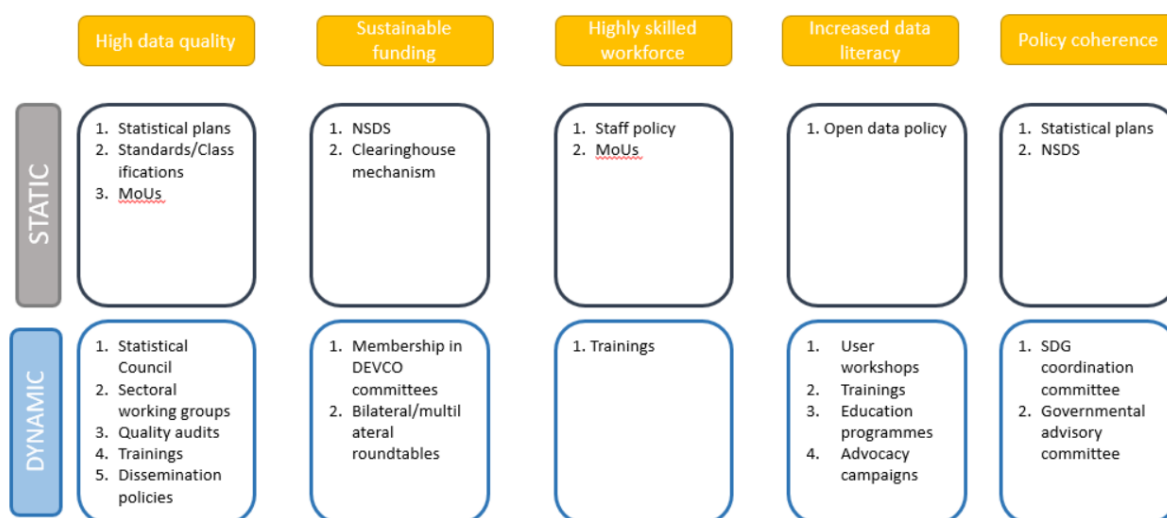


A toolbox of coordination mechanisms

Over the years, statistical organisations have developed a wide range of institutional mechanisms (Figure 1). This overview does not aim at providing a complete and final list of all the mechanisms, but rather provides an attempt to classify and strategize the tools.

Figure 1: A toolbox of coordination mechanisms



Source: PARIS21 (2020)

Notes: The mechanisms are presented as a result of an extensive literature review.

Virtual Roundtable II

Breakout Session: Applying mechanisms to the problem areas

What are the most effective mechanisms to improve coordination?

The group work will map mechanisms to identified challenges and discuss whether the mechanisms were efficient, sufficient and effective in improving coordination.

Static coordination tools

Static coordination tools involve coordination mechanisms stemming from available resources and technologies at a given point in time. These can include legal acts, mandates, strategies, standards/classifications and M&E frameworks. Static mechanisms can be legally binding, such as the statistical law, and non-binding instruments, such as for instance the dissemination policies. A legally binding instrument, as compared to a non-legally binding one, can be a stronger signal for commitment and ensure more solid enforcement mechanisms.

1. Statistical law and other legal frameworks

The **statistical law** is the most relevant instrument within the legal framework. This act is legally binding, and it governs all the matters that relate to collection, processing, compilation, analysis, publication and dissemination of all statistical data that pertain to a country. It designates the entity responsible for statistical coordination, it assigns the coordination tasks and defines the coordination structure for statistical activities (UNECE, 2018_[20]). **Other legal frameworks** can relate to the privacy and protection of natural persons with regards to the collection and processing of personal data by the official producers of statistics and to the legal framework for the access to information (ATI) and right to information (RTI). These can include laws, regulations and provisions that advance and restrict the right to information in different ways and sectors.

2. Statistical programmes

The UNSD (2003_[13]) defines the preparation of **the multi-annual and annual statistical programmes** as the main tools for coordination, in which, by planning future statistical activities, specific mechanisms – such as project groups or memoranda of understanding (MoU) – can be set up. Such programmes do not need a legal status, despite being important planning and coordination tools (UNECE, 2018_[20]).

A **long-term statistical programme** is a multi-year statistical plan that ensures ex-ante coordination of statistical activities for five-to ten years. Annual adjustments are possible but remain in most cases partial. In some cases, the long-term program can be embedded in or coincide with the NSDS, where coordination objectives and mandate are explicitly stated. UNECE (2018_[20]) reports that the NSO under the lead of the Chief Statistician should be responsible for preparing these statistical programs as well as implementation and evaluation reports in close consultation with users and producers of official statistics. These programmes, at times legally binding, may legitimate producers to collect data from primary respondents through surveys for exclusively statistical purposes (Bruengger, 2008_[41]).

The **annual work plan of statistics** sets out the strategic priorities and statistical planning for the year depending on the national context. A review past achievements and planned activities for the current year are also provided. Coordination tasks can be assigned in the annual plan of statistics as part of the activity plan such as coordination of dissemination tools and of interlinked products in order to ensure harmonization in statistical production and increase the usefulness of raw data from different areas.

3. Standards and classifications

Coordination through standards is usually valid for the whole NSS and shall be prepared involving all relevant producers of official statistics before they are formally adopted.

A first type of standards refers to classifications, terminologies and definitions to ensure that results are coherent, and terms are clearly defined. A second type of standards are methodological standards

and guidelines for the production of statistics such as sampling, treatment of non-response or imputations of missing values. Methodological standards ensure a quality, consistency and comparability across a wide range of statistical products and institutions. A third type of standards is related to **metadata and documentation**. Coordination and harmonization of data sources and methods guarantee transparency both for internal purposes and for access by users. Standards can also refer to ***production and dissemination processes of a variety of statistical operations, such as quality management***, including those quality parameters that are released as part of the metadata with the results, or the definition of a minimum level of quality for results to be released as official statistics (UNSD, 2003_[13]).

4. Clearinghouse mechanism

The **Clearinghouse** for Financing Development Data is the first online platform for matching supply and demand of financing for statistics. This new mechanism was developed in 2019 by the Bern Network in order to help “countries, donors and development partners to identify funding opportunities, bring projects to scale, advocate for support to data and statistics and connect to new partners” (Bern Network, 2020_[42]).

This platform shall facilitate the match between supply and demand of financing for data and statistics and foster transparency, accountability and coordination among donors and partner countries, in order to boost efficiency of cooperation for data and statistics.

5. Dissemination policies

Dissemination policies ensure a consistent and coordinated practice in releasing official statistics. With the Open Data Movement emerging in 2010, best practices around data transparency and openness have pushed many NSOs to publish according to a **unified statistical terminology** and update **advance release calendars**. This is crucial to prevent manipulation of release dates for political purposes.

Dynamic coordination tools

Dynamic coordination tools are more flexible than static tools and enable direct inter-personal exchange. These mechanisms thus range from the national statistical council, over coordination committees and training schemes. They might allow for more agility than the static tools, can vary over time and reconfigure themselves internally and externally in order to address the changes in the statistical environment.

1. National Statistical Council

The **National Statistical Council** is an institutional body that represents the data users' community within and outside the government and is comprised of both data producers and users. (UNSD, 2017_[22]). Membership of national statistical councils may include representatives of the private sector, universities, research institutions, local governments, labour unions and the media. Leadership approach of statistical councils varies between countries. For example, while in the Philippines, the Ministry of Planning leads the Philippine Statistics Authority Board; in Portugal, the Central Bank chairs the Portuguese Statistical Council. Different countries use various terms to name this institutional body, for example, the Statistics Advisory Council¹, Statistical Council², and Statistics Authority Board³.

The purpose of a national statistical council is to guide data producers inside the NSS. The role of the national statistical council is to advise the NSS and the government, allow users to provide inputs regarding their data needs, and implementing the statistical work programme (UNSD, 2017_[22]). In light of the changing data ecosystem, the council plays a central role in facilitating the exchange between traditional producers of official statistics and potential new producers, advising on data sharing and quality evaluation. National statistical councils also contribute to statistical coordination by advising the NSS, the government and the Chief Statistician on aspects such as improvement, extension and coordination of statistical services for public purposes; review of statistical programmes, and budgetary proposals for statistical operations; and any other matters relating to government statistical operations, standards and classifications.

2. Coordination entities and advisory bodies

Regardless of the autonomous standing of the NSO, the UNECE (2018_[20]) suggests having a Coordination Committee of Producers established by the Statistical Law to ensure the coordination of work in the NSS. A statistical coordination committee is usually an interagency (or inter-ministerial) body within the government that oversees the resolution of statistical issues in the NSS. In some countries, there could be more than one coordination committee for each sectoral area of concern. Often, the NSO leads and coordinates this committee. The Chief Statistician and/or the Sectoral Ministry steering the NSO is the Chair, and the statistical coordination unit in the NSO serves as secretariat.

Coordination Committees guide the statistical standards and methodologies that lead to quality harmonized data. The activities of the Statistical Coordination Committee include discussion, review and coordination of statistical work programmes, common dissemination policies, common quality assurance frameworks and common quality labels and common confidentiality rules, common statistical methodology and standards to be applied (UNECE, 2018_[20]). In an ideal case, the body would be responsible for the preparation of the annual statistical work programme and the multi-annual programme. It should also be in charge of reporting on the implementation of the programmes, monitoring and advancing statistical activities. Moreover, it should carry out quality assurance and

¹ Australian Statistics Advisory Council <http://www.asac.gov.au/>

² Statistical Council of the Republic of Azerbaijan https://www.stat.gov.az/menu/2/statistic_council/?lang=en

³ Philippine Statistics Authority Board <https://psa.gov.ph/psa-board-2>

promote the use of common standards across the NSS, channel training and discuss development needs and statistical issues with other relevant stakeholders within the NSS. Other coordination tasks include guaranteeing coherence across the system and compliance with the Statistical Law, the principles of official statistics and other internationally agreed standards and recommendations.

The **Chief Statistician** can also be designated in charge of statistical coordination. For example, in Canada, the Chief Statistician is personally responsible for protecting the confidentiality of individual respondent records and has full authority for setting priorities for Statistics Canada's programs. Through **approval by the Chief Statistician** (*including the approval of forms for all data collection for statistical purposes*), the Chief Statistician formally intervenes or explicitly approves the implementation of *statistical activities of other producers* if they involve the creation of new terms for results of official statistics based on a new concept.

A **statistical coordination unit** refers to a unit(s)/department(s) in the NSO in-charge of managing NSS-wide coordination activities. It functions as the liaison unit for coordinating with different actors within the NSO and between the NSO and the NSS. For example, in the Philippines, the NSO has three units for coordinating sectoral statistics, censuses and technical coordination, and civil registration and central support⁴.

Donor coordination groups can be crucial for efficient allocation of external resources and, ultimately, coordination with donors, which guarantees transparency, alignment and cost effectiveness. By coordinating with other donors and for instance international financial institutions, aid effectiveness can be boosted, and capacity building fostered in candidate countries.

Research Coordination Groups have the objective to support and promote coordination between relevant research organisations and to provide a forum for the exchange of information on activities and plans. These groups are often sorted and organized by subject (climate, environment, health) and can also comprise government line ministries, agencies and research centres. Enhancing coordination of research and innovation helps to attain cost efficiency and leapfrogging, thanks to spillover effects.

The Statistical Law might designate **other advisory bodies** that include members from within and outside the NSS in order to support strategic and methodological activities in official statistics. The mandates and composition of these bodies – and their work - should be public. These advisory bodies would support the development and coordination of specific statistical activities and methodological development. They would assist the NSS in providing high quality statistics by supporting statistical development in a specific statistical domain, in developing new methodologies, and carrying out projects with stakeholders (UNECE, 2018_[20]).

3. Bilateral/Multilateral Roundtables

Donor roundtables meetings can involve different actors across any of the various governance levels. Meetings can be international, regional, sub-regional, national or even sub-national and their main objective is to support efficient mobilization of funding based on national priorities, action plans and

⁴ More information about the structure of the coordinating units of the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) available in the following link: <https://psa.gov.ph/content/psa-organizational-structure-0>

international policy framework. Depending on the target of the meetings, the composition of these events can change. However, the type of actors that typically participate ranges from country or region representatives to bilateral or multilateral donor agencies and sometimes also invitees from the private sector or academia.

Roundtable meetings can considerably help the achievement of a number of outcomes of coordination through strengthening the alignment of donor funding with recipient priorities and maximizing the efficiency of investments by identifying funding leverage opportunities.

4. Staff policies and trainings

The UNSD (2003^[13]) also introduces **coordination through staff policies**. Some countries with a high number of other national producers of official statistics use a system of *exchange or rotation of staff between producers* – secondment - in order to guarantee that the culture of official statistics is spread to all members of the NSS.

A fundamental mechanism of coordination occurs through **trainings**. NSOs can organise staff trainings in order to ensure that standards are applied across the NSO in a coherent way. Trainings can also concern specific branches of data production (e.g. gender statistics), data collection (e.g. basic survey design or sampling techniques) and data analysis (e.g. time series analysis for official governmental agencies, price statistics and international comparison).

Trainings for official statistics are not limited to the NSO staff but also include staff from other official producers at the national level or from other actors in the data ecosystem (e.g. media, academia). Sometimes, such trainings can also be jointly organized by these actors, for example universities or journalists, in order to enhance data use and analysis techniques of the NSO staff. In addition, education programmes and training centres can ensure sustainable skill enhancement in the long-term.