



Republic of Macedonia
State Statistical Office

Policy on Statistical Confidentiality

Policy on Statistical Confidentiality

Policy objective

The State Statistical Office (hereinafter SSO) collects data on natural and legal persons that are treated as confidential information. The result of statistical processing can also generate information that is considered confidential, such as anonymised microdata, data tables with very low levels of aggregation, and as yet unpublished data. The statistical confidentiality policy aims to lay down the basic principles that are applied in the SSO, arising from the:

- Law on State Statistics
(<http://www.stat.gov.mk/ZakonZaStatistika.aspx>)
- Code of Practice of European Statistics
(<http://www.stat.gov.mk/ZaNas.aspx?id=2>)
- Resolution of the United Nations on Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics
(<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/dnss/gp/FP-New-E.pdf>)

Confidential data management

- The security of confidential information in the SSO is guaranteed by the application of legal, organisational and technical measures that control the access in line with the Policy on Information Security.
- The protection of statistical confidentiality is a complex concept and covers several phases of the statistical business process model: data collection, processing and dissemination.
- Reporting units are informed about the measures for protection of confidential data and that data are used only for statistical purposes.
- The electronic submission of data takes place in a strictly controlled environment with the use of encryption.
- Access to the databases with individual data that are in the phase of collecting or processing is strictly controlled within the network, the database as well as the application level by passwords in accordance with the Policy on Information Security.

Obligations of employees

- All employees are required to protect the secrecy of personal and individual data on the reporting units they come in contact with during their work.
- Employees engaged in the collection, processing and storage of confidential information sign declarations for the protection of statistical confidentiality of data, confirming that they are familiar with the data protection obligation, which continues even after leaving the SSO.
- Continuous efforts are made to educate employees and raise awareness of the importance of statistical confidentiality, its aspects, legal bases, procedures, and above all the fact that the weakest link in the system is always the human factor, rather than the legal and technological measures.

Dissemination

- The State Statistical Office, as an institution, and employees, individually, may not disclose/provide access to:
 - individual statistical data;
 - statistical data that can be combined with other data, which could lead to disclosure of the unit they refer to;
 - aggregate statistical data for which the recommended measures for protection against statistical disclosure have not been implemented;
 - tables and other information, as well as draft publications and news releases that are still under preparation and not yet published. The draft text remains confidential even after the publication of the final version;
 - data not published at the level planned in the Work Programme of the SSO, without respecting the procedure for unpublished data and prior approval by the director of the SSO;
- Published official statistics will not disclose any personal information about a person or a business entity in accordance with the Law on State Statistics.
- Different methods and tools for data protection are applied in the dissemination phase, depending on the form of dissemination (microdata or aggregate data).

- Data collected through statistical surveys or directly from administrative sources may be used for statistical purposes only and published as aggregated data that prevent the identification of the statistical unit to which the data refer.
- As an exception, only upon written consent of the reporting statistical unit the data may be published that could allow indirect identification.
- The only exception when access to anonymised microdata may be given to registered research institutions and registered researchers is for scientific research purposes:
 - the right of access is not granted per se, but rather each request is considered separately by the Statistical Confidentiality Committee;
 - the right of access to anonymised microdata is based on signed agreements with researchers and their declaration of data protection.