

Code of Ethics Charter

4th revised edition, March 2025

Carta della deontologia ufficiale della statistica federale della Svizzera Confederale



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Federal Department of Home Affairs FDHA
Federal Statistical Office FSO



CORSTAT
KORSTAT



Conseil d'éthique
Ethikrat



Overview of the Charter

The Charter of Swiss Official Statistics is a code of practice. A total of 16 principles governing the institutional environment, statistical processes and statistical outputs form the cornerstones of a common quality framework and thus help boost the credibility of official statistics.



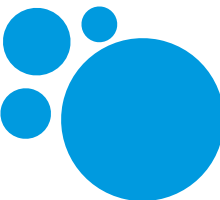
The institutional environment promotes...

- professional independence
- partnership and cooperation in Switzerland's statistical system
- access to the necessary data
- adequate resources
- a commitment to quality
- statistical confidentiality and data protection
- impartiality and objectivity



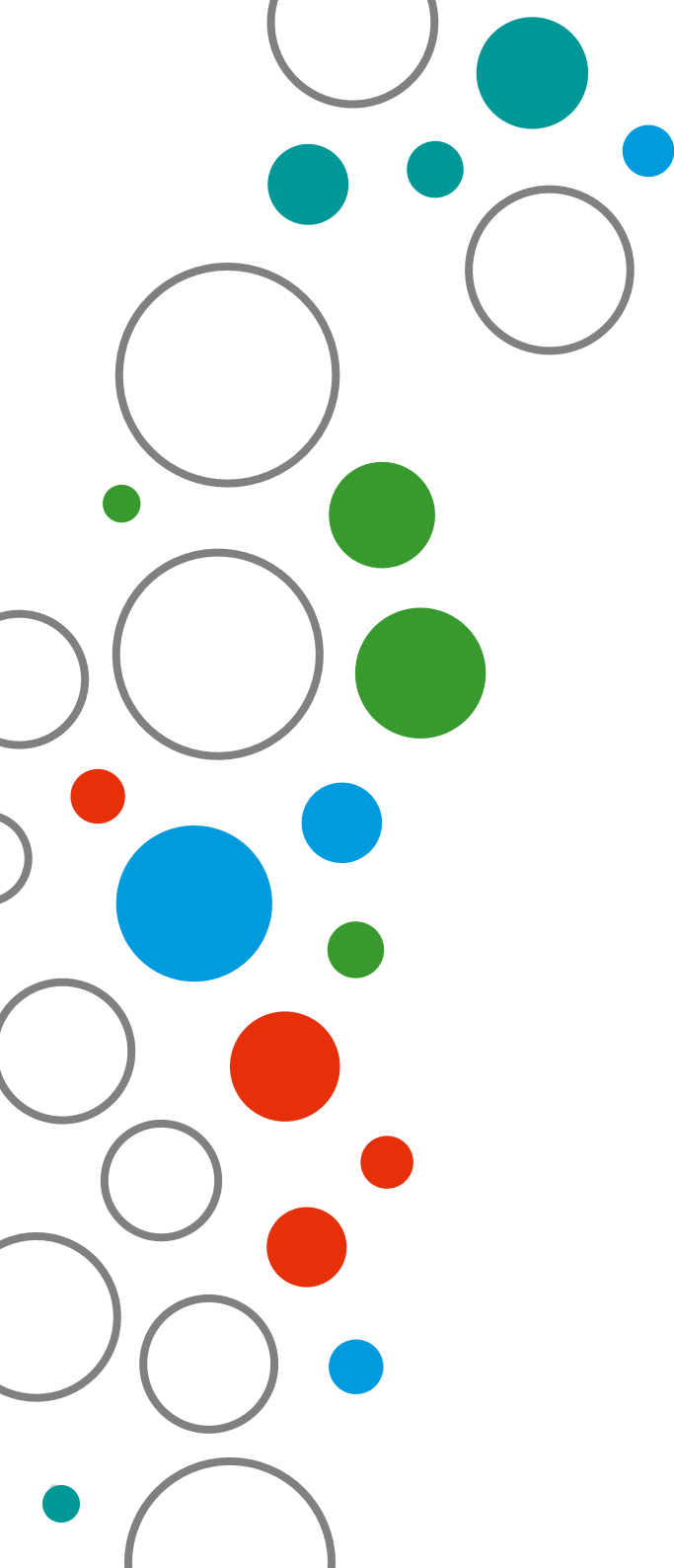
Statistical processes...

- are based on sound methodology
- are monitored and transparent
- minimise the burden on respondents
- support optimal resource efficiency



Statistical outputs...

- meet the needs of users
- accurately and reliably portray reality
- are released in a timely and punctual manner
- are comparable over time and between countries and regions
- are presented in a clear and understandable form





Preamble

Aim, purpose and scope of application of the Charter

The Charter of Swiss Official Statistics is a code of practice. It comprises 16 principles that set out the professional ethics requirements governing the institutional environment, statistical processes and statistical outputs. These form the cornerstones of a common quality framework and thus help boost the credibility of official statistics.

The Charter is a self-regulatory instrument that contains targets and complements the legal framework. It applies to all activities associated with the development, production and dissemination of official statistical information. For each of the 16 principles, a set of indicators of best practices and standards provides guidance on Swiss official statistics.

New roles and new structure

The Charter was drawn up by the Federal Statistical Office (FSO) and the Swiss Conference of Regional Statistical Offices (CORSTAT) in 2002 and revised in 2008 and 2012. The current version takes account of the fact that the statistical services have become centres of competence for data stewardship and data science. As before, the main focus of the Charter is on official statistics. It also recommends that statistical services take on new roles for harmonised and standardised data stewardship, and develop and use data science methods, techniques and practices from the field of artificial intelligence to perform statistical and other tasks, for purposes not related to specific persons. Professional ethics requirements in respect of data stewardship and data science are not covered by this Charter, as these apply to public administration in general rather than exclusively to official statistics.

The current version of the Charter follows the latest structure of the European Statistics Code of Practice (CoP) first drawn up in 2005, but has been amended to remove EU-specific aspects and incorporate both the characteristics of Switzerland's federal statistical system and the terminology used in previous versions of the Charter. This reflects the close alignment of the two charters over the years in terms of content.

Alignment with a common system of values and implementation

Complementing the different legal bases of the Confederation and the cantons, the Charter provides the uniform framework for Switzerland's system of official statistics. Within this system, alignment with the Charter is designed to promote key ethical values such as professional independence, impartiality, statistical confidentiality, the accessibility of information, etc. and thus drive higher quality standards. This should in turn strengthen trust in statistical information and the credibility of official statistics in general. This enables official statistics to fulfil their purpose of providing statistically relevant information that enables society to form opinions and provides a basis for political and economic decision-making. Official statistics are a public good.

As the centre of competence for official statistics at federal level, the FSO is responsible for coordinating Switzerland's statistical system. This system comprises around 40 federal services and some 40 services at regional level. The regional statistical services also cover the specific regional needs of the cantons, cities and towns. The statistical services differ considerably in terms of their remit, size, organisational structure, institutional integration, etc. As a result, the requirements set out in the Charter do not apply equally to all statistical services. However, they must all respect the principles of the Charter, endeavour to implement them through the introduction of appropriate measures, and generally ensure there is a clear separation between their statistical work and any enforcement, supervisory or regulatory duties.



Principles and indicators

Indicators specify the various aspects of the principles and are used to review their implementation. Alongside self-regulation, this is primarily achieved through the exchange of best practice between the statistical services and through peer reviews.

Addressees and accession to the Charter

The Charter is aimed at producers of Swiss official statistics. These entities will subsequently be collectively referred to as statistical services, and their accession to the Charter is described in more detail in the annex.

Commitment of the statistical services

By signing the Charter, the statistical services undertake to respect the principles and endeavour to implement them through the introduction of appropriate measures. They are required to inform their superior authority about their accession to the Charter, secure its approval in principle and publicise both the Charter and their accession to it.

Swiss Ethics Council for Official Statistics

The Official Statistics Section (SSS-O) of the Swiss Statistical Society appoints an Ethics Council on behalf of the FSO and CORSTAT. The Ethics Council is mandated to monitor compliance with the Charter, to provide advice and to disseminate the Charter. The SSS-O guarantees the independence of the Ethics Council.

An annex dealing with organisational matters is attached to the Charter.

The institutional environment promotes...

- professional independence
- partnership and cooperation in Switzerland's statistical system
- access to the necessary data
- adequate resources
- a commitment to quality
- statistical confidentiality and data protection
- impartiality and objectivity

Principle 1 Professional independence

The professional independence of the statistical services from political or regulatory bodies, other administrative services and private sector operators ensures the credibility of official statistics.

INDICATOR

- 1.1** The professional independence of the statistical services in developing, producing and disseminating statistical information is specified in law and organised in an appropriate form.
- 1.2** The heads of the statistical services possess the relevant professional expertise. They have sufficiently high hierarchical standing to ensure senior level access to the administration and to political authorities.
- 1.3** The heads of the statistical services are responsible for ensuring that statistics are developed, produced and disseminated in an independent manner.
- 1.4** The heads of the statistical services are responsible for defining the statistical methods, standards and procedures used and the content and timing of statistical releases.



- 1.5** The statistical work programmes are published, and periodic reports are produced describing the progress made.
- 1.6** Statistical releases are clearly distinguished and issued separately from political statements. Where statements, media conferences, etc. are published/held jointly with other operators, the part associated with official statistics is clearly distinguished.
- 1.7** Where necessary, the statistical services draw attention to possible misinterpretations or major misuses of their statistical findings by issuing counterstatements.
- 1.8** The procedures for recruiting the heads of the statistical services are transparent and based on professional criteria. Their term of office may only be terminated in accordance with applicable legal provisions; such termination may not be due to compliance with the requirements of professional or scientific independence.

Principle 1a Coordination and cooperation

Complementing the legal framework at federal and cantonal level, the Charter provides a common code of practice for all producers of official statistics. Based on these requirements, the federal, cantonal and communal statistical services work together as partners and thus contribute to the smooth functioning of Switzerland's system of official statistics.

INDICATOR

- 1a.1** The statistical services are actively involved in the relevant official statistics commissions to promote statistical cooperation, planning and coordination between the Confederation, cantons and communes.
- 1a.2** The statistical services coordinate the statistical activities in their respective area, develop corresponding standards and recommendations and actively fulfil their role as centres of competence for data and statistics.
- 1a.3** The statistical services can act as data stewards in the fields of statistics, data stewardship and data science and foster cooperation with the relevant services.



Principle 2 Mandate for data collection and access to data

There is a legal basis for collecting and accessing data from multiple data sources for statistical purposes.

INDICATOR

- 2.1** The mandate of the statistical services to collect data for the production and dissemination of official statistics is enshrined in law
- 2.2** The statistical services are permitted by law to access administrative data free of charge and use it for statistical purposes. To make relevant administrative records more suitable for statistical purposes, the statistical services are involved in their development from an early stage.
- 2.3** The statistical services may compel respondents to participate in statistical surveys on the basis of applicable legislation.
- 2.4** Access to other data, such as privately held data, for statistical purposes is facilitated, while ensuring statistical confidentiality and data protection.
- 2.5** Respondents receive understandable and transparent information on the legal basis and objectives of data collection and on the data protection measures implemented.

Principle 3 Adequacy of resources

The resources available to the statistical services enable them to fulfil their mandate.

INDICATOR

- 3.1** Human, financial and technical resources adequate in both scope and quality, are available to meet statistical needs.
- 3.2** The scope, detail and cost of statistics are commensurate with needs.
- 3.3** Demands for new statistics are assessed and justified after consideration of the costs and benefits.
- 3.4** Existing statistics are reviewed periodically to establish whether the associated costs and benefits still justify their production.

Principle 4 Commitment to quality

The statistical services are committed to quality. They systematically and regularly review process and output quality with a view to continuous improvement.

INDICATOR

- 4.1** The quality guidelines are defined and made available to the public. An organisational structure and organisational tools are in place to ensure effective quality management.
- 4.2** Procedures are in place to plan, monitor and improve the quality of statistical processes, including the integration of data from multiple data sources.
- 4.3** Regular reports are prepared on the quality of statistical output, observing national and international standards where reasonable.



4.4

There is a regular and thorough review of the key statistical outputs, in consultation with external experts where appropriate.

Principle 5 Statistical confidentiality and data protection

The anonymity of data providers, the confidentiality of the information they provide, its use solely for statistical purposes and the security of the data are guaranteed in all circumstances.

INDICATOR

5.1

Statistical confidentiality is enshrined in law. The statistical services respect this confidentiality by treating all data relating to natural or legal persons in the strictest confidence. Statistical information may not allow any conclusions to be drawn about individual persons.

5.2

The staff of the statistical services sign legally binding confidentiality commitments on appointment.

5.3

Willful breaches of statistical confidentiality are regulated by law and subject to penalties.

5.4

Guidelines and instructions are provided to staff on ensuring statistical confidentiality throughout all statistical processes. The confidentiality policy is made known to the public.

- 5.5** Organisational, physical and technical measures are in place to protect the security and integrity of statistical data and its transmission.
- 5.6** Agreements guaranteeing data protection and statistical confidentiality are concluded with external users wishing to access statistical microdata for research purposes.
- 5.7** Data collected from natural or legal persons for statistical purposes is subject to purpose limitation, in other words the data may not be used for administrative decisions or measures that affect these persons. It may only be used for other purposes where this is explicitly provided for by law or with the consent of the persons in question.

Principle 6 Impartiality and objectivity

Statistical information is developed, produced and disseminated impartially in a way that respects scientific independence and ensures all users are treated equitably.

INDICATOR

- 6.1** Statistics are compiled on an objective basis determined by statistical considerations.
- 6.2** Choices of data sources and statistical methods as well as all decisions about the dissemination of statistics are based on statistical considerations.



6.3 Errors discovered in published statistics are corrected at the earliest possible date. Material errors are communicated to the public as rectifications.

6.4 Information on the data sources, methods and procedures used is publicly available.

6.5 Statistical release dates and times are pre-announced.

6.6 Advance notice is given for all major revisions or changes in methodologies.

6.7 The statistical services independently decide on the timing and content of statistical releases, while taking into account the goal of providing complete and timely statistical information.

All users have equal access to statistical releases at the same time. Any privileged pre-release access for external users is limited, well-justified, controlled and publicised.

In the event of a breach, the pre-release arrangements are reviewed so as to ensure impartiality.

6.8 Statistical releases and statements made in media conferences are objective and impartial.

Statistical processes...

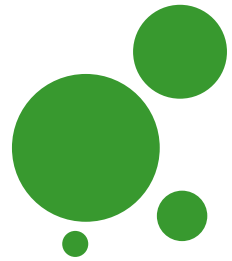
- are based on sound methodology
- are monitored and transparent
- minimise the burden on respondents
- support optimal resource efficiency

Principle 7 Sound methodology

Sound methodology underpins quality statistics. This requires adequate tools, procedures and expertise.

INDICATOR

- 7.1** Statistical information is developed, produced and disseminated in accordance with national and international standards, recognised (data) science methods and principles of professional ethics, which are constantly developed in an innovative way.
- 7.2** Procedures are in place to ensure that concepts, definitions, classifications and other types of standards are consistently applied within the statistical service.
- 7.3** The registers and frames used are regularly evaluated and adjusted if necessary.
- 7.4** Detailed concordance exists between regional, national and international classification systems.
- 7.5** The statistical services recruit staff with the required expertise from the relevant specialist fields.
- 7.6** The statistical services encourage their staff to engage in continuous professional training and development.
- 7.7** The statistical services foster cooperation with the scientific community with the aim of improving methodology.



Principle 8 Appropriate statistical procedures

Appropriate statistical procedures, implemented throughout all statistical processes, underpin quality statistics.

INDICATOR

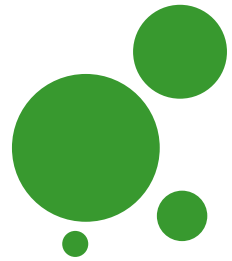
- 8.1** Where statistics are based on administrative or other data, the definitions and concepts used approximate as closely as possible to those used for statistical purposes.
- 8.2** Questionnaires for statistical surveys are systematically tested prior to data collection.
- 8.3** Statistical processes are routinely monitored and revised as required.
- 8.4** Metadata related to statistical processes is managed throughout all statistical processes and disseminated where appropriate.
- 8.5** Revisions follow standard, well-established and transparent procedures.
- 8.6** In the absence of a corresponding legal basis, agreements are made with holders of administrative and other data setting out how this data may be used for statistical purposes.
- 8.7** The statistical services cooperate with the holders of administrative and other data to ensure data quality.

Principle 9 Non-excessive burden on respondents

The response burden is proportionate to the needs of the users and is to be kept low for respondents.

INDICATOR

- 9.1** The range and detail of demands for statistical data is limited to what is absolutely necessary.
- 9.2** The response burden is spread as widely as possible over survey populations and monitored by the statistical services.
- 9.3** The data sought from businesses is, as far as possible, readily available from their systems and is transmitted electronically wherever possible.
- 9.4** Administrative and other data sources are used whenever possible and the once-only principle is applied (data is only transmitted to the public administration once but is then used multiple times).
- 9.5** The operators in Switzerland's statistical system promote data sharing within this system and the integration of data from different sources, while ensuring statistical confidentiality and data protection.
- 9.6** To minimise the response burden, the statistical services promote measures that allow data to be linked.



Principle 10 Cost effectiveness

The statistical services use their resources in a cost-effective way.

INDICATOR

- 10.1** Internal and/or external controls are in place to review how resources are used.
- 10.2** The opportunities offered by information and communication technologies are fully exploited throughout the entire statistical process.
- 10.3** Proactive efforts are made to improve the statistical potential of administrative and other data sources and to limit recourse to direct surveys.
- 10.4** The statistical services promote and implement standardised solutions that increase effectiveness and efficiency, and share them with other operators.

Statistical outputs...

- meet the needs of users
- accurately and reliably portray reality
- are released in a timely and punctual manner
- are comparable over time and between countries and regions
- are presented in a clear and understandable form

Principle 11 Relevance

The statistical information produced and made available by the statistical services meets users' needs.

INDICATOR

11.1 Procedures are in place for consulting users. These consultations are used to monitor the relevance of existing statistics and allow new needs to be identified at an early stage. Innovation is pursued to continuously improve statistical output.

11.2 Users' key needs are reflected in the statistical work programmes.

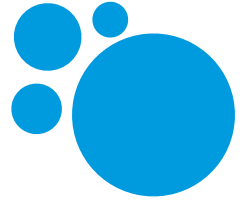
11.3 User satisfaction with the entire range of services is reviewed on a regular basis and systematically followed up.

Principle 12 Accuracy and reliability

The statistics portray reality as accurately and reliably as possible.

INDICATOR

12.1 Raw data, interim results and statistical outputs are regularly assessed and validated.



12.2 The accuracy of statistical results is monitored and published.

12.3 Revisions of statistical results, for example due to the inclusion of previously unavailable data or following changes to methodology and/or concepts, are analysed on a regular basis. The conclusions from these analyses are incorporated into internal statistical processes.

Principle 13 Timeliness and punctuality

Statistics are released in a timely and punctual manner.

INDICATOR

13.1 The time between the reference period and the release of statistical results is kept as short as possible.

13.2 A standard time for the release of statistics is usually made public.

13.3 The periodicity of statistics takes users' needs into account as much as possible.

13.4 Any divergence from the release schedule is publicised in advance and explained.

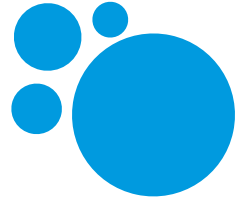
13.5 Preliminary results of acceptable overall quality are disseminated if this is considered to be useful.

Principle 14 Coherence and comparability

Statistics are consistent internally and over time, and are comparable at international, national and regional level. It is possible to combine and make joint use of related data from different data sources.

INDICATOR

- 14.1** Statistics are internally consistent and mutually comparable.
- 14.2** Statistics are comparable over a reasonable period of time. Long time series are available for key statistical results.
- 14.3** Statistics are compiled on the basis of common standards with respect to scope, definitions, units and classifications in the different surveys and sources.
- 14.4** Statistics from the different data sources and of different periodicity are compared and reconciled where possible.
- 14.5** The international and regional comparability of the data is ensured and refined where reasonable through regular dialogue between the statistical services concerned.



Principle 15 Accessibility and clarity

Statistical information is presented in a clear and understandable form and released in an appropriate and user-friendly manner. In line with the principle of impartiality it is made available and accessible together with the supporting metadata and guidance and is archived.

INDICATOR

- 15.1** Statistics and the corresponding metadata are presented and archived in a form that facilitates proper interpretation and meaningful comparisons.
- 15.2** Statistics are disseminated using modern information and communication technology, methods, platforms and open data standards, taking the needs of different user groups into account.
- 15.3** Custom-designed analyses are provided when feasible and the public is informed.
- 15.4** Access to microdata is allowed for research purposes and is subject to specific rules or protocols.
- 15.5** Metadata is managed and disseminated in a standardised form.
- 15.6** Users are kept informed about the methodology of statistical processes, including the use and integration of administrative and other data.
- 15.7** Users are kept informed about the quality of statistical outputs.

Annex:

Organisational matters

1. Responsible bodies and Ethics Council

The Federal Statistical Office (FSO) and the Swiss Conference of Regional Statistical Offices (CORSTAT) are the bodies responsible for the Charter. The Official Statistics Section (SSS-O) of the Swiss Statistical Society establishes the Swiss Ethics Council for Official Statistics (Ethics Council) on behalf of the above bodies. The Ethics Council is mandated to monitor compliance with the Charter, to provide advice and to disseminate the Charter. It acts as a mediator and reviews all written submissions it receives in connection with the Charter. Submissions are treated confidentially; no person shall be subject to any form of disadvantage as a result of making a submission to the Ethics Council. The SSS-O guarantees the independence of the Ethics Council and defines its mandate in a set of regulations.

2. Activities covered by the Charter

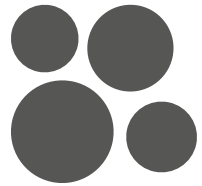
The Charter applies to all activities associated with the development, production and dissemination of official statistical information. This includes in particular the collection, processing and linking of data, the preparation and updating of classifications, nomenclatures and registers, and procedures for the storage of statistical information.

3. Accession to the Charter

The Charter is aimed at producers of Swiss official statistics.

The following may accede to the Charter:

- the Federal Statistical Office (FSO);
- Switzerland's regional statistical services that make up the Swiss Conference of Regional Statistical Offices (CORSTAT);
- all other producers of statistics within the Federal Administration and all public institutions partially subject to the Federal Statistics Act that regularly produce and publish official statistics under their own responsibility;
- all other administrative units or public institutions of a canton or commune that regularly produce and publish official statistics under their own responsibility.



4. Signing of an accession declaration

By signing an accession declaration, the statistical services undertake to respect the content of the Charter, to publicise the Charter and to supply the Ethics Council with any information it requests.

5. Exclusion from the group of signatories

The responsible bodies are entitled, after consulting the Ethics Council, to exclude a statistical service from the group of signatories if it repeatedly breaches the Charter. Justification must be provided in such cases and the decision must be made public.

6. Evaluation of Charta

The responsible bodies and the Ethics Council undertake to exchange experiences on the Charter whenever circumstances require it, but at least every five years, and to consider whether revisions are necessary.

7. Revision process

The responsible bodies agree revisions to the Charter after due consultation with statistical services that have signed it.

8. Entry into force

The revised Charter is effective from the date of publication.

9. Publication

The Charter is edited and published by the responsible bodies. The Ethics Council publishes a list of the statistical services that have acceded to the Charter. These services also publicise their commitment to the Charter on their websites.

Editors: Federal Statistical Office (FSO)
Swiss Conference of Regional Statistical Offices
(CORSTAT)

Information: FSO: info@bfs.admin.ch
CORSTAT: info@corstat.ch

Original text: German

Translation: FSO language services

Layout: Publishing and Dissemination PUB, FSO

Online: www.statistics.admin.ch

Print: www.statistics.admin.ch
Federal Statistical Office, CH-2010 Neuchâtel,
order@bfs.admin.ch, tel. +41 58 463 60 60
Printed in Switzerland

Copyright: FSO, Neuchâtel | CORSTAT, Zürich 2025
Reproduction with mention of source authorised
(except for commercial purposes).

BFS-Number: 942-2500

ISBN: 978-3-303-00767-9



Charta Charta
de la
publica
Statistik
de
Suisse