreed standards, openness of operations and commitment to quality. Professional independence should not be seen as a principle that limits cooperation; on the contrary, it requires close consultations with users, data providers and other stakeholders to ensure that official statistics maintain their relevance.</p>



Article	Comment
<p><b>Article 4:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The Authority enjoys a public legal personality and financial and administrative independence and is legally linked to the Minister of Economy and Planning, and the Authority's main headquarters shall be in Riyadh city, and its branches and offices may be opened anywhere in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.</li><li>2. The Authority is the sole producer of official statistics in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and is responsible for coordinating all activities of developing, producing and publishing official statistics within the Kingdom.</li><li>3. The Authority shall have an independent budget that shall be issued by a Royal Decree.</li><li>4. The Authority shall grant a budget to ensure the availability of adequate human, financial, and technical resources to implement the statistical programs stipulated in this law, and to implement innovation in the production and dissemination of official statistics.</li></ol>	<p>This article explains that the establishment of the Authority and its role</p>



Article	Comment
<p><b>Article 5:</b></p> <p>1. The Authority shall have a Board of Directors, appointed by decision of the Council of Ministers and comprising of H.E. the Minister of Economy and Planning, up to four additional members of the government, the Director of the National Information Center, two independent members recognized for their work and experience in the field of Statistics and the Authority's President, chaired by H.E. the Minister of Economy and Planning, overseeing the work of the Authority. In addition to the authorities set out elsewhere in this law, the Board shall:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. appoint the President of the Authority and such Vice Presidents of the Authority as the board of directors determined are necessary;</li> <li>b. approve the multi-year statistical program of the Authority;</li> <li>c. approve the draft budget of the Authority; and</li> <li>d. approve any material change to the organizational structure of the Authority.</li> </ol> <p>2. The Board shall be considered as the dominant authority that manages and conducts the affairs of the Authority and takes all the necessary decisions to achieve its objectives, as set out in this Law, including the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adoption of the Authority's' general policies, plans and operational programs.</li> <li>• Adoption of the Authority's organizational structure.</li> <li>• Adoption of internal and technical regulations, procedures, rules and standards that are related to the Authority's activities.</li> <li>• Adoption and submission of the Authority's draft budget in accordance with statutory procedures.</li> <li>• Adoption of the Authority's final accounts, auditor's report and annual report in preparation for submission and accordance with statutory procedures.</li> <li>• Formation of the Statistical Advisory Council and Statistical Coordinating Committee and appointment of their members, as well as the adoption of relevant regulations.</li> <li>• Adoption of the Authority's delegates and freelancers' bonuses in agreement with the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Civil Service.</li> <li>• Adoption of executive working mechanisms with respect to financial costs of Statistical Work and Data provision in agreement with the Ministry of Finance.</li> </ul>	<p>This Article explains how management is carried out in the Authority and how its President is appointed, under the supervision of a board of directors.</p>



Article	Comment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Acceptance of donations, grants, endowments, bequests and assistance provided to the Authority in accordance with statutory procedures.</li><li>• Appointment of an external auditor and an internal financial controller.</li><li>• Formation of committees to grant them the necessary powers to carry out specific tasks.</li></ul> <p>3. The Board may delegate some of these functions and tasks to the appropriate officials of the Authority as required to ensure the progress of work.</p>	
<p><b>Article 6:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The Authority shall have a President, who is considered the Chief Executive Officer of the Authority.</li><li>2. The President shall:<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>d. decide, based strictly on professional statistical standards that he or she considers appropriate, the methods and procedures for carrying out statistical programs regarding:<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>i. the collection, compilation, analysis, abstraction and publication of statistical information that is produced or is to be produced by the Authority,</li><li>ii. the content of statistical releases and publications issued by the Authority, and the timing and methods of Dissemination of Statistics compiled by the Authority;</li></ol></li><li>e. advise on matters pertaining to statistical activities of Public Entities and confer with them to that end; and control the operations and staff of the Authority.</li></ol></li><li>3. The President shall be accountable to the Board in accordance with the provisions of this Law subject to the statistical principles set out in Article Three.</li></ol>	<p>This paragraph provides an independent role to the President of the National Statistical Office in the decision on statistical methods and procedures. These elements largely define the professional independence of the entire National Statistical System, enable compilation of statistics on an impartial basis and build trust in official statistics.</p> <p>The standards and guidelines issued by the President of the National Statistical Office mainly rely on recognized international standards and good practice in statistics. Issuing common standards is an important tool to develop professionalism and enhance users' trust.</p> <p>These standards and guidelines can also be promoted for use by respondents and administrative data providers. For example, if administrative data providers use the same classifications as the National Statistical System, this reduces costs of maintaining classifications and increases efficiency of using data from multiple sources. Statisticians have recognized expertise in creating well-functioning international classification systems that can also benefit other authorities in the countries if used more widely.</p>



Article	Comment
<p><b>Article 7: Other Producers of Statistics</b></p> <p>Public entities, when carrying out statistical work or a part of it for the benefit of a public entity, shall adhere to concepts, definitions, classifications, technical standards, statistical methods, and scientific methods set by the Authority. The regulations specified for this shall be issued by a decision of the Board, after consultation with the Statistical Coordination Committee.</p>	<p>Similarly to the National Statistical Office, Other Producers of Statistics have to strictly adhere to the definitions, classifications, technical standards, statistical methods, and scientific approaches, which are certified by the authority.</p>
<p><b>Article 8:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A board called the statistical advisory board is to be formed, and it is to be linked organizationally to the Board, and it shall consist of members not from the Board and not from the Authority's employees, and is concerned with providing all necessary advice to the president on issues of strategic importance to official statistics.</li> <li>2. The statistical advisory board is composed of specialists whose number does not exceed ten members who have distinguished knowledge and experience in the field of statistics. The members of the statistical advisory board are appointed by the Board of Directors upon the proposal of the president, and they are chaired by one of its members. The president shall attend meetings of the statistical advisory board. The term of membership of the statistical advisory board is three years and shall be renewable.</li> <li>3. The statistical advisory board shall undertake the following tasks: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Provide advice on the strategic development of official statistics and ensure that the statistical program reflects the priority information needs of society.</li> <li>b. Evaluate the implementation of the statistical program and follow up the implementation of the strategic development activities.</li> <li>c. Evaluate the extent to which the Authority adheres to statistical principles.</li> <li>d. Any other tasks as specified by the regulations issued by a decision of the Board.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>	<p>The Statistical Advisory Board is the advisory body on strategic priorities and user needs for the President.</p> <p>The role of the Statistical Advisory Board is to ensure the relevance of official statistics and promote transparency and accountability of the National Statistical System. For this purpose, the Statistical Advisory Board has the authority to launch independent evaluations related to the quality of statistics and implementation of the principles of official statistics in specific domains, activities or organizational entities, provided that resources are available for this purpose.</p>



Article	Comment
<p><b>Article 9: Statistical Coordination Committee</b></p> <p>1. A committee called (the Coordination Committee) is formed - upon a decision by the Board - and it is linked organizationally to the Board, with a membership of representatives of the relevant public Authorities, and chaired by the President.</p> <p>2. The committee shall undertake the following tasks:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>Coordination between the Authority and public authorities participating in statistical activities.</li><li>Ensure the continuous flow of administrative data from entities to the Authority.</li><li>Supporting the Authority's efforts in developing statistical awareness.</li><li>Exchange of information between the Authority and public entities in the field of statistics.</li><li>Any other tasks as specified by the regulations issued by a decision of the Board.</li></ol>	<p>The Statistical Coordination Committee facilitates coordination between the National Statistical Office and producers of data, and coordination among the latter, whilst ensuring system-wide coherence and compliance with the Law and the principles of official statistics.</p>
<p><b>Article 10:</b></p> <p>1. The Authority is responsible for producing Official Statistics, in particular in the three Statistical Domains of Social, Economic and Spatial Statistics. It must apply sound methodology in accordance with internationally recognized professional standards to the production of Official Statistics.</p> <p>2. The Authority shall design and conduct Censuses, in addition to the other statistical products. The costs of Censuses shall be covered by extraordinary budget allocations. The following Censuses shall be carried out on a regular basis:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>A population and housing Census every ten years. The Authority has the responsibility of implementing it, and publishing its results. The time of conduction is determined by resolution of the Council of Ministers;</li><li>A Census of non-agricultural Private Establishments every five years;</li><li>A Census of agricultural Private Establishments every ten years.</li></ol>	<p>Censuses could be carried out on various topics, including on the size and structure of the population, housing, economic units, buildings or farms. Censuses provide the basis for the infrastructure for undertaking a country's statistical operations, including updating sampling frames and updating projections of populations (in the case of population censuses). These operations are key to producing intercensal statistics. They are often also the sole source of information for small geographic areas, providing crucial inputs for public policy decision-making.</p>



Article	Comment
<p><b>Article 11:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Authority shall prepare a multi-year statistical program and an annual statistical program as key instruments for the effective strategic and operational management of statistical activities in Saudi Arabia.</li> <li>2. The statistical programs shall be prepared by the Authority in consultation with stakeholders, users of Statistics, respondents and administrative Data providers.               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The multi-year statistical program shall define the strategic development of Official Statistics in Saudi Arabia, aiming at satisfying existing and emerging user needs. It shall provide a vision and priorities for the development of Official Statistics for the next five years and establish the required deliverables and development actions.</li> <li>b. The annual statistical program of the Authority shall be the operational translation of the multi-year statistical program. It shall contain all Official Statistics to be released and Statistical Surveys to be carried out, as well as cover the main development activities of Official Statistics.</li> <li>c. Both the multi-year statistical program and the annual statistical program shall be made publicly available.</li> </ol> </li> </ol> <p>The Authority shall submit the multi-year and the annual statistical programs to the Statistics Advisory Board for opinion and subsequently to the Board of Directors for adoption.</p>	<p>The multi-year statistical program will focus on long-term challenges and strategic development of the National Statistical System as a whole, for users in the wide sense of the term, that is to say government users and private users.</p> <p>The multi-year statistical program will outline activities and projects for implementing the vision. It will address issues identified for improvement, for instance, in the global assessment of the National Statistical System or while preparing the annual statistical program.</p> <p>The multi-year statistical program will analyze changes in user needs and changes in the context in which statistics are produced. It will weigh the development needs against available resources.</p> <p>The annual statistical program will include a list of all main inputs, outputs and activities in the National Statistical System: official statistics to be released; all data sources, such as statistical surveys, administrative data and any other data sets; annual development activities; and statistical registers.</p>



Article	Comment
<p><b>Article 12:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The Authority shall be entitled to select data sources based on professional considerations and collect the necessary data to compile Official Statistics directly from respondents. Data collection shall be designed with due consideration to quality of Statistics, costs of data provision and response burden. Data should be collected in electronic form in a mode and format decided by the Authority.</li><li>2. The Authority is entitled to:<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Conduct surveys and censuses among households, individuals and establishments in all available modes. The Board may determine the parameters under which participation in any Statistical Survey or census is compulsory and set out regulations to this effect.</li><li>b. Access all administrative records in the Kingdom considered relevant by the Authority for statistical production. Public Entities must grant the Authority with access to the Data on a Micro Data level, in electronically processable format on a continuous basis and without delay.</li><li>c. Use Big Data sources for the production of Official Statistics. Private Establishments must, upon request from the Authority, share their data with the Authority on a micro data level and on a continuous basis in electronically processable format free of charge.</li></ol></li><li>3. The Authority shall keep all data collected confidential and must not share identifiable micro data with any party outside of the Authority. Owners of Administrative Data or Big Data are exempted from any confidentiality obligations when sharing data with the Authority.</li><li>4. The Authority is entitled to contract with external workforce to carry out data collection activities.</li></ol>	<p>This paragraph entitles the Authority to use all different kinds of data sources for the collection of statistical data. Surveys require the cooperation of respondents and should, in principle, be compulsory. Voluntary surveys can be carried out, but have the disadvantage of requiring a bigger sample to achieve the same level of confidence, hence resulting in higher data collection costs.</p> <p>Administrative data should be made available by all government entities to the Authority whenever needed for the production of official statistics.</p> <p>The Law underlines the professional independence of the Authority in selecting data sources and collection methods. This paragraph also applies to the use by the Authority of other datasets, for example those under the ownership of private organizations, including big data.</p> <p>The Authority shall be entitled to access and collect data from all public data sources, free of charge, including identifiers and with the level of detail required for statistical purposes. Furthermore, agreements may be reached which enable the Authority to access and collect data from private sources regarding third parties, with the level of detail required for statistical purposes.</p>



Article	Comment
<p><b>Article 13:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Official Statistics shall be disseminated in a timely and punctual manner respecting statistical confidentiality and ensuring equal access to data.</li> <li>2. The Authority shall establish and make public an advance release calendar that indicates the planned dates and times for the releases of Official Statistics. Any expected divergence from the advance release calendar shall be communicated to the public before the planned release date. A new date for the release shall be set within a reasonable time and made public.</li> <li>3. Releases of Official Statistics shall be accompanied by meta data and explanatory comments, and access shall be granted to all users free of charge in a user-friendly data base, allowing users to access time series and break downs and download the relevant data in different formats.</li> <li>4. The Authority can grant access to anonymized micro data to authorized researchers in a protected environment, subject to conditions to be determined by resolution of the Board which shall include the requirement that any accessing research must sign confidentiality and non-disclosure agreements in advance in order to be granted access.</li> <li>5. Official Statistics shall be clearly distinguished from any other Statistics when released.</li> <li>6. Errors discovered in released Official Statistics shall be corrected, and the corrections shall be released and communicated to users at the earliest possible time.</li> <li>7. Users are entitled to use Official Statistics and the related meta data in their own products with indication of the data source.</li> </ol>	<p>The Authority must establish a public, pre-announced release calendar with the planned dates and times for the releases of official statistics. This informs all users about when official statistics are released and ensures that statistics are disseminated. The presentation of data and statistics should be objective and impartial and not contain any policy-prescriptive statements</p> <p>All releases of official statistics need to be accompanied by sufficient, up-to-date metadata and explanatory comments, provided by the Authority. Metadata provide information on the methodology applied, the data sources used, attributes of the data, such as the length and consistency of time series or average revisions to be expected. Expert users will need more detailed metadata to evaluate the statistical methods applied and the quality of the statistics.</p> <p>Access to official statistics, as a public good, should be made available free of charge. This should cover all data, provided privacy principles are followed, in at least one electronic publication format.</p>
<p><b>Article 14:</b></p> <p>Except for Official Statistics which must be provided free of charge, the Authority may provide statistical products and services in a commercial manner in accordance with regulations issued by the Board for this purpose.</p>	<p>On customers' request, the Authority may provide statistical processing services using data in their possession. Statistical processing services shall not jeopardize the production and quality of official statistics or the credibility of the National Statistical System</p>



Article	Comment
<p><b>Article 15:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The Authority shall cooperate with International Organizations as well as with other National Statistical Organizations and Regional Organizations in the field of Statistics, in order:<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. to develop internationally comparable Statistics;</li><li>b. to design international standards and guidelines;</li><li>c. to exchange information on good statistical practice.</li></ol></li><li>2. The Authority shall provide International Organizations with the required data, in compliance with international statistical standards agreed to by Saudi Arabia.</li><li>3. The Authority represents Saudi Arabia in international fora in the field of Statistics.</li></ol>	<p>Statistics cannot be developed in isolation within national borders. International collaboration creates opportunities for efficient development of new statistics in a joint effort of the experts. It reduces costs of producing official statistics through the development of common standards and tools and sharing of experience. Above all, it is crucial for ensuring the comparability of statistics across countries.</p>



Article	Comment
<p><b>Article 16:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Authority shall be committed to high quality standards when producing Official Statistics, respecting internationally agreed statistical quality principles. To guarantee the quality of results, statistics shall be developed, produced and disseminated on the basis of international standards and of scientific methods.</li> <li>2. In this respect, the following quality criteria shall apply:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. 'relevance', which refers to the degree to which Statistics meet current and potential needs of the users;</li> <li>b. 'accuracy', which refers to the closeness of estimates to the unknown true values;</li> <li>c. 'timeliness', which refers to the period between the availability of the information and the event or phenomenon it describes;</li> <li>d. 'punctuality', which refers to the fact that statistical releases should be published on the dates and times pre-announced in the statistical release calendar;</li> <li>e. 'accessibility' and 'clarity', which refer to the conditions and modalities by which users can obtain, use and interpret data;</li> <li>f. 'comparability', which refers to the measurement of the impact of differences in applied statistical concepts, measurement tools and procedures where Statistics are compared between geographical areas, sectoral domains or over time;</li> <li>g. 'coherence', which refers to the adequacy of the data to be reliably combined in different ways and for various uses.</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. To maintain a high standard of quality of Official Statistics, the Authority is entitled to edit and validate data, combine data from different sources, carry out record linking and matching of individual data exclusively for statistical purposes and use statistical estimation techniques to fill gaps.</li> <li>4. The Authority shall document sources and methods used in the production process, as well as the resulting data sets, in a standardized way. Users shall be kept informed about the sources and methods of statistical production and quality of statistical outputs through meta data.</li> </ol>	<p>The Authority commits to follow the highest quality standards when producing official statistics. Users statistics must be able to trust the integrity and methodological soundness of statistics produced by the Authority.</p> <p>The Authority regularly assesses and continually improves the quality of their products and processes, with respect to user needs, the principles of official statistics and internationally agreed statistical standards and recommendations. The commitment to quality should be made visible by including key improvement actions in the statistical programs.</p> <p>Quality management shall be based on common standards and harmonized methods of official statistics.</p> <p>To ensure quality of statistics, the Authority shall apply statistical methods, such as editing of individual data, record linking or other forms of combining data from different sources and using estimation techniques. This includes correct treatment of nonresponse, both for sample and more exhaustive surveys.</p> <p>Proper documentation for sources, methods and data sets is a basic requirement that the Authority need to observe. Ideally, metadata would include an assessment of how each statistic meets the quality targets. External and internal quality assessments should be made public as part of metadata.</p>



Article	Comment
<p><b>Article 17:</b></p> <p>The Authority shall respect the principles of statistical confidentiality. This shall apply to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Micro Data which allows natural or legal persons to be identified, either directly or indirectly</li><li>b. Aggregates composed of no more than 1 to 3 units, when the unit is a natural or legal person, if one of these units could be identified indirectly, thereby disclosing individual data about this unit</li><li>c. Classified Documents and Classified Information as defined in the Penal Law on Dissemination and Disclosure of Classified Information and Documents issued by Royal Decree No. M/35 dated 8/5/1432.</li><li>d. Any other data which is designed as confidential data by the President of the Authority.</li></ol>	<p>Respondents need to trust that the information provided by them for statistical purposes is not shared with other authorities on the individual level. Data collected for statistical purposes must not be used for administrative purposes on the individual level</p> <p>Individual data subject to confidentiality, are those that allow natural or legal persons to be identified, either directly or indirectly, thereby disclosing individual information. In addition, information declared Classified Documents and Classified Information as defined in the Penal Law on Dissemination and Disclosure of Classified Information and Documents issued by Royal Decree No. M/35 dated 8/5/1432 and shall be subject to statistical confidentiality.</p>
<p><b>Article 18:</b></p> <p>Confidential data held by the Authority, shall not be used for any investigation, surveillance, legal proceedings, administrative decision making or other similar handling of matters concerning a natural or a legal person by any Public Entity except to the extent that such confidential data was already in the possession of the relevant Public Entity.</p>	<p>Data collected for statistical purposes shall not be used for administrative purposes on the individual level. The Authority must, hence, not share data with other entities on the individual level.</p>
<p><b>Article 19:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The Authority shall protect a confidential data and take all necessary regulatory, administrative, technical and organizational measures to prevent access by unauthorized persons.</li><li>2. The Authority shall not disclose confidential data, except as outlined in Article 13 (4) and Article 20 1.</li><li>3. It is prohibited to use confidential data obtained by the Authority's employees or delegates, or employees of Public Entities or their representatives for non-statistical purposes.</li></ol>	<p>The Authority shall use individual data exclusively for statistical purposes. Measures should be taken to protect individual data and to respect the principle of privacy and statistical confidentiality.</p>



Article	Comment
<p><b>Article 20: Access to confidential Micro Data for research purposes</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Authority may, upon request, grant access, in a protected environment, to micro data which is also Confidential Data, for independent scientific research projects in accordance with regulations issued by the Board.</li> <li>2. The confidential data for research purposes must not include identifiers. The data provided shall be limited to the data necessary for the research purpose.</li> <li>3. The regulations issued by the Board shall set a fee as a compensation for the additional costs incurred in preparing and providing the data. All access to micro data for research purposes shall be documented.</li> </ol>	<p>The Authority may, upon submission of a detailed request, indicating the purpose, goal and methodology, grant access to their anonymized individual data for scientific research projects in accordance with regulations issued by the Board.</p>
<p><b>Article 21:</b></p> <p>The provisions of the system of penalties for publishing confidential information documents issued by Royal Decree No. M / 35 of 5/8/1432H shall apply to all confidential data and documents, and what is related to the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. All regular and temporary staff of the Authority;</li> <li>b. Persons from outside the Authority who are involved in survey or census operations;</li> <li>c. Any other persons who are authorized to access confidential data.</li> </ol>	<p>A confidentiality commitment shall be signed upon taking up functions in official statistics</p>
<p><b>Article 22:</b></p> <p>The Authority may subcontract parts of tasks of statistical production to a third party only when the full protection of confidential data can be ensured. Third parties shall use and maintain the data exclusively for the operations and only for the duration defined in the subcontract.</p>	<p>The Authority may subcontract parts of tasks of statistical production or support activities to a third party only when the full protection of statistical confidentiality and professional independence can be ensured.</p>

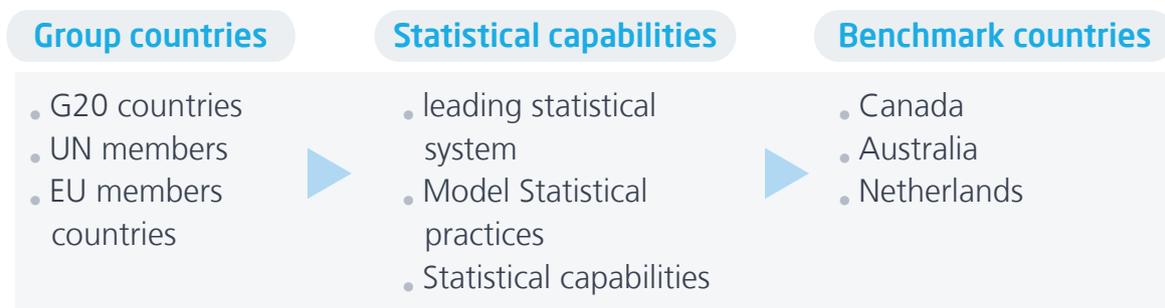


Article	Comment
<p><b>Article 23:</b></p> <p>Without prejudice to any more severe punishment stipulated in any other law, anyone who violates the provisions of this law or regulations issued by the Board under this law shall be punished with a fine not exceeding one hundred thousand riyals.</p> <p>The penalty shall be doubled if the violation is repeated.</p> <p>If a violation is committed by a corporate entity, and it is proved that the violation was committed with the consent or connivance of any director, the manager or other similar officer or any person who was purporting to act in any such capacity, he as well as the corporate entity shall be guilty of that violation, and shall be liable to be proceeded against and punished accordingly.</p>	<p>Violations of the confidentiality provisions of the present Law shall be prosecuted as regulated. The penalties provided for shall be effective, proportionate and deterrent.</p>
<p><b>Article 24:</b></p> <p>Specialized employees of the Authority - appointed by a decision of the President - shall monitor and prove violations of the provisions of this law, and they shall have the designation of judicial control officers.</p>	<p>The execution of the violation shall be the Authority's duty</p>
<p><b>Article 25:</b></p> <p>The law comes into effect after 180 days from the date of its publication in official gazette, and replaces the general statistics system issued by Royal Decree no. (23) dated 7/12/1379H, and the general population census system issued by Royal Decree no. M / 13 dated 23/04/1391H, and it repeals all provisions that contradict it.</p>	<p>The law in effect date</p>



## ▲ International experiences used for the law project

For the purpose of preparing the new Statistics Law in Saudi Arabia, a selection of best practices of statistic laws was analyzed. The selected countries Canada, Australia and the Netherlands are examples for leading statistical systems in terms of reputation, modern statistical practices and their capability to very quickly react to statistical needs in their respective countries. Like Saudi Arabia, Canada and Australia are members of the G-20, the statistical system of the Netherlands is the leading statistical system in Europe.



### ● Canada

The Canadian Statistics Act has a clear mandate for data collection and collaboration with departments of governments. It also provides authorities to collect survey or acquire and administrative data and contains penalties for not providing the information where required by law. There are clear obligations to undertake a Census of Population or Agriculture on a mandatory basis every 5 years.

### ● Netherlands

The National Statistics Office of the Kingdom of the Netherlands is the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS).

### ● Australia

The National Statistical Institute of Australia is the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). The legal basis is the Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975, last updated in 2017.



## ▲ International Comparison scope

The international comparative study dealt with the application of a number of common pillars between the international statistical laws and in which a number of countries compared, and each country has specificities in many of its articles and provisions, and the following comparisons included the following pillars:

1. Statistical Principles
2. Organization of the National Statistical System
3. Tasks of the National Statistics Office
4. Quality of Official Statistics
5. Statistical Confidentiality
6. Infringements and Penalties

### 1. Statistical Principles

Country	Practice
EU	<p><b>Article 2 of the EU law for Statistics states that: Statistical principles:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The development, production and dissemination of European statistics shall be governed by the following statistical principles:<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>(a) 'professional independence', meaning that statistics must be developed, produced and disseminated in an independent manner, particularly as regards the selection of techniques, definitions, methodologies and sources to be used, and the timing and content of all forms of dissemination, and that the performance of those tasks is free from any pressures from political or interest groups or from Union or national authorities;</li><li>(b) 'impartiality', meaning that statistics must be developed, produced and disseminated in a neutral manner, and that all users must be given equal treatment;</li><li>(c) 'objectivity', meaning that statistics must be developed, produced and disseminated in a systematic, reliable and unbiased manner; it implies the use of professional and ethical standards, and that the policies and practices followed are transparent to users and survey respondents;</li><li>(d) 'reliability', meaning that statistics must measure as faithfully, accurately and consistently as possible the reality that they are designed to represent and implying that scientific criteria are used for the selection of sources, methods and procedures;</li><li>(e) 'statistical confidentiality', meaning the protection of confidential data related to single statistical units which are obtained directly for statistical purposes or indirectly from administrative or other sources and implying the prohibition of use for non-statistical purposes of the data obtained and of their unlawful disclosure;</li></ol></li></ol>



Country	Practice
	<p>(f) 'cost effectiveness', meaning that the costs of producing statistics must be in proportion to the importance of the results and the benefits sought, that resources must be optimally used and the response burden minimised. The information requested shall, where possible, be readily extractable from available records or sources.</p> <p>The statistical principles set out in this paragraph are further elaborated in the Code of Practice in accordance with Article 11.</p> <p>2. The development, production and dissemination of European statistics shall take into account international recommendations and best practice.</p>
<b>Australia</b>	<p>Statistics Laws in these countries built on the UN statistics principles or make reference to it. The principles followed can be summarized in: 'professional independence'; 'impartiality'; 'objectivity'; 'reliability'; 'statistical confidentiality'; 'cost effectiveness'. The development, production and dissemination of statistics is governed by them.</p>
<b>Canada</b>	
<b>Netherlands</b>	

## 2. Organization of the National Statistical System

Country	Practice
EU	<p><b>Article 5 of the EU law for Statistics states that: National statistical institutes and other national authorities:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The national statistical authority designated by each Member State as the body having the responsibility for coordinating all activities at national level for the development, production and dissemination of European statistics, which are determined in the European statistical programme in accordance with Article 1, (the NSI) shall act in this regard as the sole contact point for the Commission (Eurostat) on statistical matters.</li> <li>2. The Commission (Eurostat) shall maintain and publish on its website a list of NSIs and other national authorities responsible for the development, production and dissemination of European statistics as designated by Member States.</li> </ol> <p>Article 5a states that "Within their national statistical system, Member States shall ensure the professional independence of officials responsible for the tasks set out in this Regulation."</p>



Country	Practice
<b>Australia</b>	<p><b>Article 5 of the Act states that Establishment of Bureau and office of Statistician:</b></p> <p>(1) There is hereby established a Bureau to be known as the Australian Bureau of Statistics.</p> <p>(2) There shall be an Australian Statistician.</p> <p>(3) The Bureau shall consist of the Statistician and the staff referred to in subsection 16 (1).</p> <p>(4) The Statistician shall control the operations of the Bureau and shall have such other functions, powers and duties as are conferred or imposed upon the Statistician by or under any Act and such other functions and powers as are conferred upon the Statistician by or under any law of a Territory.</p> <p>(5) For the purposes of the finance law (within the meaning of the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(a) the Bureau is a listed entity; and</li><li>(b) the Statistician is the accountable authority of the Bureau; and</li><li>(c) the following persons are officials of the Bureau:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(i) the Statistician;</li><li>(ii) the staff referred to in subsection 16(1);</li><li>(iii) persons engaged under subsection 16(2); and</li></ul></li><li>(d) the purposes of the Bureau include:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(i) the functions of the Bureau referred to in section 6; and</li><li>(ii) the functions of the Statistician referred to in subsection (4) and section 4.</li></ul></li></ul>
<b>Canada</b>	<p><b>Article 3 of the Statistics bureau states that:</b></p> <p>There shall continue to be a statistics bureau under the Minister, to be known as Statistics Canada.</p> <p>Article 4 section 1 states that the Governor in Council shall appoint the Chief Statistician of Canada to be the deputy head of Statistics Canada.</p> <p>Section 6 In each fiscal year the Chief Statistician shall make a report to the Minister on the activities of Statistics Canada in the preceding fiscal year, and that report shall be included as a separate part of the Minister's annual report to Parliament.</p>



Country	Practice
Netherlands	<p><b>In Part 1 of the Netherlands statistics act, “The Establishment and duties” in Section 2:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. There is a body called Statistics Netherlands (CBS).</li> <li>2. The CBS shall possess legal personality.</li> <li>3. The Autonomous Administrative Authorities Framework Act shall be applicable.</li> </ol> <p><b>Section 2a:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The CBS consists of one management body, the director general, with the title of director general of statistics.</li> <li>2. The director general shall be appointed for a period not exceeding seven years and may be reappointed once for a period not exceeding three years.</li> <li>3. When the position of director general becomes vacant, the advisory council shall recommend a candidate for the position to Our Minister.</li> <li>4. The director general may only be suspended or dismissed in consultation with the advisory council.</li> <li>5. Our Minister may draw up rules concerning deputisation for the director general.</li> </ol> <p><b>Section 2b:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The director general shall adopt a set of regulations of the board.</li> <li>2. The regulations of the board shall contain at least a section concerning:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. the structure of the CBS organisation;</li> <li>b. the composition and functioning of the superiors of the various organisational units at CBS and the general division of their tasks.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>

### 3. Tasks of the National Statistics office

Country	Practice
EU	<p><b>Article 5a of the EU Statistics law states that: To that end, the heads of national statistical institutes (NSIs) NSIs shall:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) have the sole responsibility for deciding on processes, statistical methods, standards and procedures, and on the content and timing of statistical releases and publications for European statistics developed, produced and disseminated by the NSI;</li> <li>(b) be empowered to decide on all matters regarding the internal management of the NSI;</li> <li>(c) act in an independent manner while performing their statistical tasks; and neither seek nor take instructions from any government or other institution, body, office or entity;</li> <li>(d) be responsible for the statistical activities and budget execution of the NSI;</li> <li>(e) publish an annual report and may express comments on budget allocation issues related to the statistical activities of the NSI;</li> </ol>



Country	Practice
EU	<p>(f) coordinate the statistical activities of all national authorities that are responsible for the development, production and dissemination of European statistics, as set out in Article 5(1);</p> <p>(g) produce national guidelines, where this is necessary to ensure quality in the development, production and dissemination of all European statistics within their national statistical system and monitor and review their implementation; while being responsible for ensuring compliance with those guidelines solely within the NSI; and</p> <p>(h) represent their national statistical system within the ESS.</p> <p>Each Member State shall ensure that other national authorities responsible for the development, production and dissemination of European statistics carry out such tasks in accordance with the national guidelines produced by the head of the NSI.</p>
Australia	<p><b>Article 6 of Australian Bureau for Statistics states:</b></p> <p>Functions of Bureau</p> <p>(1) The functions of the Bureau are as follows:</p> <p>(a) to constitute the central statistical authority for the Australian Government and, by arrangements with the Governments of the States, provide statistical services for those Governments;</p> <p>(b) to collect, compile, analyse and disseminate statistics and related information;</p> <p>(c) to ensure co-ordination of the operations of official bodies in the collection, compilation and dissemination of statistics and related information, with particular regard to:</p> <p>(i) the avoidance of duplication in the collection by official bodies of information for statistical purposes;</p> <p>(ii) the attainment of compatibility between, and the integration of, statistics compiled by official bodies; and</p> <p>(iii) the maximum possible utilization, for statistical purposes, of information, and means of collection of information, available to official bodies;</p> <p>(d) to formulate, and ensure compliance with, standards for the carrying out by official bodies of operations for statistical purposes;</p> <p>(e) to provide advice and assistance to official bodies in relation to statistics; and</p> <p>(f) to provide liaison between Australia, on the one hand, and other countries and international organizations, on the other hand, in relation to statistical matters.</p> <p>(2) For the purpose of the performance of its functions and for the purpose of co-ordinating statistical activities and securing the observance of statistical standards, the Bureau may collaborate with bodies, being Departments and authorities of the States, the Administrations and authorities of the external Territories and local governing bodies, in the collection, compilation, analysis and dissemination of statistics, including statistics obtained from the records of those bodies. Authorised Version C2019C00184 registered 10/05/2019</p>



Country	Practice
<p><b>Australia</b></p>	<p>Australian Bureau of Statistics and Australian Statistician Part II Section 7</p> <p>Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975 Compilation No. 11 Compilation date: 3/5/19 Registered: 10/5/19 (3) Subject to subsection (4), each new proposal for the collection of information for statistical purposes by the Bureau shall be laid before both Houses of the Parliament before its implementation, unless the proposal is for the collection of information on a voluntary basis.</p> <p>(4) Where, in relation to a proposal to which subsection (3) is applicable, being a proposal for the collection of information relating to businesses, the Minister considers it necessary to commence implementation of the proposal at a time when it is not practicable to comply with subsection (3) the Minister may authorize the implementation of the proposal without compliance with that subsection but in such a case particulars of the nature of the information to which the authorization relates shall be laid before each House of the Parliament within 5 sitting days of that House after the giving of the authorization.</p> <p>(5) For the purposes of this section:</p> <p>(a) a reference to statistical purposes shall be read as including purposes in connexion with the collection, compilation, analysis and dissemination of statistics; and</p> <p>(b) a reference to an official body shall be read as a reference to:</p> <p>(i) an Agency within the meaning of the Public Service Act 1999; or</p> <p>(ii) the holder of an office established for a public purpose by or under an Act or a law of an internal Territory; or</p> <p>(iii) a body corporate, or other body, established for a public purpose by or under an Act or a law of an internal Territory other than such a body corporate, or other body, that is declared by the regulations not to be an official body for the purposes of this Act.</p>
<p><b>Canada</b></p>	<p><b>Article 3 of the Statistics Act states:</b></p> <p>There shall continue to be a statistics bureau under the Minister, to be known as Statistics Canada, the duties of which are</p> <p>(a) to collect, compile, analyse, abstract and publish statistical information relating to the commercial, industrial, financial, social, economic and general activities and condition of the people;</p> <p>(b) to collaborate with departments of government in the collection, compilation and publication of statistical information, including statistics derived from the activities of those departments;</p> <p>(c) to take the census of population of Canada and the census of agriculture of Canada as provided in this Act;</p> <p>(d) to promote the avoidance of duplication in the information collected by departments of government; and</p> <p>(e) generally, to promote and develop integrated social and economic statistics pertaining to the whole of Canada and to each of the provinces thereof and to coordinate plans for the integration of those statistics.</p>



Country	Practice
Netherlands	<p><b>Sections 3,4, and 5 states:</b></p> <p><b>Section 3:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The task of the CBS is to carry out statistical research on account of the government for practice, policy and research purposes and to publish the statistics compiled on the basis of such research.</li><li>2. The CBS shall be responsible for fostering:<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. the provision of statistical information on account of the government which meets the needs of practice, policy and science;</li><li>b. the accuracy and completeness of the statistics to be published on account of the government;</li></ol></li><li>3. None of Our Ministers shall commission new statistical research or amend existing research without first consulting the director general.</li></ol> <p><b>Section 4:</b></p> <p>The CBS is the national authority responsible for the production of European statistics.</p> <p><b>Section 5:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The CBS may occasionally carry out statistical work for third parties. This work must not lead to competition with private suppliers of similar services which is undesirable from the perspective of the proper operation of market forces.</li><li>2. Our Minister may adopt further rules governing the work referred to in the first subsection.</li></ol>



## 4. Quality of Official Statistics

Country	Practice
<b>EU</b>	<p><b>Article 12 of the EU Statistics law Statistical quality</b></p> <p>1. To guarantee the quality of results, European statistics shall be developed, produced and disseminated on the basis of uniform standards and of harmonized methods. In this respect, the following quality criteria shall apply:</p> <p>(a) 'relevance', which refers to the degree to which statistics meet current and potential needs of the users; (b) 'accuracy', which refers to the closeness of estimates to the unknown true values; (c) 'timeliness', which refers to the period between the availability of the information and the event or phenomenon it describes; (d) 'punctuality', which refers to the delay between the date of the release of the data and the target date (the date by which the data should have been delivered); (e) 'accessibility' and 'clarity', which refer to the conditions and modalities by which users can obtain, use and interpret data; (f) 'comparability', which refers to the measurement of the impact of differences in applied statistical concepts, measurement tools and procedures where statistics are compared between geographical areas, sectoral domains or over time; (g) 'coherence', which refers to the adequacy of the data to be reliably combined in different ways and for various uses.</p>
<b>Australia</b>	Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975 does not include articles related to the quality of official statistics.
<b>Canada</b>	Section 8.1 of the act (1) An advisory council, to be known as the Canadian Statistics Advisory Council, is established (a) to advise the Minister and Chief Statistician in a transparent manner on any question that either of them has referred to the Council on the overall quality of the national statistical system, including the relevance, accuracy, accessibility and timeliness of its data;
<b>Netherlands</b>	The Netherlands does not include articles related to the quality of official statistics, but follows the EU statistics law in many aspects.

## 5. Statistical Confidentiality

Country	Practice
<b>EU</b>	<p>Article 20, The Protection of confidential data, of the statistics law lays out the rules and measures that apply to ensure that confidential data are exclusively used for statistical purposes and to prevent their unlawful disclosure. Also, states that "Confidential data obtained exclusively for the production of European statistics shall be used by the NSIs and other national authorities and by the Commission (Eurostat) exclusively for statistical purposes unless the statistical unit has unambiguously given its consent to the use for any other purposes".</p>



Country	Practice
<b>EU</b>	Article 21, the Transmission of confidential data, states that: “National rules on statistical confidentiality shall not be invoked to prevent the transmission of confidential data under paragraphs 1 and 2 where an act of the European Parliament and of the Council acting in accordance with Article 251 of the Treaty provides for the transmission of such data”. Also, “Confidential data transmitted in accordance with this Article shall be used exclusively for statistical purposes and only accessible to staff working in statistical activities within their specific domain of work.
<b>Australia</b>	Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975 does not include articles related to statically confidentiality but is subject to the Privacy Act 1988 (the Privacy Act) and to the Australian Privacy Principles (APPs) contained in the Privacy Act. In addition to the Privacy Act the ABS is also bound by the secrecy requirements of the Census and Statistics Act 1905 (Census & Statistics Act) which prohibits the release of information collected for a statistical purpose in a manner that is likely to enable the identification of any person or business.
<b>Canada</b>	Article 17 of Canadian statistics act states the following: (1) Except for the purpose of communicating information in accordance with any conditions of an agreement made under section 11 or 12 and except for the purposes of a prosecution under this Act but subject to this section, (a) no person, other than a person employed or deemed to be employed under this Act, and sworn under section 6, shall be permitted to examine any return or identifying information obtained for the purposes of this Act; and (b) no person who has been sworn under section 6 shall disclose or knowingly cause to be disclosed, by any means, any information obtained under this Act in a manner that it is possible from the disclosure to relate the information obtained to any identifiable individual person, business or organization.
<b>Netherlands</b>	<p>In the National law of Statistics of the Netherlands Part 1, section 33 Article 4: On request by the director general the institutions, departments, bodies and autonomous administrative authorities referred to in the first subsection, the legal persons referred to in the second subsection and the companies, independent professionals, institutions and legal persons referred to in the third subsection shall provide the data referred to in those subsections free of charge within a period to be stipulated by Order in Council. In such cases no duty of confidentiality may be invoked, unless this duty is based on international regulations.</p> <p>In Part 3, Section 39, Article 2: In every other instance in which data are provided to the Community and national statistical agencies of the member states of the European Union or members of the European System of Central Banks, the director general shall ascertain that all necessary administrative, technical and organisational measures have been taken for the physical and logistical protection of confidential data and to prevent any unlawful publication or use for non-statistical purposes in the dissemination of Community and national statistics.</p>



## 6. Infringements and Penalties

Country	Practice
<b>EU</b>	Article 26 states that Member States and the Commission shall take appropriate measures to prevent and penalise any violations of statistical confidentiality. The penalties provided for shall be effective, proportionate and dissuasive.
<b>Australia</b>	<p>The Australian Bureau of Statistics is subject to the Privacy Act 1988 (the Privacy Act) and to the Australian Privacy Principles (APPs) contained in the Privacy Act. In addition to the Privacy Act the ABS is also bound by the secrecy requirements of the Census and Statistics Act 1905 (Census &amp; Statistics Act) which prohibits the release of information collected for a statistical purpose in a manner that is likely to enable the identification of any person or business.</p> <p>Australian Bureau of Statistics staff are personally bound to protect identifiable data. It is an offence for any Australian Bureau of Statistics staff, past or present, to divulge, directly or indirectly, any information collected under the Census &amp; Statistics Act. Breaching this requirement can result in heavy penalties, including fines and imprisonment.</p>
<b>Canada</b>	<p>Every person who, after taking the oath set out in subsection 6(1),</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) deserts from his duty, or wilfully makes any false declaration, statement or return in the performance of his duties,</li> <li>(b) in the pretended performance of his duties, obtains or seeks to obtain information that the person is not duly authorized to obtain, or</li> <li>(c) contravenes subsection 17(1) is guilty of an offence and liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding one thousand dollars or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months or to both.</li> </ul> <p>Article 31 states that: Every person is guilty of an offence and liable on summary conviction to a fine of not more than \$500 who, without lawful excuse,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) refuses or neglects, following a request for information under this Act, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) to provide any requested information to the best of their knowledge and belief, or (ii) to provide any requested information when and as required under this Act; or</li> <li>(b) knowingly gives false or misleading information or practises any other deception under this Act.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Netherlands</b>	<p><b>In Part 4, Section 43, of the Act:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The director general may impose an administrative fine of up to € 5,000 on legal persons referred to in Section 33 (2) and companies, independent professionals, Institutions and legal persons referred to in Section 33 (3) that fail to provide the data referred to in those subsections or fail to provide them in full or in time.</li> <li>2. The director general may impose an administrative fine of up to € 5,000 on parties that fail to provide the data as referred to in Section 38b, or fail to provide them in full or in time.</li> <li>3. Our Minister may adopt rules in consultation with Our Minister of Justice with respect to the exercise of the power to impose an administrative fine.</li> </ol>



# International Principles and Benchmarks of Statistics Legislation

Benchmark Study for Drafting  
the Statistics Law in Saudi Arabia

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prepared by **Dr. Konrad Pesendorfer**



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## ▲ Background and Introduction

Trustworthy and reliable statistics must be founded on a sound legal basis which lives up to the highest national and international standards. Official statistics is not only an important evidence base for national decision makers, but it is also a reference for international comparisons, international benchmark exercises, and an input for investment decisions of international investors. A statistics law must therefore not only serve national purposes, but will also be scrutinized from outside the country.

International organizations carry out assessments of the statistical system of countries to see whether statistical data is produced on the basis of high professional standards and in compliance with the United Nation's Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics. The United National Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), together with the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and Eurostat carry out Global Assessments on countries' request. Saudi Arabia, being a member of the United Nations, needs to live up to the international obligations in the field of official statistics, resulting from the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics. These principles should be reflected in any legal basis regulating official statistics in Saudi Arabia.

In 2019, Saudi Arabia signed up to the Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS) of the International Monetary Fund. The SDDS require countries that have or seek access to capital markets to disseminate key data so that users in general, and financial market participants in particular, have adequate information to assess the economic situations of individual countries. The SDDS not only prescribes that subscribers disseminate certain data categories, but also prescribes that subscribers disseminate the relevant metadata to promote public knowledge and understanding of their compilation practices with respect to the required data categories.

The OECD assesses national statistical systems on the basis of the Recommendation of the OECD Council on Good Statistical Practice, adopted on 23 November 2015. These assessments can be carried out upon the request of a non-member country to strengthen the trust in the statistical system. For any country wanting to join the OECD as a member, the assessment is part of the formal accession procedure and only if the assessment is positive, the accession procedure can continue. The OECD, upon request, also carries out assessment of statistical systems of non-OECD member states. In case Saudi Arabia plans to request such an assessment of its statistical system in the future, it is important to reflect those OECD Recommendations in any legal basis regulating official statistics in Saudi Arabia.

At the level of the European Union, regular peer review exercises of national statistical systems of member states are carried out to assess the compliance with the EU regulation 223/2009 of European Statistics, as well as with the Code of Practice for European Statistics. The Code of Practice for European Statistics specifies the pillars of EU regulation 223/2009 and provides



principles and indicators to assess the compliance of national statistical institutes and EU member states with the legal; framework and good practices in the field of statistics. Any modern statistics law with the ambition of meeting high international standards should incorporate the main regulatory elements of the EU's regulation of European Statistics and its Code of Practice Principles.

This international benchmark study also analyzed the statistics laws of selected countries to show, how the international standards and principles are translated into national legislation. The selection of countries and statistics laws was not driven by the objective to show the average status of existing statistics laws in individual countries, but was rather looking for best practices in the international field. Canada, Australia and the Netherlands are examples for leading statistical systems in terms of reputation, modern statistical practices and their capability to very quickly react to statistical needs in their respective countries. Like Saudi Arabia, Canada and Australia are members of the G-20, the statistical system of the Netherlands is the leading statistical system in Europe.

The new Statistics Law in Saudi Arabia was drafted with a view to reflect all the existing international benchmarks, standards and good practices, as well as to take into account new developments in the fields of statistics, like e.g. the use of big data for statistical production. This new Statistics Law is not only a sound legal basis for the production of trustworthy statistics in Saudi Arabia, but it places Saudi Arabia in an excellent position in the case of an external assessment of the national statistical system by one of the international organizations.

**The following international standards and benchmarks were used as a reference when drafting the new Statistics Law in Saudi Arabia:**

- The United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics <sup>1</sup>
- The Generic Law on Official Statistics, developed by the UNECE <sup>2</sup>
- The UN Classification of International Statistical Activities <sup>3</sup>
- The Recommendation of the OECD Council on Good Statistical Practice <sup>4</sup>
- Regulation (EC) No 223/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council on European statistics <sup>5</sup>
- European Statistics Code of Practice <sup>6</sup>
- The Special Dissemination Standard of the IMF <sup>7</sup>
- The national statistics laws of the following countries:
  - Canada <sup>8</sup>
  - The Netherlands <sup>9</sup>
  - Australia <sup>10</sup>

A Comparative Study of International Practices in the «National Statistics System»<sup>11</sup> was prepared for a previous version of a new Statistics Law in Saudi Arabia, referencing the statistics systems of eight countries and the UN Generic Law on Official Statistics. This note on international benchmarks takes into account the findings of this comparative study.



## ▲ United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as a member of the United Nations subscribes to the standards and principles of the UN. In the field of Statistics, the core body of standards are the United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, first adopted by the UN Statistical Commission in 1994, and later amended in 2014. Ten principles are laid down in this central document:

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1. <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/dnss/gp/fundprinciples.aspx>
  2. [https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/stats/publications/2016/ECECESSTAT20163\\_E.pdf](https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/stats/publications/2016/ECECESSTAT20163_E.pdf)
  3. <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/iiss/Classification-of-International-Statistical-Activities.ashx?HL=social,statistics>
  4. <https://www.oecd.org/statistics/good-practice-toolkit/Brochure-Good-Stat-Practices.pdf>
  5. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32009R0223&from=EN>
  6. <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/4031688/8971242/KS-02-18-142-EN-N.pdf/e7f85f07-91db-4312-8118-f729c75878c7>
  7. <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/sdds/guide/2013/sddsguide13.pdf>
  8. <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/PDF/S-19.pdf>
  9. [https://www.cbs.nl/-/media/\\_pdf/2017/28/statistics-netherlands-act-2017-0101.pdf](https://www.cbs.nl/-/media/_pdf/2017/28/statistics-netherlands-act-2017-0101.pdf)
  10. <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2017C00096/604d13a5-86c1-4aca-8dde-e6c1226b17b3>
  11. prepared by Statistician Peter Harper in February 2017.



## Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics:

**Principle 1.** Official statistics provide an indispensable element in the information system of a democratic society, serving the Government, the economy and the public with data about the economic, demographic, social and environmental situation. To this end, official statistics that meet the test of practical utility are to be compiled and made available on an impartial basis by official statistical agencies to honor citizens' entitlement to public information.

**Principle 2.** To retain trust in official statistics, the statistical agencies need to decide according to strictly professional considerations, including scientific principles and professional ethics, on the methods and procedures for the collection, processing, storage and presentation of statistical data.

**Principle 3.** To facilitate a correct interpretation of the data, the statistical agencies are to present information according to scientific standards on the sources, methods and procedures of the statistics.

**Principle 4.** The statistical agencies are entitled to comment on erroneous interpretation and misuse of statistics.

**Principle 5.** Data for statistical purposes may be drawn from all types of sources, be they statistical surveys or administrative records. Statistical agencies are to choose the source with regard to quality, timeliness, costs and the burden on respondents.

**Principle 6.** Individual data collected by statistical agencies for statistical compilation, whether they refer to natural or legal persons, are to be strictly confidential and used exclusively for statistical purposes.

**Principle 7.** The laws, regulations and measures under which the statistical systems operate are to be made public.

**Principle 8.** Coordination among statistical agencies within countries is essential to achieve consistency and efficiency in the statistical system.

**Principle 9.** The use by statistical agencies in each country of international concepts, classifications and methods promotes the consistency and efficiency of statistical systems at all official levels.

**Principle 10.** Bilateral and multilateral cooperation in statistics contributes to the improvement of systems of official statistics in all countries.

Most Statistics Laws in individual countries, as well as reference frameworks in the European Union or in the OECD are built on these principles or make reference to it. The new Statistics Law for Saudi Arabia follows this international benchmark.



## ▲ The Generic Law on Official Statistics (UNECE)

The Generic Law on Official Statistics was developed under the United Nations Development Account (UNDA) 9th tranche project for the countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia. The Conference of European Statisticians (CES) strongly supported and unanimously endorsed the Generic Law on Official Statistics and its explanatory notes at its plenary session on 29 April 2016 (decision ECE/CES/91). The purpose of the Generic Law is to provide a strong reference for developing a solid legal basis for the functioning of a National Statistical System and the production of high-quality official statistics. The Generic Law on Official Statistics is accompanied by explanatory notes to facilitate the understanding and interpretation of the Law and to describe how the individual articles provide important building blocks of a sound legal basis for producing official statistics.

The Generic Law is fully in line with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, originally endorsed by United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) in 1992, and aligned with the principles of the European statistics Code of Practice where applicable. Thus, the Law aims to enhance public trust and promote the use of official statistics in the countries.

The Generic Law on Official Statistics provides a model for drafting statistics laws. The main elements covered in the Generic Law on Official Statistics are as follows:

- The definition of official statistics, to be distinguished from administrative information;
- The definition and delineation of Producers of Official Statistics;
- The principle of professional independence of organizations and organizational entities producing official statistics;
- The role of the National Statistical Office as the main Producer of Official Statistics and the coordinator of the system of official statistics in the country;
- Operational and strategic programming, focusing on existing and emerging user needs;
- The mandate for data collection and access to administrative data and other data sources;
- The principles and procedures for handling confidential statistical data;
- Management of quality, taking into account users' perspective;
- The principles for dissemination of official statistics to all relevant user groups.

The Generic Law on Official Statistics was used as the main point of departure when drafting the new Statistics Law for Saudi Arabia. While maintaining the main elements and structure of the Generic Law on Official Statistics, adjustments were made to take into account the national circumstances and the legal system in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.



## ▲ Recommendation of the OECD Council on Good Statistical Practice

The Recommendation of the OECD Council on Good Statistical Practice were adopted on 23 November 2015. The Recommendations are one of the OECD's legal instruments. They are not legally binding but practice accords them great moral force as representing the political will of member countries. It reflects the fact that the quality of statistics is fundamental for the quality of evidence-based analytical work of the Organization and also for the quality of statistical publications and databases produced by the OECD. There are twelve recommendations covering the institutional, legal and resource requirements for statistical systems; the methods and quality of processes of statistical production; dissemination; coordination and co-operation and statistical innovation. For each of the twelve recommendations in the Recommendation, a set of good practices has been compiled.

The Recommendation was developed under the auspices of the OECD Committee on Statistics and Statistical Policy (CSSP). It was subject to an extensive consultation procedure with countries, and approved by the CSSP on 31 July 2015.

The twelve recommendations are the following:

1. Put in place a clear legal and institutional framework for official statistics which should in particular provide:
  - i) details as to the organization of the NSS, the legal status and role of the NSO, as well as the legal status, functions, relationship, rights and responsibilities of other institutions within the NSS;
  - ii) a clear mandate for institutions of the NSS to collect data for statistical purposes.
2. Ensure professional independence of National Statistical Authorities. To this end, Adherents should ensure that the National Statistical Authorities:
  - i) are professionally independent from other policy, regulatory or administrative departments and bodies, as well as from private sector operators, considering that professional independence of the producers of official statistics is essential for the production and the dissemination of objective statistics;
  - ii) have the exclusive authority, as part of their professional independence, to decide on statistical methods and dissemination;
  - iii) are protected, through the inclusion of explicit provisions in statistics legislation, from political and other interference in developing, compiling and disseminating official statistics.
3. Ensure adequacy of human financial and technical resources available to the National Statistical Authorities for the production and dissemination of official statistics. To this end, Adherents should ensure that the resources are:
  - i) sufficient to allow National Statistical Authorities to meet their commitment to quality, and to meet professional standards thereby fulfilling their role as providers of reliable, relevant and accessible data for national and international use;



- ii) adequate to produce a minimum core set of data, to be defined nationally or internationally, to monitor the economy, society and the environment.
4. Protect the privacy of data providers (including individuals, households, enterprises, administrations, and all levels of government) and guarantee by law the confidentiality of the individual information provided and its use for statistical purposes only.
  5. Ensure the right to access administrative sources to produce official statistics. To this end, Adherents should ensure that:
    - i) National Statistical Authorities have the right to access administrative data for the regular production of official statistics and to use them in the interest of ensuring quality of official statistics, raising the analytical value of official statistics, reducing burden on survey respondents and reducing the cost of statistical programmes;
    - ii) National Statistical Authorities co-operate with owners of administrative records as regards their statistical quality and have authority to influence their design to ensure they are fit for statistical purposes.
  6. Ensure the impartiality, objectivity and transparency of official statistics, through the development, production and dissemination by the National Statistical Authorities of statistics respecting scientific independence put in place in an objective, professional and transparent manner in which all users are treated equitably. Equitable treatment implies in particular equal access to data by all users.
  7. Employ sound methodology and commit to professional standards used in the production of official statistics. To this end, Adherents should:
    - i) apply appropriate statistical procedures and methods, including a stated revisions policy;
    - ii) strive to adhere to international norms and standards, such as methodological manuals developed by the United Nations Statistical Commission or by the OECD, and international classifications in the statistics collected by the OECD.
  8. Commit to the quality of statistical outputs and processes, in particular to key quality dimensions as defined in national and international quality assessment frameworks, for instance in the Quality Framework and Guidelines for OECD Statistical Activities: timeliness and punctuality (statistics are released in a timely and punctual manner); relevance (statistics meet the needs of users); accuracy (statistics accurately and reliably portray reality); credibility (confidence is placed by users in statistical products); coherence and comparability (statistics are consistent internally, over time and in space and it is possible to combine and make joint use of related data from different sources); and interpretability and accessibility (see Recommendation 9).
  9. Ensure user-friendly data access and dissemination, so that statistics are presented in a clear and understandable form, released in a suitable and convenient manner, including in machine-readable form ('open data'), can be found easily, and are available and accessible on an impartial basis with supporting metadata and guidance. This also entails a commitment to respond to major misinterpretations of data by users.



10. Establish responsibilities for co-ordination of statistical activities within the NSS. To this end, Adherents should ensure that:
  - i) the co-ordination of statistical activities among statistical producers is done through the use of standard concepts and classifications and avoids the duplication of effort;
  - ii) responsibilities for such co-ordination function are clearly laid out and anchored in statistical legislation.
11. Commit to international co-operation. To this end, Adherents should:
  - i) encourage statistical producers to achieve common goals in statistics jointly with the statistical producers in other countries and with international organizations, with a view to developing internationally comparable statistics, to designing international standards and to exchanging information on good practice.
  - ii) provide the necessary data for the OECD's reporting system and analytical work, in compliance with international statistical standards as recognized by the OECD and preferably using the Statistical Data and Metadata eXchange method/standard in particular for domains with internationally agreed Data Structure Definitions (DSDs).
12. Encourage exploring innovative methods as well as new and alternative data sources as inputs for official statistics, and in particular encourage statistical agencies to actively explore possibilities to use new data sources (including large datasets owned by the private sector), or to combine existing and new data sources as input for official statistics. At the same time, these opportunities are weighted against the limits of using modern information technologies and the need to maintain the quality of official statistics.

The Recommendations are addressed both to OECD member states, as well as to non-member states. In June 2020 the following six Non OECD member states have adhered to the Recommendations on Good Statistical Practice <sup>12</sup>:

- Argentina
- Bulgaria
- Croatia
- Peru
- Romania
- Columbia

## ▲ Regulation No 223/2009 on European Statistics

Regulation (EC) No 223/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council on European statistics is the legal framework for member countries of the European Union to produce harmonized statistics at the European level.

For the draft of the new Statistics Law in Saudi Arabia, in particular two elements of this regulation were referenced: the statistical principles (Article 2) and the article on statistical quality (Article 12 (1)):

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12. See: <https://www.oecd.org/statistics/good-practice-toolkit/countryassessments/>



## Article 2: Statistical principles

1. The development, production and dissemination of European statistics shall be governed by the following statistical principles:
  - (a) 'professional independence', meaning that statistics must be developed, produced and disseminated in an independent manner, particularly as regards the selection of techniques, definitions, methodologies and sources to be used, and the timing and content of all forms of dissemination, free from any pressures from political or interest groups or from Community or national authorities, without prejudice to institutional settings, such as Community or national institutional or budgetary provisions or definitions of statistical needs;
  - (b) 'impartiality', meaning that statistics must be developed, produced and disseminated in a neutral manner, and that all users must be given equal treatment;
  - (c) 'objectivity', meaning that statistics must be developed, produced and disseminated in a systematic, reliable and unbiased manner; it implies the use of professional and ethical standards, and that the policies and practices followed are transparent to users and survey respondents;
  - (d) 'reliability', meaning that statistics must measure as faithfully, accurately and consistently as possible the reality that they are designed to represent and implying that scientific criteria are used for the selection of sources, methods and procedures;
  - (e) 'statistical confidentiality', meaning the protection of confidential data related to single statistical units which are obtained directly for statistical purposes or indirectly from administrative or other sources and implying the prohibition of use for non-statistical purposes of the data obtained and of their unlawful disclosure;
  - (f) 'cost effectiveness', meaning that the costs of producing statistics must be in proportion to the importance of the results and the benefits sought, that resources must be optimally used and the response burden minimised. The information requested shall, where possible, be readily extractable from available records or sources. The statistical principles set out in this paragraph are further elaborated in the Code of Practice in accordance with Article 11.
2. The development, production and dissemination of European statistics shall take into account international recommendations and best practice.

## Article 12: Statistical quality

1. To guarantee the quality of results, European statistics shall be developed, produced and disseminated on the basis of uniform standards and of harmonised methods. In this respect, the following quality criteria shall apply:
  - (a) 'relevance', which refers to the degree to which statistics meet current and potential needs of the users;
  - (b) 'accuracy', which refers to the closeness of estimates to the unknown true values;



- (c) 'timeliness', which refers to the period between the availability of the information and the event or phenomenon it describes;
- (d) 'punctuality', which refers to the delay between the date of the release of the data and the target date (the date by which the data should have been delivered);
- (e) 'accessibility' and 'clarity', which refer to the conditions and modalities by which users can obtain, use and interpret data;
- (f) 'comparability', which refers to the measurement of the impact of differences in applied statistical concepts, measurement tools and procedures where statistics are compared between geographical areas, sectoral domains or over time;
- (g) 'coherence', which refers to the adequacy of the data to be reliably combined in different ways and for various uses.

## ▲ Other international references

- **European Statistics Code of Practice:**

The European Statistics Code of Practice is the cornerstone of the common quality framework of the European Statistical System.

It is a self-regulatory instrument and is based on 16 Principles covering the institutional environment, statistical processes and statistical outputs. A set of indicators of best practices and standards for each of the Principles provides guidance and reference for reviewing the implementation of the Code of Practice, increasing transparency within the European Statistical System.

Statistical authorities, comprising the European Union Statistical Authority (Eurostat), the National Statistical Institutes and other national authorities responsible for the development, production and dissemination of European Statistics, commit themselves to adhere to the Code of Practice.

The 16 principles of the Code of Practice are structured in three areas and comprise:

- 1. Institutional environment:**
  - a. Professional Independence
  - b. Coordination and cooperation
  - c. Mandate for data collection and access to data
  - d. Adequacy of Resources
  - e. Commitment to Quality
  - f. Statistical confidentiality and data protection
  - g. Impartiality and Objectivity



2. Statistical Processes:
  - a. Sound methodology
  - b. Appropriate statistical procedures
  - c. Non-excessive burden on respondents
  - d. Cost effectiveness
3. Statistical Output:
  - a. Relevance
  - b. Accuracy and reliability
  - c. Timeliness and punctuality
  - d. Coherence and comparability
  - e. Accessibility and clarity

- **The Special Dissemination Standard of the IMF:**

In September 2019, Saudi Arabia subscribed to the International Monetary Fund's Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS). The subscription to the SDDS enhances the availability of timely statistics according to an advance release calendar, thereby contributing to sound macroeconomic policies and the proper functioning of financial markets. Although voluntary, a subscribing member commits to observe the standard and to provide information (metadata) about data dissemination practices. This information is made publicly available on the IMF's Dissemination Standards Bulletin Board (DSBB).

The SDDS identifies four dimensions of data dissemination:

- **Data coverage**, periodicity, and timeliness. Comprehensive economic and financial data, disseminated on a timely basis, are essential to the transparency of macroeconomic performance and policy. Countries subscribing to the SDDS are obliged to disseminate the prescribed categories of data with the specified coverage, periodicity, and timeliness.
- **Access by the public.** Dissemination of official statistics is an essential feature of statistics as a public good. The SDDS calls for providing the public, including market participants, with ready and equal access to the data. Countries subscribing to the SDDS are obliged to (1) disseminate advance release calendars (ARCs) for the data and (2) release the data to all interested parties simultaneously.
- **Integrity.** To fulfill the purpose of providing the public with information, official statistics must have the confidence of their users. In turn, confidence in the statistics ultimately becomes a matter of confidence in the objectivity and professionalism of the agencies producing the statistics. Transparency of its practices and procedures is a key factor in creating this confidence. The SDDS obliges subscribing countries to (1) disseminate the terms and conditions under which official statistics are produced, including those



relating to the confidentiality of individually identifiable information; (2) identify internal government access to data before release to the public; (3) identify ministerial commentary on the occasion of statistical releases; and (4) provide information about revision and advance notice of major changes in methodology.

- **Quality.** A set of standards that deals with the coverage, periodicity, and timeliness of data must also address the quality of statistics. Although quality is difficult to judge, monitorable proxies, designed to focus on information the user needs to judge quality, can be useful. The SDDS obliges subscribing countries to (1) disseminate documentation on methodology and sources used in preparing statistics, including the identification of methodological deviations from internationally accepted statistical methodologies, encouraging them to undertake and publish data modules of the Reports on the Observance of Standards and Codes (Data ROSCs) or other quality assessments every seven to ten years; and (2) disseminate component detail, reconciliations with related data, and statistical frameworks that support statistical cross-checks and provide assurance of reasonableness.

For each of these dimensions, the SDDS prescribes best practices that can be observed, or monitored, by the users of statistics. These practices are referred to as “monitorable elements.”

- **The UN Classification of International Statistical Activities:**

The UN Classification of International Statistical Activities describes the three main subject matter domains in official statistics, as well as methodology and strategic and managerial issues of official statistics.

The three subject matter domains comprise:

**Domain 1: Demographic and social statistics:**

- Population and migration
- Labour
- Education
- Health
- Income and consumption
- Social protection
- Human settlements and housing
- Justice and crime
- Culture
- Political and other community activities
- Time-use

**Domain 2: Economic statistics •**

- Macroeconomic statistics
- Economic accounts
- Business statistics
- Sectoral statistics
  - a) Agriculture, forestry, fisheries
  - b) Energy
  - c) Mining, manufacturing, construction
  - d) Transport
  - e) Tourism
  - f) Banking, insurance, financial statistics
- Government finance fiscal and public sector statistics
- International trade and balance of payments
- Prices
- Labour cost
- Science, technology and innovation

**Domain 3: Environment and multi-domain statistics**

- Environment
- Regional and small area statistics
- Multi-domain statistics and indicators
  - a) Living conditions, poverty and cross-cutting social issues
  - b) Gender and special population groups
  - c) Information society
  - d) Globalisation
  - e) Indicators related to the Millennium Development Goals
  - f) Sustainable development
  - g) Entrepreneurship
- Yearbooks and similar compendia

## ▲ National Statistics Laws

National circumstances vary from country to country. For the purpose of preparing the new Statistics Law in Saudi Arabia, a selection of best practices of statistic laws was analyzed. The selected countries Canada, Australia and the Netherlands are examples for leading statistical systems in terms of reputation, modern statistical practices and their capability to very quickly react to statistical needs in their respective countries. Like Saudi Arabia, Canada and Australia are members of the G-20, the statistical system of the Netherlands is the leading statistical system in Europe.



- **Canada:**

The Canadian Statistics Act has a clear mandate for data collection and collaboration with departments of governments. It also provides authorities to collect survey or acquire and administrative data and contains penalties for not providing the information where required by law. There are clear obligations to undertake a Census of Population or Agriculture on a mandatory basis every 5 years.

The Act assigns clear responsibilities to the Chief Statistician.

- (5) The Chief Statistician shall, in addition to any other duties imposed on him or her under any other provision of the Act,
- a) decide, based strictly on professional statistical standards that he or she considers appropriate, the methods and procedures for carrying out statistical programs regarding:
    - i. the collection, compilation, analysis, abstraction and publication of statistical information that is produced or is to be produced by Statistics Canada,
    - ii. the content of statistical releases and publications issued by Statistics Canada, and
    - iii. the timing and methods of dissemination of statistics compiled by Statistics Canada;
  - b) advise on matters pertaining to statistical programs of the departments and agencies of the Government of Canada, and confer with those departments and agencies to that end; and
  - c) control the operations and staff of Statistics Canada.

Whether data collection is mandatory or not is decided by the Chief Statistician.

- 8 (1) The Chief Statistician shall determine whether a request for information is mandatory or voluntary, with the exception of the census of population and census of agriculture, both of which are mandatory.

A Statistics Advisory Council is established.

- 8.1 (1) An advisory council, to be known as the Canadian Statistics Advisory Council, is established
- (a) to advise the Minister and Chief Statistician in a transparent manner on any question that either of them has referred to the Council on the overall quality of the national statistical system, including the relevance, accuracy, accessibility and timeliness of its data; and
  - (b) to make public an annual report on the state of the national statistical system.

The Act also provides for a confidentiality provision to protect the information and ensure that any dissemination of information would not identify an individual, business or organization. The Statistics Act's strength is found in its clear confidentiality provision and mandate to collect data.



### **Prohibition against divulging information**

17 (1) Except for the purpose of communicating information in accordance with any conditions of an agreement made under section 11 or 12 and except for the purposes of a prosecution under this Act but subject to this section,

- (a) no person, other than a person employed or deemed to be employed under this Act, and sworn under section 6, shall be permitted to examine any return or identifying information obtained for the purposes of this Act; and
- (b) no person who has been sworn under section 6 shall disclose or knowingly cause to be disclosed, by any means, any information obtained under this Act in a manner that it is possible from the disclosure to relate the information obtained to any identifiable individual person, business or organization.

The Act also foresees punishments for offenses in case of false declarations or the refusal to provide information.

### **Desertion or false declaration**

30 Every person who, after taking the oath set out in subsection 6(1),

- (a) deserts from his duty, or wilfully makes any false declaration, statement or return in the performance of his duties,
- (b) in the pretended performance of his duties, obtains or seeks to obtain information that the person is not duly authorized to obtain, or
- (c) contravenes subsection 17(1) is guilty of an offence and liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding one thousand dollars or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months or to both.

### **False or unlawful information**

31 Every person is guilty of an offence and liable on summary conviction to a fine of not more than \$500 who, without lawful excuse,

- (a) refuses or neglects, following a request for information under this Act,
  - (i) to provide any requested information to the best of their knowledge and belief, or
  - (ii) to provide any requested information when and as required under this Act; or
- (b) knowingly gives false or misleading information or practises any other deception under this Act.

### **Refusal to grant access to records**

32 Every person is guilty of an offence and liable on summary conviction to a fine of not more than \$1,000



- (a) who, having the custody or charge of any documents or records that are maintained in any department or in any municipal office, corporation, business or organization, from which information sought in respect of the objects of this Act can be obtained or that would aid in the completion or correction of the information, refuses or neglects to grant access to the information to any person authorized for the purpose by the Chief Statistician, or
- (b) who otherwise in any way wilfully obstructs or seeks to obstruct any person employed in the execution of any duty under this Act.

Statistics Canada makes available to the public, its legislation and supporting governance documents.

- **Netherlands:**

The National Statistics Office of the Kingdom of the Netherlands is the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS). Its tasks are clearly laid down in the following section of the Statistics Netherlands Act (2017):

**Section 3:**

1. The task of the CBS is to carry out statistical research on account of the government for practice, policy and research purposes and to publish the statistics compiled on the basis of such research.
2. The CBS shall be responsible for fostering:
  - a. the provision of statistical information on account of the government which meets the needs of practice, policy and science;
  - b. the accuracy and completeness of the statistics to be published on account of the government;
3. None of Our Ministers shall commission new statistical research or amend existing research without first consulting the director general.

**Section 4:**

The CBS is the national authority responsible for the production of European statistics.

**Section 5:**

1. The CBS may occasionally carry out statistical work for third parties. This work must not lead to competition with private suppliers of similar services which is undesirable from the perspective of the proper operation of market forces.
  2. Our Minister may adopt further rules governing the work referred to in the first subsection.
- The Statistics Office of the Netherlands has a clear mandate to collect data.

**Section 33:**

1. The director general is authorised to use, for statistical purposes, data from registers that are maintained in connection with the performance of a statutory duty by:
  - a. institutions and departments of:
    - 1°. central government;
    - 2°. provinces;
    - 3°. local authorities;
    - 4°. water boards;
    - 5°. public bodies established pursuant to the Joint Regulations Act;
  - b. public bodies as referred to in Section 134 of the Constitution;
  - c. autonomous administrative authorities at the level of central government.
2. The director general is further authorised to use, for statistical purposes, data from registers that are maintained by legal persons designated by an Order in Council, which carry out a task regulated by or by virtue of the law or which are wholly or partially financed, directly or indirectly, from funds provided by the State or from the proceeds of levies imposed by or by virtue of the law.
3. In so far as the methods of acquiring data referred to in the first and second subsections fail to yield the necessary data, the director general is authorised to request, for statistical purposes, data designated by Order in Council from the categories of companies, independent professionals, institutions and legal persons designated by said Order.
4. On request by the director general the institutions, departments, bodies and autonomous administrative authorities referred to in the first subsection, the legal persons referred to in the second subsection and the companies, independent professionals, institutions and legal persons referred to in the third subsection shall provide the data referred to in those subsections free of charge within a period to be stipulated by Order in Council. In such cases no duty of confidentiality may be invoked, unless this duty is based on international regulations.
5. In so far as the data referred to in the third subsection relates to the Dutch banking sector and they are collected by De Nederlandsche Bank NV as part of its duties these data shall be acquired after consultation with and through the mediation of De Nederlandsche Bank NV. Other data relating to the Dutch banking sector shall be acquired in consultation with De Nederlandsche Bank NV.

**Section 34:**

The director general may use the citizen service number in any register and use it for statistical purposes. The director general may use the citizen service number in communications with persons and agencies in so far as they themselves are authorised to use that number in a register.

**Section 35:**

The director general may process personal data as referred to in Section 16 of the Personal Data Protection Act for statistical purposes.

**Section 36:**

Having due regard to the proper performance of his duties, the director general shall ensure that data are acquired in such a way as to minimise the ensuing administrative burden for companies, independent professionals and institutions as well as legal persons whose objective according to their articles of association is to represent the interests of the companies, independent professionals and institutions concerned.

The use of data collected in this way must be restricted to statistical purposes.

**Section 37:**

1. The data received by the director general in connection with the performance of his duties to implement this act shall be used solely for statistical purposes.
2. The data referred to in the first subsection shall not be provided to any persons other than those charged with carrying out the duties of the CBS.
3. The data referred to in the first subsection shall only be published in such a way that no recognisable data can be derived from them about an individual person, household, company or institution, unless, in the case of data relating to a company or institution, there are good reasons to assume that the company or institution concerned will not have any objections to the publication.

Access to micro data can be granted by the Director General of the Statistics Office (CBS).

**Section 41:**

1. Contrary to the provisions of Section 37 the director general may, on request, provide or grant access to a set of data to a department, organisation or institution as referred to in the second subsection for the purposes of statistical or academic research where appropriate measures have been taken to prevent identification of individual persons, households, companies or institutions from those data.
2. A set of data as referred to in the first subsection may be provided to or made accessible to:
  - a) a university within the meaning of the Higher Education and Research Act;
  - b) an organisation or institution for academic research established by law;
  - c) planning offices established by or by virtue of the law;
  - d) the Community statistical agency and national statistical agencies of the member states of the European Union;
  - e) research departments of ministries and other departments, organisations and institutions.

Fines can be imposed by the Director General in case data access is not granted.

**Section 43:**

1. The director general may impose an administrative fine of up to € 5,000 on legal persons referred to in Section 33 (2) and companies, independent professionals, institutions and legal persons referred to in Section 33 (3) that fail to provide the data referred to in those subsections or fail to provide them in full or in time.
2. The director general may impose an administrative fine of up to € 5,000 on parties that fail to provide the data as referred to in Section 38b, or fail to provide them in full or in time.
3. Our Minister may adopt rules in consultation with Our Minister of Justice with respect to the exercise of the power to impose an administrative fine.

**• Australia:**

The National Statistical Institute of Australia is the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). The legal basis is the Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975, last updated in 2017.

The Statistics Act allocated clear responsibilities to the ABS:

**6 Functions of Bureau**

(1) The functions of the Bureau are as follows:

- a. to constitute the central statistical authority for the Australian Government and, by arrangements with the Governments of the States, provide statistical services for those Governments;
- b. to collect, compile, analyse and disseminate statistics and related information;
- c. to ensure co-ordination of the operations of official bodies in the collection, compilation and dissemination of statistics and related information, with particular regard to:
  - i. the avoidance of duplication in the collection by official bodies of information for statistical purposes;
  - ii. the attainment of compatibility between, and the integration of, statistics compiled by official bodies; and
  - iii. the maximum possible utilization, for statistical purposes, of information, and means of collection of information, available to official bodies;
- d. to formulate, and ensure compliance with, standards for the carrying out by official bodies of operations for statistical purposes;
- e. to provide advice and assistance to official bodies in relation to statistics; and
- f. to provide liaison between Australia, on the one hand, and other countries and international organizations, on the other hand, in relation to statistical matters.

An Australian Statistics Advisory Council is established with the following functions:

**18 Functions of Council:**

- (1) The functions of the Council are to advise the Minister and the Statistician in relation to:
  - (a) the improvement, extension and co-ordination of statistical services provided for public purposes in Australia;
  - (b) annual and longer term priorities and programs of work that should be adopted in relation to major aspects of the provision of those statistical services; and
  - (c) any other matters relating generally to those statistical services.
- (2) Either the Minister or the Statistician, or both of them, may refer matters of the kind referred to in subsection (1) to the Council for the purpose of seeking the advice of the Council in relation to those matters.



## ▲ References:

The United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics:

<https://unstats.un.org/unsd/dnss/gp/fundprinciples.aspx>

The Generic Law on Official Statistics, developed by the UNECE:

[https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/stats/publications/2016/ECECESSTAT20163\\_E.pdf](https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/stats/publications/2016/ECECESSTAT20163_E.pdf)

The UN Classification of International Statistical Activities:

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The Recommendation of the OECD Council on Good Statistical Practice:

<https://www.oecd.org/statistics/good-practice-toolkit/Brochure-Good-Stat-Practices.pdf>

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The Special Dissemination Standard of the IMF:

<https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/sdds/guide/2013/sddsguide13.pdf>

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Statistics Netherlands Act:

[https://www.cbs.nl/-/media/\\_pdf/2017/28/statistics-netherlands-act-2017-0101.pdf](https://www.cbs.nl/-/media/_pdf/2017/28/statistics-netherlands-act-2017-0101.pdf)

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