



EUROPEAN
STATISTICAL
SYSTEM

**IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS
GERMANY**

**PEER REVIEWERS' RECOMMENDATIONS
AND IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS OF THE
NATIONAL STATISTICAL SYSTEM OF
GERMANY IN RESPONSE TO THE
RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Recommendation

The Federal Statistical Office should formalise and publish National Guidelines to ensure quality in the development, production and dissemination of European Statistics, applicable to all Other National Authorities. The implementation of these National Guidelines should be monitored and reviewed. The responsibility for ensuring compliance with the Guidelines rests solely with the heads of the Other National Authorities. (Compliance-relevant: ES CoP, indicator 1bis.2).

Current situation:

The German statistical system is highly decentralised. The coordination role of the Federal Statistical Office (FSO) appears well established as far as the Statistical Offices of the Länder are concerned. However, this coordination role should be reinforced regarding the Other National Authorities (ONAs) apart from the Statistical Offices of the Länder. National guidelines to ensure quality in the development, production and dissemination of European statistics are needed, and the process of concluding Memoranda of Understanding could usefully be strengthened. Both activities would actively support the coordination role of the FSO with the 'other' ONAs in the short term, as well as strengthen a key part of the coordination infrastructure in the future.

Improvement sub-action 1.1:

A kick-off and 1–2 working meetings are planned by the end of 2023 to familiarize the ONAs with the applicable quality guidelines.

Deadline: Q4 2023

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 1.1: FSO, all ONAs (except the Statistical Offices of the Länder)

Improvement sub-action 1.2:

The quality guidelines in force for the German official statistics network will be applied in at least 2 ONAs.

Deadline: Q4 2026

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 1.2: FSO, all ONAs (except the Statistical Offices of the Länder)

Improvement sub-action 1.3:

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is the instrument to establish binding rules (but without legal obligation) for implementation of these guidelines by ONAs. The MoU will be revised to include a reference to the national Quality guidelines. This course of action complies with Article 5 paragraph 1 of Regulation (EU) No 223/2009, pursuant to which the National Statistical Institutes are responsible for coordinating European statistics and act as the contact point for the Commission on statistical matters.

Deadline: Q4 2024

<p>Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 1.3: FSO, all ONAs (except the Statistical Offices of the Länder)</p>
<p>Improvement sub-action 1.4:</p> <p>The adherence to and implementation of the quality guidelines will be regularly monitored as part of evaluating the respective MoU.</p>
<p>Deadline: Q4 2026</p>
<p>Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 1.4: FSO, all ONAs (except the Statistical Offices of the Länder)</p>
<p>2. Recommendation</p> <p>The Federal Statistical Office should consider establishing an overarching coordination mechanism to bring together the Statistical Offices of the Länder and ‘other’ Other National Authorities as a way of sharing experiences and insights about implementing the principles of the ES CoP to strengthen the German statistical system. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 1bis.1).</p>
<p>Current situation:</p> <p>The Statistical Offices of the Länder and the ‘other’ ONAs play very different roles in the German statistical system, have different perspectives and face different challenges. At the same time, they are all required to follow the standards of the <i>European Statistics Code of Practice</i> (ES CoP). The different parts of the German statistical system would be more likely to learn about how others engage with the ES CoP if the FSO developed a mechanism to facilitate such learning.</p> <p>Some first measures have already been implemented (e.g. the participation, for the first time, of specific Statistical Offices of the Länder in the national plenary meeting on 12 December 2022; a new examination procedure within the FSO at the end of 2022, concerning whether ONAs are eligible / able to receive EU grants, too (in a consortium with the FSO or on their own)).</p>
<p>Improvement sub-action 2.1:</p> <p>The form of cooperation established within the network of official statistics will be expanded to include the ONAs where appropriate and possible in view of the framework conditions. ONAs will be included into the sub-groups “Digitalisation and standards” and “Methods and quality”.</p>
<p>Deadline: Q4 2022</p>
<p>Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 2.1: FSO, all ONAs</p>
<p>Improvement sub-action 2.2:</p> <p>The sub-groups "Digitalisation and standards" and "Methods and quality" will define the precise form of cooperation in reference to their tasks. Some of the Statistical Offices of the Länder may be invited to get involved, in order to share and implement best practices.</p>
<p>Deadline: Q4 2024</p>

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 2.2: FSO, all ONAs
Improvement sub-action 2.3: The forms of cooperation as defined in sub-action 2.2 will be implemented, e.g. through joint projects and grants.
Deadline: Q4 2026
Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 2.3: FSO, all ONAs
Improvement sub-action 2.4: The whole new process of closer cooperation with the ONAs will be evaluated at a joint meeting at the end of 2027. The open topics as well as the next steps will be summarised in a work plan.
Deadline: Q4 2027
Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 2.4: FSO, all ONAs

3. Recommendation
The Federal Statistical Office should consider further streamlining the German statistical system, building on the success of the lead Länder initiative and reviewing lessons learned from the integration of four Statistical Offices of the Länder into two. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 10.2 and 10.4).
Current situation: The federal/state structure of German institutions is well established, and, in official statistics, there are mechanisms to help it work effectively. The lead Länder initiative — whereby, for statistical or horizontal topics, one Land Statistical Office takes the lead in coordinating all activities and reporting back to the FSO — works effectively. Under a recent initiative, four Statistical Offices of the Länder were integrated into two: a small streamlining/simplification of the statistical system. Nevertheless, there is scope to improve matters further. The cooperation between the FSO and the Statistical offices of the Länder started several decades ago and is based on the “Framework Agreement on Performing Tasks across Offices in Official Statistics”. Until now, the cooperation has especially concerned software development and maintenance and technical data processing. Since the start of the cooperation, a review of activities and further development has taken place regularly. In 2021, the evaluation started to identify points for optimizing cooperation. This will include the renewal of the existing “self-image”, a further professionalization of the cooperation and the extension of the lead Länder initiative. The evaluation procedure will be finalized in June 2023.

Improvement action 3:

The results of the evaluation of the existing cooperation arrangements (assessment and recommendations) will be handed over to the responsible ministries at the federal and Länder levels. After negotiations between the ministries, the final aim is to integrate them into the “Framework Agreement on Performing Tasks across Offices in Official Statistics”.

Deadline: Q4 2024

Responsible institution for improvement action 3: Statistical Offices of the Länder

4. Recommendation

The Federal Statistical Office should consider strengthening the role of the Memoranda of Understanding by:

- a) Making clear which statistical datasets are provided to Eurostat and ensuring that a Memorandum of Understanding is signed with each Other National Authority. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 1bis.1)
- b) Reviewing the Memorandum of Understanding template more regularly, taking Principle 1bis into account. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 1bis.1)
- c) Holding regular discussions on compliance with the ES CoP (which should be part of the Memoranda of Understanding). (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 1bis.1)
- d) Including more detailed compliance requirements (national quality guidelines or other relevant handbooks). (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 1bis.2)
- e) Completing the publication of all Memoranda of Understanding (on the websites of the Federal Statistical Office and the Other National Authorities). (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 1bis.1)
- f) Committing to explore the potential of new data sources. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 2.4).

Current situation:

The coordination of the Statistical Offices of the Länder is articulated in law. For ‘other’ ONAs, the FSO has signed Memoranda of Understanding to guarantee that European statistics are developed, produced and disseminated according to the principles of the ES CoP. Those Memoranda of Understanding were signed before the new ES CoP principle 1bis on coordination and cooperation was developed. The practice and periodicity of revising the Memoranda of Understanding are currently handled differently by the ONAs, and there are no regular processes.

Improvement sub-action 4.1:

Appointing a national statistics producer as ONA requires a number of consultations between Eurostat, the responsible ministry and the FSO. The process to be designed for this will have to ensure efficiency and provide a sound basis for early planning. The same applies to the respective MoU, which will be prepared in future using legally examined text modules.

The MoU will include the applicable quality guidelines, a clear reference to the *European statistics Code of Practice* (ES CoP) and a fixed point in time for evaluation. In addition, an overview of the data delivered to Eurostat by the ONA will be attached to each MoU.

Deadline: Q4 2024

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 4.1: FSO, ONAs (except the Statistical Offices of the Länder)

Improvement sub-action 4.2:

After the MoU with an ONA has been concluded, it will be published on the FSO website. The ONA concerned will be strongly encouraged to publish the MoU, too.

Deadline: Q4 2025

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 4.2: FSO, ONAs (except the Statistical Offices of the Länder)

Improvement sub-action 4.3:

The potential of using and sharing new data sources (e.g. experimental data, administrative data, other business data) will be explored on the basis of the established ONA cooperation procedures as well as in the context of statistical subject matters.

Deadline: Q4 2026

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 4.3: FSO, ONAs (except the Statistical Offices of the Länder)

Improvement sub-action 4.4:

The fulfilment of the ES CoP will be evaluated regularly through the ONA cooperation procedures (e.g. sub-group "Standards and Quality").

Deadline: Q4 2027

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 4.4: FSO, ONAs (except the Statistical Offices of the Länder)

5. Recommendation

The Ministry of the Interior, on behalf of the Federal Government, should take steps to improve the transparency of future appointments of the President of the Federal Statistical Office, for example by advertising the post and the necessary qualifications and knowledge openly, and clarifying the potential reasons for his/her dismissal. (Compliance-relevant: ES CoP, Indicator 1.8).

Current situation:

The principle of professional independence should be operationalized by improving the transparency of future appointments of the President of the FSO and clarifying the potential reasons for his/her dismissal. According to current procedures, the Federal Government makes proposals to the Federal President for the appointment of the President of the FSO. The proposals can be based on an open competition or a simple nomination, the latter having been the case for the last three Presidents of the FSO. The reasons for the dismissal of the President of the FSO are not publicly stated.

Improvement action:

FSO has a diverging view and hence does not propose any IA.

6. Recommendation

The Federal Statistical Office should improve the transparency of the operation of the German statistical system by publishing an accessible narrative work plan and introducing an appropriate approach to publicly reporting on progress against the plan. (Compliance-relevant: ES CoP, Indicator 1.5).

Current situation:

The FSO does not publish a statistical work plan for the German statistical system as such: rather, its programme of work is largely made up of the surveys conducted on the basis of specific survey legislation. This makes it hard for users to appreciate the range of work that the German statistical system is responsible for, or how effective it is.

The FSO's publication "Your Benefit. Our Mission." ("Ihr Nutzen. Unser Auftrag", IN.UA) already provides information on important aspects of our vision, strategic goals and programmatic priorities, including an overview of the programme planning. However, information in IN.UA is partly outdated and has to be updated.

Improvement sub-action 6.1:

Develop a multi-year programme containing a modern, digital form of presenting the tasks and the strategy of the FSO. Based on the FSO's corporate strategy and a multi-year programme, the publicity and reputation of Destatis is going to increase. This will be achieved through transparent communication on the FSO's tasks, goals and benefits. The must-haves of a modern IN.UA are published on the website.

Deadline: Q2 2025

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 6.1: FSO

Improvement sub-action 6.2:

Publish strategically important projects of the multi-year programme.

Deadline: Q4 2025

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 6.2: FSO

7. Recommendation

The Federal Statistical Office should take steps to ensure the involvement of the statistical authorities from the beginning in the design, development and discontinuation of administrative records to make them more suitable for statistical purposes. (Compliance-relevant: ES CoP, Indicators 2.2 and 9.4).

Current situation:

The German statistical system is increasingly reliant on administrative data held by a range of ministries and agencies. However, statisticians are frequently unable to influence decisions about many aspects across the life cycle of such data. In practice, statisticians should have more opportunity to influence the design and development of administrative data systems used for statistical purposes.

Improvement action:

The FSO has a diverging view and hence does not propose any IA.

8. Recommendation

The Federal Statistical Office should:

- a) scrutinise the legal basis for all Other National Authorities (apart from the Statistical Offices of the Länder) and, if any problematic situation regarding professional independence is observed, a revision of the legal provision should be considered. (Compliance-relevant: ES CoP, Indicator 1.1)
- b) take steps to ensure that the coordination role for Other National Authorities apart from the Statistical Offices of the Länder is clearly articulated in law. (Compliance-relevant: ES CoP, Indicator 1bis.1).

Current situation:

According to the ES CoP, the independence of National Statistical Institutes should be specified in law and assured for ONAs developing, producing and disseminating official statistics. The professional independence of the FSO and the Statistical Offices of the Länder is enshrined in legal provisions. The situation regarding the 'other' ONAs apart from the Statistical Offices of the Länder is different. Recently, the legal basis of a number of ONAs was reviewed and clarified regarding provisions relating to professional independence. It is not fully evident, however, that this holds for all 'other' ONAs. Another important aspect is that the FSO does not have a clear legal mandate to coordinate common activities with the 'other' ONAs.

Improvement action:

The FSO has a diverging view and hence does not propose any IA.

9. Recommendation

The Federal Statistical Office should take steps to achieve access to the national population register. This should include creating a legal basis for sustainable access to the register as a sampling

frame and as a data source for demographic statistics. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 2.2 and 7.3).

Current situation:

By maintaining a high-quality business register, the FSO can make use of a very appropriate sampling frame for its business surveys. However, for social surveys and other household surveys, sampling frames are based on the last (2011) census and the annual update of the new buildings in the construction activity statistics. This constitutes a potential source for bias, as the sampling frames will be out-of-date and will not capture, for example, properties built since the previous annual update.

Improvement action:

The FSO has a diverging view and hence does not propose any IA.

10. Recommendation

The Federal Statistical Office should take steps to introduce legal changes, which allow the creation of tailor-made data products based on linked data and ad-hoc surveys to be conducted quickly to produce indicators and figures related to suddenly emerging topics. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 9.6 and 11.1).

Current situation:

The current legal situation empowers the FSO to produce a high volume of statistics and to determine the methods which have to be applied by the Statistical Offices of the Länder. However, the fact that there can be no statistics without a legal basis, and the strict rules regarding data linking, limit the German statistical system's ability to react to emerging data needs in a flexible manner, which is of special importance in crisis situations (such as COVID-19).

Improvement action:

The FSO has a diverging view and hence does not propose any IA.

11. Recommendation

The Federal Statistical Office should enhance the range of surveys which are based on Ordinances, and, as part of this, take steps to enable such surveys to be conducted for more than the current time and cost limits. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 11.1).

Current situation:

Statistical surveys are defined in considerable detail in legislation, which limits their flexibility. Some surveys are based on relatively light touch legislation (Ordinances), which can be agreed and implemented more quickly than fully-fledged statistical legislation — providing the survey costs less than 2 million euros, and that the duration of the survey is no more than three years. This approach provides useful flexibility, which would be beneficial if it could be applied more generally.

Improvement sub-action 11.1:

The FSO will request the Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community (BMI) to examine the requirements. One of the goals is to extend the Federal Government's power to issue statutory instruments, as laid down in Section 5 (2) of the Federal Statistics Act (BStatG), to periods of more than three years. Another aim is to expand the regulatory options of Section 5 (2a) of the Federal Statistics Act (BStatG), for example for being able to reduce the periodicity of statistical surveys.

Deadline: Q1 2025

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 11.1: FSO, BMI

Improvement sub-action 11.2:

Identification of different options to achieve the goals (to extend the Federal Government's power to issue statutory instruments and to expand the regulatory options of section 5 (2a) of the Federal Statistics Act) and potential ways of legal implementation together with the Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community (BMI).

Deadline: Q4 2025

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 11.2: FSO, BMI

Improvement sub-action 11.3:

Together with the Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community (BMI), the FSO works out an implementation plan to amend the current legal act.

Deadline: Q2 2026

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 11.3: FSO, BMI

12. Recommendation

As part of this project, the Statistical Offices of the Länder might usefully consider:

- a) extending the scope of the lead Länder concept to include the collection of data on particular topics across the whole of Germany. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 10.4)
- b) whether there would be efficiencies in centralising the production and publication of statistics and the dissemination of data. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 10.4)
- c) clarifying the role of the Statistical Offices of the Länder in relation to drafting national and Länder statistical laws. (Improvement-related: ES CoP: Indicator 1.).

Current situation:

The Statistical Offices of the Länder are initiating a project to re-evaluate the ways in which they work together, including how they cooperate and how they might take forward the lead Länder initiative. This project provides an opportunity to review whether it might be feasible for a Land Statistical Office to, for example, collect data on a particular topic for the whole country, and whether there might be other efficiencies to be gained or roles and responsibilities to be clarified.

Improvement actions:

The FSO has a diverging view and hence does not propose any IA.

13. Recommendation

The Federal Statistical Office should take steps to ensure that resources allocated by all Ministries for statistical work can be used to fund permanent staff. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 3.1).

Current situation:

Resources allocated by the Ministry of the Interior can be used to fund permanent/established posts; other ministries' resources can only be used for fixed-term contract staff. This can cause problems in managing modernisation projects to improve production work, including for European statistics, and it reduces the resilience of the German statistical system and its retention of expertise.

Improvement action:

The FSO has a diverging view and hence does not propose any IA.

14. Recommendation

The Ministry of the Interior, on behalf of the Federal Government, should seek to ensure that all statistical authorities (the Federal Statistical Office, Statistical Offices of the Länder and the 'other' Other National Authorities) are allocated the necessary human and financial resources to be able to take full advantage of possible improvements driven by the digital revolution and to realise quality improvements and efficiency gains by implementing corresponding modernisation projects. Additionally, the necessary resources should be available for research projects. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 3.1 and 10.2).

Current situation:

The bodies of the German statistical system — the FSO, Statistical Offices of the Länder and the 'other' ONAs — have strong ambitions for innovative programmes. However, it is not clear whether the necessary financial and technical resources are granted in full, while there are difficulties in recruiting sufficient IT experts given their better pay rates elsewhere. There appears to be a clash between the 'standard pay rate' approach in the German civil service and the realities of the demand for IT staff in the German economy.

Improvement action:

The FSO has a diverging view and hence does not propose any IA.

15. Recommendation

The Federal Statistical Office should consider measures that would allow a regular exchange of knowledge between the different methodological units (for instance, by organising regular meetings or by establishing an overarching methodological committee). (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 7.2 and 1.4).

Current situation:

The FSO has considerable expertise in all relevant methodological topics, including sampling, editing and imputation, confidentiality and seasonal adjustment. However, the historical evolution of the organisational structure of the FSO means that the knowledge is spread over several departments, which reduces the scope for innovation and the sharing of best practices.

A binding approach, clear responsibilities concerning the methods to be applied, and an independent examination of whether the process standards and guidelines are applied correctly — all these elements are required to guarantee a quality-assured and harmonised statistics production and high-quality results.

Improvement sub-action 15.1:

Define new processes to ensure a harmonized (e.g. standardizations against GSBPM) course of action in the specialized departments.

Deadline: Q1 2025

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 15.1: FSO

Improvement sub-action 15.2:

Implement the processes ensuring a harmonized course of action.

Deadline: Q1 2026

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 15.2: FSO

Improvement sub-action 15.3:

Evaluate the effectiveness of the new processes and how they ensure increased harmonization.

Deadline: Q4 2026

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 15.3: FSO**16. Recommendation**

Considering the quality building blocks already in place, as well as possible enhancements, the Federal Statistical Office should define and draft, in cooperation with the Other National Authorities (i.e. both the Statistical Offices of the Länder and the 'other' Other National Authorities), a quality policy that would summarise the elements already in place in a concise and integrated way. (Compliance-relevant: ES CoP, Indicator 4.1).

Current situation:

The FSO, together with the ONAs, has designed quality mechanisms in the context of a decentralised statistical system. However, no quality policy for the German statistical system has been formalised and made available to the public. The policy should reflect the existing quality management system, possibly drawing on the common quality framework of the European Statistical System for inspiration. The policy should cover the whole German statistical system and be made available to the public.

Improvement action 16:

Draft, in close cooperation and consultation with the ONAs and building on existing elements of quality management, a quality policy for the German statistical system and publish it on the website.

Deadline: Q4 2026

Responsible institution for improvement action 16: FSO, all ONAs

17. Recommendation

The Federal Statistical Office should develop a formalised quality review mechanism, articulating its objectives, scope and approach. Such a quality review mechanism should be reflected in the (new) quality policy and national guidelines and be applicable across the German statistical system as a whole, including the Other National Authorities. (Compliance-relevant: ES CoP, Indicators 1bis.2, 4.3 and 4.4).

Current situation:

A key aspect of the ES CoP, Principle 4, Commitment to Quality, consists of a regular and thorough review of key statistical outputs, using external experts where appropriate. Quality is monitored in the FSO on a continuous basis by the staff in charge of production. However, there is no mechanism in place for a regular review of key statistical outputs, using external experts where appropriate.

The FSO is committed to the quality assurance of all data deliveries from the ONAs to Eurostat since, according to Article 5, Paragraph 1, of the EU Regulation 223/2009, at the national level it is the national statistical office that is solely responsible for the coordination of European statistics.

Improvement sub-action 17.1:
Develop a quality monitoring mechanism/policy, together with the Statistical Offices of the Länder and the ONAs.
Deadline: Q4 2024
Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 17.1: FSO
Improvement sub-action 17.2:
Implement the quality monitoring mechanism/policy in the FSO.
Deadline: Q4 2025
Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 17.2: FSO
Improvement sub-action 17.3:
Implement the quality monitoring mechanism/policy in at least 3 selected ONAs.
Deadline: Q2 2026
Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 17.3: FSO, Länder offices and ONAs

18. Recommendation
The Federal Statistical Office should reflect on the Quality Data Sheets system and align it with the Single Integrated Metadata Structure standard to facilitate quality reporting at European and national levels, for the whole German statistical system. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 4.3).
Current situation:
The FSO has developed an elaborate system of Quality Data Sheets to monitor the various process and product quality indicators and targets. However, the interactions between the Quality Data Sheets and the European system of metadata and quality reporting (Single Integrated Metadata Structure) are not well established.
Improvement sub-action 18.1:
Update the structure of the existing quality reports based on the current SIMS version.
Deadline: Q1 2024
Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 18.1: FSO
Improvement sub-action 18.2:
Changes in the structure of the quality reports will be transferred to the quality applications "Quality guidelines" and "Quality data sheets in the official statistics network".
Deadline: Q2 2025
Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 18.2: FSO

Improvement sub-action 18.3:

Extend the quality guidelines and quality data sheets to the Statistical Offices of the Länder and ONAs

Deadline: Q2 of 2025

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 18.3: FSO, Statistical Offices of the Länder and ONAs

19. Recommendation

The Federal Statistical Office should ensure that the privileged pre-release access to outside users is justified more clearly, and more limited in time and number. (Compliance-relevant: ES CoP, Indicator 6.7).

Current situation:

Pre-release access to statistical releases is allowed from 2 pm on the day before the following day's 8 am release of a set of statistics. Considering that statistical authorities have to ensure the production and dissemination of European statistics in an objective and transparent way, and that all users should be treated equitably, the peer review team sees a need to take measures to ensure compliance with the ES CoP by tightening the rules and arrangements for privileged pre-release access to statistical results. This will demonstrate transparently that the dissemination of European statistics is impartial.

Improvement sub-action 19.1:

Revision of the existing criteria for sending out press releases prior to the official publication date based on the recommendations of the peer review expert team. Reserve pre-release access to statistical results to ministries if the results are directly relevant for political decisions and the ministries could expect reactions to the results. Inform other public agencies of the results in advance only if they are directly involved in political decision-making and the relevant set of statistics is a major basis for such decisions. As a rule, pre-release access to embargoed press releases will be given to the agencies concerned at the earliest on the day before publication. As a result, the number of ministries which will be getting a pre-release will be significantly reduced.

Deadline: Q1 2023

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 19.1: FSO

Improvement sub-action 19.2:

Assess the existing pre-access arrangements: ministries and other public agencies which do not meet the revised criteria are informed about the discontinuation of pre-release access.

Deadline: Q1 2023

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 19.2: FSO

Improvement sub-action 19.3:

For reasons of transparency, publish an overview on the adjusted pre-access arrangements for selected key economic indicators and important population and social indicators on the FSO's website.

Deadline: Q1 2023

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 19.3: FSO

20. Recommendation

Considering the legal framework in place, the Federal Statistical Office should investigate the possibilities for expanding the use of the Research Data Centres, including allowing more convenient (suitable) remote access to microdata and for reducing the administrative burden to access microdata by simplifying the procedures for experienced users. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 15.2 and 15.4)

Current situation:

The German statistical system has established Research Data Centres in order to provide the scientific community with microdata. There are certain procedures and conditions for granting access to researchers. However, the procedures are seen as cumbersome and slow, and even experienced users with long track records in the safe use of data in the centres have to start from scratch when applying for a new project.

In the Research Data Centres working party (AK FDZ), the FSO and the Statistical Offices of the Länder are in the process of identifying measures to make appropriate allowances for future user needs and the ensuing reduction in the workload of the Research Data Centres. This includes, for example, remote access to de facto anonymised individual data according to the legal requirements, as defined in Section 16 (6), the first sentence, no. 1 of the BStatG.

Improvement sub-action 20.1:

Establishment of a remote access system.

Deadline: Q4 2024

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 20.1: FSO, the Statistical Offices of the Länder

Improvement sub-action 20.2:

Establishment of an evidence-based control system

Deadline: Q4 2023

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 20.2: FSO

Improvement sub-action 20.3:

Establishment of e-Learning tools

Deadline: Q2 2024

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 20.3: FSO

21. Recommendation

The Federal Statistical Office should take steps to ensure that the independence of the development, production and dissemination of official statistics is maintained by separating new (data steward) tasks from traditional statistical obligations, and that this is clearly reflected in law. The Ministry of Interior should ensure that the Federal Statistical Office is provided with sufficient additional resources to be able to fulfil the additional tasks appropriately. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 1.1 and 3.1).

Current situation:

The FSO is keen to improve the national data ecosystem and to take an important and proactive role in developing the national data strategy. This may entail a non-negligible risk for the respect of the professional independence of the FSO. Therefore, the new tasks, including acting as a national data steward, supporting the creation of a unified business identifier, assessing the quality of the registers and avoiding duplications of data collection by supporting the 'once-only principle' as much as possible, should be reflected in the relevant national legislation.

Tasks assigned to the FSO that exceed the mere production of statistics, such as the establishment and maintenance of registers, are generally regulated by statutory instruments other than BStatG.

Improvement sub-action 21.1:

The FSO and the BMI will discuss ways to make sure that the FSO is able to keep track of newly created legal acts, which contain new tasks for the FSO. The FSO will endeavour to ensure that the separation is stipulated in the relevant legal basis.

Deadline: Q2 2026

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 21.1: FSO, BMI

Improvement sub-action 21.2:

The FSO will draft a working plan to ensure the required personal and financial resources as well as to be more flexible in case of urgent data needs.

Deadline: Q3 2026

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 21.2: FSO, BMI

22. Recommendation

The Federal Statistical Office should take steps to improve the accessibility to statistical results, including the GENESIS database and corresponding metadata. (Improvement-related: Indicators 8.4, 15.2 and 15.5).

Current situation:

The FSO has established good initiatives to provide suitable dissemination channels for the users of official statistics. Besides the home page as the main platform for publishing results, the GENESIS database holds data on the topics covered by official statistics in Germany and is considered an important resource, both within the FSO and for external users. However, relatively non-expert users find it hard to work with.

The development of a fully-fledged metadata management system not only serves the purpose of providing users with adequate metadata but also constitutes a necessary condition for acting as a national data steward. While the FSO currently has a strong focus on developing a general data management system, the part related to a centralised metadata system does not appear to have the highest priority.

Improvement sub-action 22.1:

Further develop the metadata model to make it fully compatible with the Generic Statistical Information Model (GSIM).

Deadline: Q4 2023

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 22.1: FSO

Improvement sub-action 22.2:

Set up interfaces in the metadata management system for registration of data sets to provide a central data catalogue on this basis. The aim is to establish close interconnections between the data management processes and the metadata management.

Deadline: Q4 2023

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 22.2: FSO

Improvement sub-action 22.3:

The GENESIS-Online database is being revised using state-of-the-art technologies in order to facilitate its handling and to better meet user needs. Apart from expanding the range of data offered and adding a new user interface, this also includes reducing the number of interactions required to access specific information, implementing "intuitive" further processing, and enabling adjustments to be made to the set of results, which will also be provided in other modern formats.

Deadline: Q1 2024

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 22.3: FSO

23. Recommendation

The Federal Statistical Office should continue engaging with relevant stakeholders on new and innovative projects to increase innovation across the German statistical system. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 1bis.3)

Current situation:

The FSO is currently involved in several projects to support the objective of being prepared for the challenges that arise in an evolving environment. These projects include the increased use of administrative data and sustainable access to new (privately held) data, the modernisation of the IT infrastructure accompanied by actively hiring qualified staff, as well as the increased promotion of modern dissemination channels and the dissemination of data in new formats (such as machine-readable open data files).

Improvement sub-action 23.1:

Regular reporting to the senior managements of the Statistical Offices of the Länder at the Conference of Heads of the Statistical Offices and to the representatives of the ONAs in the annual plenary meeting with the ONAs as part of the annual exchange of views and opinions on professional issues. In addition, issues of developments (i.e. innovations) are topics of the ONA sub-group meetings.

Deadline: Q4 2023 and annually afterwards

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 23.1: FSO

Improvement sub-action 23.2:

Once a year, the FSO presents the progress report and informs the advisory board ("Statistischer Beirat") about the current state of play of their recommendations. The physical meeting with all members of the advisory board takes place once a year.

Deadline: Q4 2023 and annually afterwards

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 23.2: FSO