



IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS AUSTRIA

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

<p>1. Recommendation</p> <p>The relevant authorities should amend the Federal Statistical Act to assign the role of the national coordination body for the Austrian Statistical System to Statistics Austria. (Compliance-relevant: ES CoP, Indicator 1bis.1)</p>
<p>Current situation:</p> <p>Currently the coordination function of Statistics Austria within the Austrian Statistical System – first of all regarding other producers of European Statistics - is not anchored in law. Given this lack an effective coordination role embodied by Statistics Austria - as laid out in ES CoP Principle 1bis - it is difficult for Statistics Austria to ensure the same level of compliance with the ES CoP among other producers of official statistics.</p>
<p>Improvement sub-action 1.1: Creating awareness on the recommendations addressed to the Federal Chancellery</p> <p>Statistics Austria will report about the recommendations addressed to the Federal Chancellery and the Economic and the Statistics Council, the Federal Chancellor and the Austrian Parliament</p>
<p>Deadline: Q2 2023</p>
<p>Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 1.1: Statistics Austria</p>
<p>Improvement sub-action 1.2: Drafting a proposal for an amended Federal Statistics Act.</p> <p>The Federal Chancellery as responsible authority will draft a proposal for an amendment of the Austrian Federal Statistics Act containing a clear assignment of the role as coordinating body of the Austrian Statistical System to Statistics Austria.</p>
<p>Deadline: Q2 2025</p>
<p>Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 1.2: Austrian Federal Chancellery</p>
<p>Improvement sub-action 1.3: Adoption of the amended Federal Statistics Act by the Austrian Parliament</p> <p>The Austrian Parliament will adopt an amendment of the Austrian Federal Statistics Act containing a clear assignment of the role as coordinating body of the Austrian Statistical System to Statistics Austria.</p>
<p>Deadline: Q4 2025</p>
<p>Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 1.3: Austrian Parliament</p>
<p>2. Recommendation</p> <p>Statistics Austria should review those national statistical producers who are to be defined as Other National Authorities in order to clarify their status as such. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 1bis.1)</p>

<p>Current situation:</p> <p>Currently there are different scenarios within the Austrian Statistical System regarding the institutions enumerated in the list of Other National Authorities (ONAs). Some of them send data directly to Eurostat while others are delivering data to Statistics Austria (STAT) where quality and completeness is checked before STAT is sending it to Eurostat. Regarding the statistical products concerned, some of them are only of small amount and part of other statistics already produced by STAT. For other cases it is not obvious if it is really identified/labelled as European Statistics. Regarding Waste- and Water Statistics, responsibilities are strongly interwoven between three different institutions.</p>
<p>Improvement sub-action 2.1: Review of the statistical products compiled by ONAs</p> <p>Statistics Austria will in collaboration with the ONAs investigate in how far the following issues are in place:</p> <p>Is the statistics produced by the ONA identifiable as European Statistics? Is the sending of the statistics done in a way that the ONA should be classified as data provider rather than as ONA?</p>
<p>Deadline: Q3 2024</p>
<p>Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 2.1: Statistics Austria</p>
<p>Improvement sub-action 2.2: Update of the List of ONAs</p> <p>Depending on the outcome of sub-action 2.1 Statistics Austria will launch the formal procedure to update the list of ONAs,</p>
<p>Deadline: Q4 2024</p>
<p>Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 2.2: Statistics Austria</p>
<p>3. Recommendation</p> <p>As part of its coordination role, Statistics Austria should establish Memoranda of Understanding with all Other National Authorities, providing quality guidelines for the development, production, and dissemination of European Statistics and aiming to support adherence to the ES CoP. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 1bis.1 and 1bis.2)</p>
<p>Current situation:</p> <p>Statistics Austria has currently set up Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) with four of the seven assigned/identified ONAs. The MoU's contain a commitment to the Code of Practice, delivery of quality reports and the sending of data via Statistics Austria (single point of contact). There are no Memoranda of Understanding between Statistics Austria and the remaining ONAs (mainly Ministries). The responsibilities of both Statistics Austria and the Other National Authorities within the Austrian Statistical System in relation to the production of European statistics are not completely concretized and sharing of common approaches in innovation initiatives and statistical methods, standards and common guidelines is not done in a systematic way.</p>
<p>Improvement sub-action 3.1: Establishment of a National Committee on Coordination of Official Statistics</p>

<p>Statistics Austria will establish a National Committee on Coordination of Official Statistics. The mandate shall include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing standardized Memoranda of Understanding – renewing existing ones and establishing new ones • Developing quality guidelines • Promoting the principles of the Code of Practice and defining necessary improvement measures • Sharing of good practices • The committee shall meet at least twice a year.
<p>Deadline: Q1 2025</p>
<p>Responsible institution for the improvement sub-action 3.1: Statistics Austria</p>
<p>Improvement sub-action 3.2: Update of Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) with Other National Authorities</p> <p>Statistics Austria will revise and if necessary, renew existing MoUs and establish MoUs with those ONAs where they are not existing. The main objective of the sub-action is to have a complete set of MoUs with all ONAs containing a clear commitment to quality guidelines approved by the National Committee on Coordination.</p>
<p>Deadline: Q3 2025</p>
<p>Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 3.2: Statistics Austria</p>
<p>4. Recommendation</p> <p>Statistics Austria should facilitate the use of its quality guidelines and standard tools for data processing for Other National Authorities by providing appropriate training and advice. Statistics Austria should also monitor compliance with standards and guidelines in the Austrian Statistical System regarding metadata reports and dissemination. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 1bis.2 and 4.2)</p>
<p>Current situation:</p> <p>The present role for Statistics Austria to coordinate ONAs is limited to cooperation and giving statistical advice, there is no legal mandate to approve the quality of the statistics produced by ONAs or monitor their compliance with standards and guidelines. Quality reports are not sent by the ONAs to Statistics Austria on a continuous basis (despite it is laid down in some of the MoUs). The training programme of Statistics Austria is currently not accessible for staff of other producers.</p>
<p>Improvement sub-action 4.1: Opening the training programme for staff of other national producers and promote the participation</p> <p>Statistics Austria will open its training programme to statistical experts of Other National Producers and will further on promote participation. One key objective is as well to develop a set of courses which should be recommended very strongly. These concerns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course on Quality guidelines • Course on national and international standards.
<p>Deadline: Q2 2024</p>
<p>Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 4.1: Statistics Austria</p>

<p>Improvement sub-action 4.2: Setting up a process to monitor guidelines and standards</p> <p>Statistics Austria will implement a process where the ONAs are encouraged to report in how far standards are respected. This will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing and maintaining a release calendar • Provision of Quality report • The use of adequate metadata standards • Reporting on compliance to standards (this shall be part of the agenda of the National Committee on Coordination of Official Statistics)
<p>Deadline: Q4 2024</p>
<p>Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 4.2: Statistics Austria</p>
<p>5. Recommendation</p> <p>Statistics Austria should develop quality assurance guidelines for administrative and other types of data from new sources for use in the Austrian Statistical System. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 1bis.2, 2.2 and 4.2)</p>
<p>Current situation:</p> <p>Statistics Austria currently uses a broad range of administrative data to produce official statistics and has also started to exploit new data sources. The quality guidelines already contain a chapter on the use of administrative data, but the use of new data sources is not reflected. Another issue is that there is no standardized workflow for the intake of external data sources.</p>
<p>Improvement sub-action 5.1: Reviewing the quality guidelines in order to map the use of external sources adequately</p> <p>Statistics Austria will update and publish the quality guidelines, which will contain an improved and enhanced chapter related to administrative sources and a new chapter on the use of new data sources.</p>
<p>Deadline: Q4 2024</p>
<p>Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 5.1: Statistics Austria</p>
<p>Improvement sub-action 5.2: Defining workflows for acquisition and assessment of external sources</p> <p>Statistics Austria currently develops a new data strategy. Within that framework Statistics Austria will define workflows to guarantee that external data sources can be used in an adequate way. The workflows will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A process which makes administrative data and/or other data sources available to all possible users • A continuous assessment of the quality of external data sources.
<p>Deadline: Q4 2025</p>
<p>Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 5.2: Statistics Austria</p>

<p>6. Recommendation</p> <p>The relevant authorities should establish a new sustainable financial framework to ensure that the resources assigned to Statistics Austria are adequate for the institution to carry out its tasks. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 3.1 and 3.4)</p>
<p>Current situation:</p> <p>The financial framework of Statistics Austria is currently funded by a lump sum which was stable in nominal terms up until the year 2022. Although the lump sum will be increased in 2024, with incremental increases bound to inflation, it is not quite sure in how far ambitions regarding innovation or the allocation/taking over/being assigned of new tasks (for instance as data steward in the national data ecosystem) can be resourced adequately.</p>
<p>Improvement sub-action 6.1: Creating awareness on the recommendations addressed to the Federal Chancellery</p> <p>Statistics Austria will report about the recommendations addressed to the Federal Chancellery, the Economic and the Statistics Council, and the Austrian Parliament</p>
<p>Deadline: Q2 2023</p>
<p>Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 6.1: Statistics Austria</p>
<p>Improvement sub-action 6.2: Drafting a proposal for an amended Federal Statistics Act</p> <p>The Federal Chancellery as responsible authority will draft a proposal for an amendment of the Austrian Federal Statistics Act containing an improved financial envelope.</p>
<p>Deadline: Q2 2025</p>
<p>Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 6.2: Austrian Federal Chancellery</p>
<p>Improvement sub-action 6.3: Adoption of the amended Federal Statistics Act by the Austrian Parliament</p> <p>The Austrian Parliament would adopt an amendment of the Austrian Federal Statistics Act containing an improved financial framework.</p>
<p>Deadline: Q4 2025</p>
<p>Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 6.3: Austrian Parliament</p>
<p>7. Recommendation</p> <p>Statistics Austria should develop and implement a roadmap to address the need to develop the competencies required in the medium term to achieve its strategic goals. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 7.6, 7.5 and 7.7)</p>
<p>Current situation:</p> <p>The staff of Statistics Austria is highly skilled in a sense that all processes relevant for producing official statistics of sufficient quality. Nevertheless, emerging changes in the statistical production processes and methods together with the ambitious objectives of the Strategy 2025 to develop and improve methods continuously creates a necessity to assess and anticipate possible competency gaps in statistical and data science.</p>
<p>Improvement sub-action 7.1: Development of a catalogue on competences</p>

<p>Statistics Austria will develop a competence catalogue which will include competences for data science, taking into account emerging needs on innovations. .</p>
<p>Deadline: Q4 2024</p>
<p>Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 7.1: Statistics Austria</p>
<p>Improvement sub-action 7.2: Establishing a structure to make an optimized use of data science competencies - STAT.DataExpert</p> <p>Statistics Austria will establish STAT.DataExpert, which will provide tools and services to support innovative data science projects. The aim is to have a centralised instance where tools and knowledge of modern data science instruments are available. It can be considered as a contact point for subject matter units who are interested in implementing innovative projects related to data science.</p>
<p>Deadline: Q1 2025</p>
<p>Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 7.2: Statistics Austria</p>
<p>8. Recommendation</p> <p>Statistics Austria should develop its statistical production system based on further standardisation of domain-specific processes and the reuse of generic digital solutions for the implementation of statistical production activities. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 8.3)</p>
<p>Current situation:</p> <p>Some of Statistics Austria's processes are standardised. For instance, there are centralised solutions on data collection. Currently within the Strategy 2025, the digitalization of processes is one of the key objectives. The goal is to enable further quality improvements and efficiency increases in these process areas beyond what has already been accomplished, so that Statistics Austria is ideally equipped to tackle any current and future challenges. For these efforts, good or best practices in digitalisation and automation at Statistics Austria or other comparable institutions should be optimally applied and expanded. However, a more systematic approach to promote standardization can be beneficial.</p>
<p>Improvement action 8: Implementation of standardized data and metadata management.</p> <p>Statistics Austria is currently developing a new data strategy. For example, Statistics Austria plans to implement centralised metadata management and enhance the standardisation of the data management. This will result in metadata-driven automated production processes.</p>
<p>Deadline: Q4 2026</p>
<p>Responsible institution for improvement action 8: Statistics Austria</p>
<p>9. Recommendation</p> <p>Statistics Austria should update its revision policy to align it with the European Statistical System framework. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 6.6, 8.5 and 12.3)</p>

<p>Current situation:</p> <p>Statistics Austria has a revision policy in place with requirements to provide clarity to users in cases where published statistics are revised for various reasons. Revisions are categorised into current revisions, which are planned, and occasional revisions, which are made for the following reasons: changes in data sources, changes in methodology and correction of errors. The revision policy contains all planned revisions for every statistical product where the issue is relevant. There is an annual update of this list. Currently, the terminology for categories of the revision policy is not completely consistent with that used in the ESS quality framework.</p>
<p>Improvement action 9: Publish an updated revision policy</p> <p>Statistics Austria will publish an updated revision policy to improve the consistency regarding categories of revisions to those used in the ESS quality framework.</p>
<p>Deadline: Q2 2024</p>
<p>Responsible institution for improvement action 9: Statistics Austria</p>
<p>10. Recommendation</p> <p>Statistics Austria should design and implement a process for analysing planned revisions and review how preliminary statistics are presented in order to provide more clarity and understanding to users and producers alike. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 12.3, 13.5 and 8.5)</p>
<p>Current situation:</p> <p>Statistics Austria releases preliminary results of acceptable aggregate accuracy and reliability when this is considered useful for users. In recent years, it became necessary to accelerate the dissemination of important economic indicators. This meant that it was necessary to provide early estimates on a very thin data basis. Until now, quality checks of releases were carried out in a decentralised way and not supported by standardized tools and the information on revisions for users was limited to textual explanations within the standard documentation.</p>
<p>Improvement sub-action 10.1: Develop a standardized analysis template for revisions.</p> <p>Based on considerations already taken, Statistics Austria will develop a sheet allowing to analyse different vintages of published indicators. Apart from revision indicators already provided by QPIs, the sheet will include test statistics allowing the producer to assess the significance of changes between different vintages. There will be a subset of indicators which will also be made available to users.</p>
<p>Deadline: Q4 2024</p>
<p>Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 10.1: Statistics Austria</p>
<p>Improvement sub-action 10.2: Inform about the new template of revisions.</p> <p>Statistics Austria will organize internal information meetings, where relevant experts are informed about the tool. Thereafter, Statistics Austria will inform users in technical subcommittees and at Feedback-Talks.</p>
<p>Deadline: Q1 2025</p>
<p>Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 10.2: Statistics Austria</p>

11. Recommendation

Statistics Austria should devise a systematic scheme to improve the review of critical accuracy issues, particularly for key statistical outputs. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 4.4, 12.1 and 12.2)

Current situation:

Statistics Austria, together with the Quality Subcommittee of the Statistical Council, regularly carries out Feedback Talks to evaluate the implementation of the statistical products of Statistics Austria. The basis for the discussion is a standard documentation, which must be compiled for every product. The document contains the description of the concept, the method which the statistics are produced and in one chapter - which is structured along the quality dimensions as provided by the ESS quality definition – a description on how the quality of the product is assessed. This also includes information on accuracy broken down by sampling and non-sampling errors.

Improvement action 11: Enhancing the accuracy chapter in the standard documentation

Statistics Austria will enhance the information on accuracy in the standard documentation. Standardized elements depending on the type of Statistics (for instance non-response tables for surveys) and quality indicators should be included. There will also be a summary focusing on critical issues related to accuracy. The inclusion and update will be performed within the regular update cycles of the standard documentation.

Deadline: Q4 2024

Responsible institution for improvement action 11: Statistics Austria

12. Recommendation

Statistics Austria should enable users to reuse data more easily, including solutions to export statistical presentations that are visualised in different ways. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 15.2 and 11.1)

Current situation:

There are several channels which are important for the reuse of data. Before the launch of the new web page in June 2022, visualisation possibilities on the Statistics Austria website were limited and suitable technology for users to export graphical presentations for further release to the public was not in place. After developing an internal tool called STATgraph capable to produce interactive graphics for the web, which is also downloadable by users, the situation has improved significantly. However, the use of graphical presentations is not equal among the landing pages related to statistical topics. The current editorial process misses an overall strategic plan which would improve the general usability of the web page. Another important channel is the database STATcube for which Statistics Austria is currently facing some criticism regarding its usability.

Improvement sub-action 12.1: Improve the editorial process for the new web page.

There will be a reorganization of the editorial process of the web page by centralising the responsibility for web contents. The main objectives will be:

- Optimizing the editorial processes
- Enforcing the use of visualisation
- Monitoring the re-use of data

Deadline: Q4 2023

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 12.1: Statistics Austria

<p>Improvement sub-action 12.2: Setting up a project STATCubeImprove in order to improve the usability of the database STATcube.</p> <p>Reacting to criticism of users, Statistics Austria will set up a project consisting of 3 phases. The first phase will investigate how far the usability can be improved while the second phase aims to define possible improvement measures for STATcube, including possible visualisation and automated use of data. The third phase involves the implementation of the proposed improvement actions.</p>
<p>Deadline: Q4 2024</p>
<p>Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 12.2: Statistics Austria</p>
<p>13. Recommendation</p> <p>Statistics Austria should develop a strategic approach to explore the potential of new data sources for statistical production. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 9.5)</p>
<p>Current situation:</p> <p>Statistics Austria has numerous ongoing experimental projects. These include the use of mobile phone data and earth observation data in collaboration with key data providers and research organisations. The main aim of these collaborations is the production of experimental statistics. It should be mentioned that the use of new data sources is part of the Strategy 2025, where the number of new data sources that are recently added to the production of official statistics are observed. Since the acquisition of new data sources is organised in a decentralised way, a comprehensive strategic approach is lacking.</p>
<p>Improvement action 13: Develop a roadmap for the use of new data sources.</p> <p>Under the framework of the new data strategy, Statistics Austria will develop a roadmap for the use of new data sources. This shall include a two-dimensional picture where it is shown which data are going to be approached and to which statistical products they could be assigned to (either new experimental products or enhancements of already existing ones).</p>
<p>Deadline: Q4 2024</p>
<p>Responsible institution for improvement action 13: Statistics Austria</p>
<p>14. Recommendation</p> <p>Statistics Austria should strengthen the cooperation with the research community to provide better services for researchers. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 7.7)</p>
<p>Current situation:</p> <p>Statistics Austria has made significant progress in improving the cooperation with the scientific community, such as the establishment and operation of the Austrian Micro Data Centre (AMDC). Another example is the cooperation with the Austrian Academy of Science, which resulted in the organisation of workshops and lecture notes twice a year. It is also observed that there is strong interest in the research community to further the collaboration with Statistics Austria in a number of fields, ranging from the development of new statistical indicators to methodological research, meaning that a further strengthening of the cooperation of Statistics Austria with the scientific community is of mutual interest.</p>

<p>Improvement action 14: Establishment of a centre for science</p> <p>Within a planned reorganisation, Statistics Austria will establish an organisational structure (Centre research). Besides providing services to researchers, one objective is to foster and strengthen cooperation with the scientific community. It will also comprise all activities related to the Austrian Micro Data centre. Other activities might include the acquisition of research projects and the participation in national and international dedicated research programmes.</p>
<p>Deadline: Q2 2023</p>
<p>Responsible institution for improvement action 14: Statistics Austria</p>
<p>15. Recommendation</p> <p>The relevant authorities should consider the extent to which the existing division of statistical and financial responsibilities, both at Statistics Austria's senior management level and at Council level, serves the core tasks of Statistics Austria. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 1.2)</p>
<p>Current situation:</p> <p>Currently the responsibilities regarding financial and statistical matters are divided between two directors general. In case of a disagreement, the DG finance has the right to decide. The separation of responsibilities is mirrored at the level of the two relevant bodies, the Statistics Council as advisory body for statistical purposes and the Economic Council as supervisory body for financial matters.</p>
<p>Improvement sub-action 15.1: Creating awareness on the recommendations addressed to the Federal Chancellery.</p> <p>Statistics Austria will report about the recommendations addressed to the Federal Chancellery, the Economic and the Statistics Council and the General Secretariat of the Federal Chancellery.</p>
<p>Deadline: Q4 2022</p>
<p>Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 15.1: Statistics Austria</p>
<p>Improvement sub-action 15.2 Assessing the consequences of merging the responsibilities of statistical and financial issues.</p> <p>The Federal Chancellery as responsible authority would assess the consequences of merging the responsibilities for statistical and financial issues on both at Statistics Austria's senior management level and at council level.</p>
<p>Deadline: Q2 2025</p>
<p>Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 15.2: Austrian Federal Chancellery</p>
<p>16. Recommendation</p> <p>Within its Strategy 2025, Statistics Austria should consider harnessing the new opportunities offered by the changing European and national data policy frameworks, and further develop its vision for its role in the emerging national data ecosystem. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 2.4)</p>

Current situation:

Against the background of a fast-changing national data ecosystem accompanied by an emerging new European legal framework to support the reuse of data, Statistics Austria, did proactively enter in discussions on a more critical role in future data management and data quality functions. This role could be based on preliminary internal reflections about a possible data stewardship function for Statistics Austria in the context of a forthcoming national data strategy, which is linked to the implementation of the Data Governance Act (DGA) to be implemented at national level by September 2023. By August 2023 the government assigned the responsibility of implementing the DGA to the Ministry of Finance and Statistics Austria is currently involved in first discussions about forthcoming implementation actions.

Improvement action 16: Develop a strategic approach to play a significant role in a national data strategy

Statistics Austria will continue its efforts to play a significant role in a forthcoming national data strategy. This includes:

- Fostering ongoing contacts at high level, regarding the development of a national data strategy and the implementation of the DGA
- The preparation for various implementation scenarios of the DGA
- The ongoing demonstration and offering of Statistics Austria's competences regarding register maintenance, quality of data and metadata standards.

Deadline: Q2 2024

Responsible institution for improvement action 16: Statistics Austria