

## Description of the German Statistical System

**Mission of the NSI:** The mission of the Federal Statistical Office (Destatis) is to provide and disseminate statistical information, which is objective, independent and of high quality. This information is made available to everybody: politicians, government, administration, businesses and industry and their associations, trade unions, the media and, last but not least, the public at large. All users have free access to the information provided by Destatis, its production is publicly financed, and it is commissioned by the legislators. In addition to the basic data services and the demand-based or target group-oriented standard provision of information, custom-made data material is provided on a chargeable basis.

**Status of the NSI in the public administration system of the country:** Destatis was set up in 1950 as an autonomous federal higher authority in the sphere of competence of the Federal Minister of the Interior. As Destatis is under the administrative supervision of the Federal Ministry of the Interior it needs the prior consent of the Ministry to take any major organisational, personnel or financial decisions. In respect of subject-related matters, the various federal ministries exercise their specialist supervision. The production of each set of statistics is under the specialist supervision of the competent federal ministry which sees to the proper and timely compilation of the federal statistics ordered by legislation. The Federal Statistical Office is however independent and not bound by instructions regarding the specific matters of statistical work, the methodological and technical preparation and compilation of statistics. In line with the federal structure of the state and of the administration in the Federal Republic of Germany federation-wide surveys of official statistics ("federal statistical surveys") are implemented in cooperation between Destatis and the statistical offices of the 16 federal states (Länder). That means that in most cases federal statistical surveys are organised in a decentralised manner. This implies a division of labour in which the main function of Destatis is coordination. Its principal responsibility is to see to it that federal statistical surveys are without overlaps, comply with standard methods and observe the time schedule. Destatis' catalogue of obligations includes activities such as methodological and technical preparations for the various statistical surveys, further development of the federal statistics programme, mutual coordination of statistical surveys, and compilation and publication of federal results. The statistical offices of the federal states are responsible for data collection and data processing up to Länder level, with a few exceptions.

**Procedure of appointment of Director-General of the NSI:** According to Article 2, Paragraph 2 of the Federal Statistics Law, the President of Destatis is appointed by the Federal President on the proposal of the Federal Government. The President of Destatis is traditionally also Federal Returning Officer and as such responsible for the elections to the German Bundestag and the European Parliament as well as for the statement of election results.

**Location of seat of the NSI, regional offices:** Destatis is located in Wiesbaden, Bonn and Berlin. The 14 statistical offices of the Länder are located in the respective states. The statistical offices of Hamburg and Schleswig-Holstein merged to form the Statistical Office North in 2004 and the Office for Data Processing and Statistics of Brandenburg and the Statistical Office of Berlin merged to form the Office for Statistics Berlin-Brandenburg in 2007.

**Organisational structure of the NSI:** Destatis is headed by a President and Vice-President. Nine Departments are responsible for different tasks: Administration (Z), Questions of Federal and International Statistics, Dissemination of Information (I), IT, Mathematical-Statistical Methods (II), National and Environmental Accounts, Labour Market (III), Business Register, Industry, Domestic Trade (IV), Prices, Foreign Trade, Transport, Earnings (V), Population, Education, Public Sector (VI), Services, Agriculture, Environment (VII), Health, Social Statistics, Households (VIII). Departments Z and I to VI are located in Wiesbaden, departments VII and VIII in the Bonn branch office. The Berlin Information Point - Service for the capital, International Statistics, European Data Service - is located in the capital.

**Main legal act:** The Federal Statistical Law (Bundesstatistikgesetz – BStatG) contains the fundamental provisions concerning German official statistics, like the commitment to quality, neutrality, and scientific independence, the tasks of Destatis or the regulations on statistical confidentiality. According to the principle "no survey without legal basis", individual federal statistics are ordered by law or legal regulation. These legal provisions for the

individual federal surveys determine the survey characteristics, the type of survey, the reference period and date, the periodicity and the group of respondents to be covered.

**Statistical programme(s):** In total, Destatis conducts more than 380 statistics on a wide range of subject matters, while the Statistical Offices of the Länder conduct more than 280 statistics. Most official statistics are jointly produced by Destatis and the Statistical Offices of the Länder. In addition, around 60 federal statistics are conducted by external partners, like the German Bundesbank. The statistical programme and Destatis main projects are laid down in the current Strategy and Programme Plan 2007 – 2011. See [www.destatis.de](http://www.destatis.de) → English → About Us.

**Statistical Advisory Committee:** According to Article 4 of the Federal Statistics Law, the task of the Statistical Advisory Committee is to give advice to Destatis in fundamental matters. It represents various user groups (such as associations, trade unions, and respondents), which use that body to contact the producers of federal statistics. The Committee also represents the interests of official statistics towards politicians, for example by submitting "recommendations on the further development of official statistics" to the Federal Government at the beginning of any parliamentary term. The Statistical Advisory Committee has set up specific bodies, the so-called Specialist committees, for the discussion of subject-related issues. The structure of these Committees has been designed to correspond to that of the Expert meetings attended by representatives of Destatis and the statistical offices of the federal states. This approach ensures consideration of the needs and interests of the Advisory Committee at the working level, too.

**Master Plan for a Reform of German Official Statistics:** In 2002, the Federal and Länder Audit Offices made recommendations for improving the operating efficiency of Official Statistics in Germany. As a response to those recommendations, the heads of Destatis and the Länder offices in early 2003 agreed on a Master Plan for a Reform of Official Statistics. The Master Plan's objective is to increase the efficiency of the German statistical system by optimising co-operation between the country's statistical offices. A central element is the further expansion and development of the cross-office fulfilment of tasks, a good example of which has been the so-called co-ordination of standard programs and formats for a couple of years. Here, one of the offices is commissioned to process the data for other offices against reimbursement of costs. As a principle, the office which offers the most cost-effective fulfilment of a given task will be commissioned to accomplish it. In the medium term, a new form of co-operation will be achieved between the statistical offices on the basis of the above-mentioned model of a cross-office fulfilment of tasks. Integrating a new Article 3a into the Federal Statistics Law in June 2005 created the legal basis for a new work-sharing according to the principle of "Make or buy" between the statistical offices of the Federation and the Länder and, in connection with Article 16 Paragraph 2 Sentence 2 (new) of the Federal Statistics Law, for the transmission of individual data required for that purpose. In spring 2006, from the aspect of the efficiency of administration, the Federation and the Länder concluded a framework agreement on the cross-office fulfilment of tasks in official statistics, combining the principle "Make or Buy" with elements of competition. As another step in the context of the reform project "Central IT Production and Data Maintenance", the statistical offices agreed in December 2006 that the microdata (individual data) obtained from federal statistical surveys will in future be available for common use.

**Other relevant remarks (e.g. major policies):** Among other policy documents, Destatis has published quality standards in German Official Statistics as well as "fit 2012 – the strategic goals of the Federal Statistical Office". Destatis has also defined a human resources concept, a staff training programme, IT security guidelines, and guidelines for dissemination. An external user satisfaction survey has been carried out in 2006 and will be conducted on a regular basis in the future. Destatis' centralised customer management system (CONSO+Web), which ensures prompt and professional response to the more than 400.000 customer enquiries each year, has been awarded in the 7<sup>th</sup> eGovernment competition of the Federal Government in 2007.

In April 2006 the Federal Government adopted the programme "Reduction of bureaucracy and improved legal provisions". Destatis has been entrusted with measuring the cost of bureaucracy in Germany based on the Standard Cost Model (SCM) and with providing advice to government authorities.

**Publications:** Destatis publication service encompasses the entire publication programme of Destatis, making subject-matter series and many other publications available for download free of charge. Printed publications can be ordered via our publication service. See [www.destatis.de/publikationen](http://www.destatis.de/publikationen)

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