

Distr.
LIMITED
LC/CEA.13/4
20 November 2025
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: SPANISH
2500626[E]

Thirteenth meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas
of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

Santiago, 25–27 November 2025

**PEER REVIEW MECHANISM OF THE CODE OF GOOD PRACTICE IN STATISTICS
FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**



This document was prepared by the working group to propose a peer review mechanism in Latin America and the Caribbean, for the 2024–2025 biennium, of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). The group was coordinated by Colombia (National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE)), and its technical secretariat was the Statistics Division of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

In addition to the coordinating country, the members of the group are:

- Argentina: National Institute of Statistics and Censuses
- Belize: Statistical Institute of Belize
- Dominican Republic: National Bureau of Statistics
- Canada: Statistics Canada
- Chile: National Institute of Statistics
- Ecuador: National Institute of Statistics and Censuses
- Kingdom of the Netherlands: Statistics Netherlands (CBS)
- Mexico: National Institute of Statistics and Geography
- Paraguay: National Institute of Statistics
- Peru: National Institute of Statistics and Informatics
- Plurinational State of Bolivia: National Institute of Statistics

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The following individuals participated in writing and consolidating this document:

- Argentina (National Institute of Statistics and Censuses): Mariela Medina
- Chile (National Institute of Statistics): Hans Kruger
- Colombia (DANE): Carlos Hernández, Julieth Alejandra Solano, Germán Leonidas Orjuela, María del Pilar Gómez and Aura María Moreno
- Dominican Republic (National Bureau of Statistics): Crismairy Jiménez and Victor Ambioris Dietsch
- Ecuador (National Institute of Statistics and Censuses): Marcelo Lastra and Ivonne Benítez
- Mexico (National Institute of Statistics and Geography): Arturo Blancas Espejo and Berta Patricia Rivas
- Uruguay (National Institute of Statistics): Lucia Pérez
- Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean: Xavier Mancero and Rocío Miranda

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	5
A. GENERAL ASPECTS OF PEER REVIEW WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE STATISTICAL CONFERENCE OF THE AMERICAS OF ECLAC	5
1. Background	5
2. General objective.....	8
3. Specific objectives.....	8
4. Scope	8
B. INTERNATIONAL BENCHMARKS FOR PEER REVIEW	9
C. IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK FOR PEER REVIEW IN LATIN AMERICA	11
AND THE CARIBBEAN	11
1. Scope	11
2. Country selection.....	11
3. Costs	11
D. EVALUATION TEAM.....	12
1. Evaluator profiles	12
2. Responsibilities	13
E. STAGES OF PEER REVIEW.....	15
1. Instruments	15
2. Visit	16
F. FINAL REPORT	23
G. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS	24
1. Preparation of an improvement plan by the national statistical office.....	24
2. Regional review of progress in compliance with the Code of Good Practice in Statistics for Latin America and the Caribbean	25
BIBLIOGRAPHY	27

INTRODUCTION

The Code of Good Practice in Statistics for Latin America and the Caribbean is a technical and regulatory instrument based on the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics. It also allows national statistical offices to operationalize these principles through the adoption of good practices.

The Code comprises a series of principles, understood as fundamental rules or ideas that govern statistical theory and practice, along with good practices, defined as replicable actions based on proven experiences with optimal results and that strengthen national statistical activity.

Given the importance of implementing the Code in national statistical offices and systems across the region, it is essential to create mechanisms that allow verification of compliance with its principles and good practices in order to ensure production of quality, reliable and timely official statistics.

Against this backdrop, the peer review mechanism aims to guarantee that the production of official statistics complies with international standards. It can also be used to identify strengths and opportunities for improvement in national statistical offices, thus facilitating the development of action plans and promoting international cooperation spaces to continuously reinforce statistical work.

Peer review thus plays a crucial role in evaluating the effectiveness, efficiency, transparency and coherence of national statistical offices in the achievement of such standards and, as a result, encouraging trust in national and regional official statistics.

In addition to the introduction, the present document is composed of seven parts. Part A includes a description of the general aspects of the peer review methodology. Part B presents international benchmarks on which the document is based, including the work of Eurostat and the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21). Part C outlines the framework for evaluation, including the scope, the countries to be evaluated and the associated costs. Part D includes a description of evaluators' profiles and the responsibilities of the country under evaluation. Part E presents the stages of evaluation, including the application of methodological instruments, visits and subsequent activities. Part F outlines the structure of the final report and the different types of evaluation outcome. Lastly, part G comprises general remarks.

A. GENERAL ASPECTS OF PEER REVIEW WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE STATISTICAL CONFERENCE OF THE AMERICAS OF ECLAC

1. Background

The working group to propose a peer review mechanism in Latin America and the Caribbean was created in the 2022–2023 biennium with the general objective of establishing a regional peer review methodology, institutionalized under the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC. This methodology is based on the Code of Good Practice in Statistics for Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as on previous peer review experiences within the framework of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC and on international methodologies.

The specific objectives for the biennium included updating the Code of Good Practice in Statistics for Latin America and the Caribbean and preparing the methodological document, as well as creating the necessary instruments to build the peer review mechanism, drawing upon international standards and experiences of implementation across the region.

The Code of Good Practice in Statistics for Latin America and the Caribbean was updated mainly in response to changes in the data ecosystem and to align it with other technical instruments regulating official statistics created since the Code was adopted in 2011. These instruments notably include the Generic Law on Official Statistics for Latin America, published in 2020, and the *National Quality Assurance Frameworks Manual for Official Statistics*, published in 2019 by the United Nations Statistics Division. The updated Code was adopted as a regional model by the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC in 2023.

The preliminary proposal for the peer review methodology, which incorporated key elements of the evaluations carried out by international bodies such as Eurostat and PARIS21, was presented in the same biennium. That draft was submitted for consideration by the countries during the process of updating the Code of Good Practice in Statistics for Latin America and the Caribbean.

The working group's efforts continued into the 2024–2025 biennium, with the aim of consolidating the methodological document and necessary instruments for implementation of the mechanism on the basis of the updated Code. From July to December 2024, the first pilot test was conducted in the Dominican Republic, with the participation of five evaluators: one representative of the technical secretariat (ECLAC), one international expert, two evaluators from DANE of Colombia and one evaluator from the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses of Ecuador.

The main outcomes of the test were as follows:

- (a) The format of the self-evaluation instrument did not meet the need to assess the practices of the Code of Good Practice in Statistics for Latin America and the Caribbean as it was based on the self-evaluation questionnaire of the *National Quality Assurance Frameworks Manual for Official Statistics* of the United Nations. In a number of cases, this meant that a practice of the Code included several practices of the *Manual* with different evaluations by the country. Moreover, the information presented was not always in line with that expected to validate the level of compliance with the practice of the Code.
- (b) The instrument to evaluate users did not provide the information actually sought. In this case, it must be noted that users can also make comments on each theme.
- (c) There must be the possibility of reinforcing instruments by ensuring that their use facilitates the inclusion of information and observations. The user evaluation questionnaire can be administered by sending the link to the questionnaire directly to persons on the list provided by the national statistical office, which enhances the transparency and institutional legitimacy of the process for users.
- (d) Two unplanned activities were crucial for evaluators:
 - (i) The national statistical office made an initial presentation of background information, such as the institution's organizational chart and the explanation of functions of the institution's different areas and statistical products, to evaluators.

- (ii) Key questions were formulated for each principle addressed, as a result of the self-evaluation review according to the information presented, for submission to the national statistical office before the visit and consideration with the teams during the visit.
- (e) The three days (three and a half days in this case) were sufficient for the visit. During the last half day, preliminary results were shared with the management of the national statistical office and the mechanism was presented to the institution, at the request of the national statistical office. Working directly with the teams was an enriching experience that was crucial to the final evaluation.

The following measures were taken as a result of this test:

- (a) Both the self-evaluation instrument and the user evaluation instrument were redesigned to facilitate a more direct and specific assessment. With regard to the self-evaluation instrument, a list of suggestions was prepared for each practice of the Code of Good Practice in Statistics for Latin America and the Caribbean.
- (b) The activities implemented under the pilot test that were not incorporated into the process were included in the methodology to ensure they were carried out in subsequent evaluations.
- (c) The outcomes of the exercise, along with the adjusted instruments and document, were shared with the member countries of the working group so that they could make comments.

Subsequently, from June to September 2025, the second pilot test was carried out at the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses of Ecuador, with participants including one evaluator from the national statistical office of the Dominican Republic, two evaluators from DANE of Colombia and one representative of the technical secretariat (ECLAC), which led the process. On that occasion, the new versions of the instruments were used and a preliminary session was held with a national expert who provided key background information.

The outcomes of the second test made clear the importance of evaluators prioritizing the statistical operations that involve reviewing the principles of the process and statistical production to provide an overview of the national statistical office's statistical production without focusing on specific themes. Overall, there was a significant improvement in instruments and their use. Ecuador also presented some observations on the self-evaluation questionnaire which were incorporated into the final version.

These tests helped to identify opportunities to improve the process and lay the groundwork for its implementation in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. The methodological document is the outcome of the group's work during the biennium and includes the experience gained through the pilot tests.

Instruments like the Code of Good Practice in Statistics for Latin America and the Caribbean must be updated regularly in light of the constantly evolving data ecosystem. As a result, the peer review mechanism must be flexible enough to adapt to such changes and to the evolving technical instruments that support the quality of official statistics.

2. General objective

Evaluate implementation of the Code of Good Practice in Statistics for Latin America and the Caribbean in national statistical systems of the region.

3. Specific objectives

- (a) Show progress in implementation of the Code of Good Practice in Statistics for Latin America and the Caribbean in national statistical systems through self-evaluation and external evaluation.
- (b) Prepare an evaluation report that identifies strengths and opportunities for improvement, and include recommendations to establish a plan of activities for the national statistical office, in accordance with the Code of Good Practice in Statistics for Latin America and the Caribbean.

4. Scope

In the context of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC, the peer review mechanism focuses initially on national statistical offices and their role and the main producers of official statistics and entities governing the national statistical system. This means that the self-evaluation instrument, which covers the 18 principles of the Code of Good Practice in Statistics for Latin America and the Caribbean, is focused on management by the national statistical office. The scope of the mechanism is then expected to be widened to include statistical systems across the region.

The methodology has three components: audit, self-evaluation and peer review.

- (a) Audit: evaluators examine the information presented by the national statistical office and determine compliance with the good practices established in the Code. This review is carried out in line with the principles of impartiality, integrity, confidentiality and independence. The main elements associated with verification are:
 - Participation of experts from other countries, ensuring objectivity, credibility and transparency in the process.
 - Presentation of information that supports compliance with good practices and the principles outlined in the Code.
 - Preparation of an evaluation report that includes, in the absence of consensus, any reservations expressed by the national statistical office with regard to the evaluation team's findings.
- (b) Self-evaluation: the national statistical office must carry out internal analysis and a preliminary evaluation of compliance with good practices for each principle of the Code, which is reflected in the completion of the self-evaluation questionnaire and must be accompanied by supporting information.
- (c) Peer review: evaluators include personnel from two national statistical offices in the region who contribute their experience and knowledge of both the statistical process and the functioning of the national statistical system to the exercise. This represents an opportunity to share good practices that improve processes. The main elements of this component are:

- Agreement within the community on the methodology and the scope of the mechanism.
- Inclusion of experts from the national statistical offices of other countries in the evaluation team.
- Encouragement of peer-to-peer learning through collaboration in the evaluation process.
- Evaluation process focused on continuous improvement of statistical systems.

B. INTERNATIONAL BENCHMARKS FOR PEER REVIEW

Eurostat and PARIS21 have made notable contributions to the development of peer review mechanisms, taking different approaches to verifying compliance with the principles of codes of good practices and to evaluating the quality of statistical activities in general.

Eurostat's peer reviews have focused on evaluating compliance with the European Statistics Code of Practice, with the aim of strengthening the integrity, professional independence and accountability of statistical authorities in the European Statistical System. They include activities such as self-evaluation of statistical authorities through the administration of questionnaires and the generation of information. A team of experts examines the documents provided by the national statistical office before visiting the country under evaluation to conduct a more in-depth analysis of the information furnished. Lastly, the team prepares a final report that includes the main outcomes and makes the necessary recommendations for improvements.

Meanwhile, in 2004, PARIS21 prepared guidelines for a national strategy for the development of statistics that focused on integrating statistical plans into a national policy that incorporates the needs of national statistical system users and actors. It also focused on monitoring and evaluation of statistical progress. In 2020, these guidelines were updated for the third time (version 3.0) and the structure of the national strategy for development of statistics was overhauled.

Regarding the management of visits, Eurostat delegates logistics to an external contractor to avoid bias, while PARIS21 acts as an intermediary.

With respect to the duration of visits, one week is considered ideal, according to the two methodologies, and emphasis is placed on the importance of having the documents showing fulfilment of evaluation criteria beforehand. Evaluators must have sufficient experience in statistical activity, as well as the necessary knowledge to analyse results and formulate recommendations (see profiles of evaluators in part D).

Overall, both methodologies are useful for national statistical offices and systems evaluated as they help to identify areas for improvement thanks to experts' recommendations. However, the Eurostat methodology is in line with the objectives of the present document as it is focused specifically on verifying compliance with the good practices and principles established in the European Statistics Code of Practice. The main elements adopted from Eurostat for the peer review in Latin America and the Caribbean are as follows:

1. Thoroughness: the Eurostat review covers the 16 principles of the European Statistics Code of Practice. For Latin America and the Caribbean, the 18 principles of the Code of Good Practice in Statistics for Latin America and the Caribbean are reviewed.

2. Self-evaluation questionnaire: as with Eurostat, a questionnaire that covers all sections of the Code of Good Practice in Statistics for Latin America and the Caribbean is administered prior to the visit. It provides an initial assessment of the national statistical office regarding compliance with good practices. As with an audit, supporting information must be provided for responses.
3. Formation of an evaluation team that ensures an independent process: for Eurostat, this team comprises four experts, including a senior manager (current or recent) of a national statistical office, an external expert (not part of the European Statistical System), an expert from a national statistical office and an expert from Eurostat. For this peer review mechanism, the team is made up of three experts, including two from national statistical offices in the region and one from ECLAC (see profiles in part D).
4. Visit: the evaluators conduct a visit during which they verify the documents analysed. For Eurostat, verification focuses on some principles, as determined by the evaluators, while under the peer review methodology, all principles of the Code of Good Practice in Statistics for Latin America and the Caribbean are examined.
5. Preparation of an evaluation report: an evaluation report outlining opportunities for improvement and recommendations on the principles being verified is prepared once the process has been completed.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, overall evaluations were carried out in the 2014–2015 biennium to support implementation of the Code of Good Practice in Statistics for Latin America and the Caribbean (2011). The national statistical offices of eight countries, namely Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Jamaica, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay, were evaluated by two teams, each one comprising two international experts and one peer country.

Evaluations focused on the eight principles of the institutional environment and coordination pillar, and on the principles of timeliness and punctuality, accessibility and clarity, and included interviews with different management, cross-functional and technical teams from national statistical offices, national statistical system institutions and various users. For more than a decade, the existence of the Code of Good Practice in Statistics for Latin America and the Caribbean, among other quality assurance instruments for official statistics, has allowed peer reviews to cover all principles, and compliance with these principles is already being monitored in the countries.

The resulting reports include specific needs and recommendations for each country. For overall evaluations, experts supported national statistical offices in preparing improvement plans, which were expected to be monitored every biennium. For evaluations, on-site visits lasted one week, while under the new peer review methodology, they lasted three days. However, visits could not be continued owing to a lack of specific financing from the Inter-American Development Bank to increase or maintain evaluations over time. Thus, one aim of the current methodology is to ensure continuity.

C. IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK FOR PEER REVIEW IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

1. Scope

The peer review methodology is implemented through a “community of countries” approach, with support from the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC as technical secretariat. This approach promotes knowledge-sharing among countries under evaluation and those conducting evaluations, strengthens regional statistical production and allows for the creation of a register of expert evaluators who can contribute their knowledge to future initiatives to improve statistical production in the region.

The community approach helps to ensure the continuity of the peer review mechanism as it does not depend on external resources, but rather on funds from the countries under valuation and those conducting evaluations, in a format that will be described in the section on costs.

The evaluated countries commit to implementing recommendations and participating in future rounds as evaluators to foster ties and continuous dialogue.

2. Country selection

For the country selection process, ECLAC, in its role as technical secretariat of the Statistical Conference of the Americas, first carries out activities to raise awareness of the peer review methodology, then launches the application process. Awareness-raising takes place in the second half of the year so that countries will be able to include the exercise in the following year’s budget, considering that two evaluations are planned per year.

The countries must express their interest via an official communication addressed to the technical secretariat during the specified application period. This must explain why they should be included in the list of countries and indicate the period in which the peer review is likely to be conducted. It must also incorporate factors such as the conduct of a census, passage of a statistical law, implementation of institutional changes, or the redesign of operations or short-term surveys, which may affect the availability of the national statistical office during the process.

The Executive Committee of the Statistical Conference of the Americas selects countries to be evaluated and to conduct evaluations from the list of applicants. The countries that apply to be evaluated in the peer review must agree to serve as evaluators in the review of another national statistical office.

Once the countries are selected, ECLAC issues an official communication informing the countries under evaluation and those conducting the evaluations of its decision and the period in which the review will take place (which is agreed on by all parties). In each case, the Commission requests that a focal point be designated.

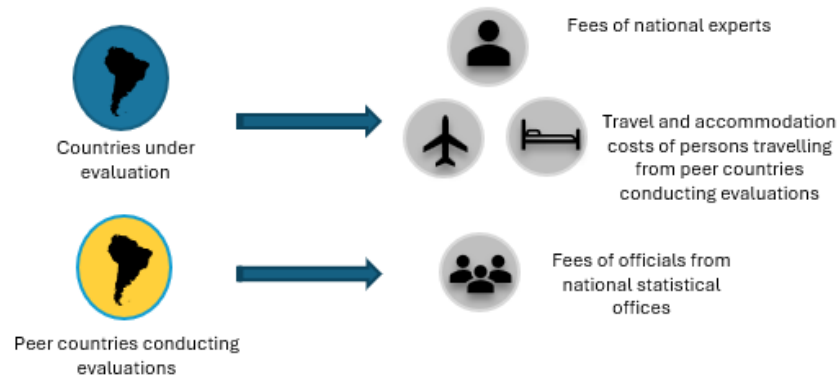
If no countries apply to be evaluated, ECLAC may invite a national statistical office to participate in the process, and must indicate the reasons for that decision.

3. Costs

Evaluation costs are structured according to the community approach, under which both countries under evaluation and those conducting the evaluations contribute resources to implement the methodology. Evaluated countries cover the fees of the national expert (if the service is not being provided pro bono) and

travel and accommodation costs incurred by peer countries conducting the evaluations during the on-site visit. Countries conducting the evaluations cover the wage costs of their representatives (see diagram 1).

Diagram 1
Methodology costs, according to the community approach



Source: Prepared by the authors.

D. EVALUATION TEAM

Implementing the methodology requires an evaluation team, comprising three evaluators:

- One expert or representative from the technical secretariat (Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC), henceforth referred to as “ECLAC expert”.
- Two peers from other national statistical offices in the region on the list of countries included in the community¹ and who fit the evaluator profile.

1. Evaluator profiles

(a) ECLAC expert

- Knowledge of national and international codes of good practices.
- Experience in the development and operation of a national statistical system.
- Knowledge of regulations relating to consolidation of statistical information production in the national statistical system.
- Knowledge of the development and implementation of statistical standards.
- Knowledge of and experience in generating statistical information.

¹ The countries included in the community are those that applied to be evaluated and have therefore agreed to serve as evaluators.

(b) Peers

- (i) Experience in management, leadership or coordination in a national statistical office or other national authority responsible for developing, preparing and disseminating statistics in any Latin American or Caribbean country. However, if there are no candidates with this profile, it is possible to appoint an expert with a specialized technical profile and proven experience in statistical processes subject to evaluation, including quality frameworks, creation and operation of a national statistical system or statistical production. This will ensure that the peer review is suitable, without significantly affecting the normal internal operation of the national statistical office conducting the evaluation.
- (ii) Knowledge of national and international codes of good practices and the national statistical system.
- (iii) Knowledge of and experience in generating statistical information.
- (iv) Knowledge of standards, statistical production, process evaluation and technical rules for statistical production.

In addition to the evaluators, a national expert must be designated by the country under evaluation. Although they are not part of the evaluation team or the national statistical office, they play a key role in the process, as they know the country's statistical ecosystem and background in official statistical production.

The national expert must have:

- (i) Knowledge of the configuration and operation of a national statistical system.
- (ii) Knowledge of the formulation and execution of strategic statistical plans at the national and international levels.
- (iii) Knowledge of national and international codes of good practices.
- (iv) Experience in statistics and implementation of statistical standards.

2. Responsibilities

In applying the peer review methodology, the various parties have the following responsibilities:

(a) National statistical office under evaluation

- (i) Select the internal focal point of the national statistical office that will liaise with the evaluators, participate in the activities carried out prior to and during the visit by providing information and documentation and contributing their experience during the process.
- (ii) Duly complete the self-evaluation questionnaire and gather the information needed to support evaluation.
- (iii) Provide evaluators with the completed self-evaluation questionnaire in a timely manner and in good order, along with the supporting information and relevant documentation that may be requested by evaluators through the channels established for that purpose, with the necessary restrictions and protection to ensure that the information provided by the national statistical office remains confidential.

- (iv) Present a detailed list of national statistical office users, which includes the contact information of focal points and the role they play in the system (in other words, if they are users who produce statistics or regularly seek information from the office, but do not produce official statistics).
- (v) Cover the travel costs of evaluation activities incurred by peers.
- (vi) Allow other users to have remote access to agreed communications technologies to conduct planned interviews.
- (vii) Allow evaluators to access the facilities and areas relating to the development of statistical operations and in-person evaluation on the agreed dates, and to the national statistical office personnel responsible.
- (viii) Propose candidates who fit the profile of national expert, who will then be selected by the technical secretariat (the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC).
- (ix) Accept and fulfil the role of evaluator in subsequent evaluations.

It is recommended that the national statistical office form a work team including all areas or technical groups it considers necessary to complete the questionnaire, ensure meeting attendance, resolve doubts and enforce recommendations.

(b) ECLAC expert

- (i) Coordinate the different peer review activities, such as conveying information between evaluators and the country under evaluation, scheduling meetings and setting deadlines.
- (ii) Participate, as part of the evaluation team, in the analysis of self-evaluation and supporting information, the visit and the preparation of the final report.
- (iii) Consolidate the final report with outcomes and recommendations for the national statistical office on the basis of information gathered by the evaluation team.
- (iv) Jointly define the timeline of the visit and the technical teams needed to carry it out, taking into account the analysis of information provided by the national statistical office.
- (v) Lead work sessions with the different technical teams and users based on the assigned principles.

(c) Peers

- (i) Participate, as part of the evaluation team, in the analysis of self-evaluation and supporting information, the visit and the preparation of the final report.
- (ii) Help to define the timeline of the visit and formulate recommendations for the participating technical teams.
- (iii) Carry out the required activities and raise the necessary questions relating to the principles assigned to the different technical teams and users of the national statistical office in the work sessions.
- (iv) Generate inputs on strengths, opportunities for improvement and recommendations relating to the principles evaluated, to be used in the final report.

E. STAGES OF PEER REVIEW

1. Instruments

The peer review methodology is based on a self-evaluation instrument to verify compliance with the criteria of the 18 principles of the Code of Good Practice in Statistics for Latin America and the Caribbean.

Along with the self-evaluation questionnaire, users receive another questionnaire to assess their perception of the principles of the Code, which are relevant to statistical work and the relationship with users and other producers of official statistics.

Both questionnaires must be administered prior to the evaluators' visit, as they inform the preliminary evaluation and the subsequent visit.

(a) Self-evaluation instrument of the national statistical office

The self-evaluation questionnaire is a list for verification of the 104 criteria that ensure compliance with the 18 principles of the Code of Good Practice in Statistics for Latin America and the Caribbean. A list of information that the countries under evaluation can present securely and objectively to show compliance is included for each criterion. If the national statistical office has other supporting documents for the self-evaluation that differ from those proposed in the instrument, it can specify what they are and attach them as evidence.

There are three categories demonstrating the level of compliance with the criteria for each principle of the instrument: "Not compliant", "Partially compliant" and "Fully compliant". Levels of compliance and their disaggregation are included in the instructions for use of the instrument.

Using the self-evaluation questionnaire and supporting information, evaluators assess compliance with the different principles. They also prepare a set of questions to resolve doubts emerging from the evaluation, which will be used as a guide in meetings with the different teams during the visit.

(b) Evaluation instrument for users

The aim of the evaluation questionnaire for users of official statistics produced by the national statistical office is to learn their perspective of compliance with the principles of the Code of Good Practice in Statistics for Latin America and the Caribbean. Users cannot evaluate all principles of the Code as many correspond to monitoring and development of the statistical process within the national statistical office. Thus, this instrument focuses on five principles that users can evaluate to determine compliance by the national statistical office. These include: coordination of the national statistical system, statistical confidentiality, relevance, timeliness and punctuality, and accessibility and clarity.

ECLAC experts email the evaluation questionnaire to all users included in the list sent by the national statistical office. This email also provides background information on the peer review, the importance of users' participation in the process and the indications for completing the questionnaire.

The main users included in evaluation are:

- (i) The academic sector
- (ii) The public sector (government users that utilize information on the main short-term statistics, such as the consumer price index, employment and poverty).

- (iii) Other producers of statistics
- (iv) The private sector (e.g. professional associations)
- (v) Researchers who use statistical information regularly
- (vi) Non-governmental or non-profit organizations
- (vii) International organizations headquartered in the country under evaluation

The criteria for selection of users are:

- (i) Importance for the national statistical office: refers to users who have established a direct relationship with the national statistical office; in other words, those who regularly use the statistical products or services provided by that office. They also include users of statistical information for decision-making and public policymaking, and for programme and project design.
- (ii) Technical and analytical capacity: refers to users who have experience with the use, management and dissemination of statistical information, and who can critically and constructively evaluate the quality, relevance and accessibility of information.
- (iii) Thematic representativeness: the profile of users included in the evaluation must be related to specific statistics themes and the principles selected for the evaluation.

All users who have completed the evaluation questionnaire will be invited to participate in the work session during the visit. However, when there are more than 10 users, the evaluators and the national statistical office will determine who will be invited, on the basis of previously established criteria. If responses have not been received from at least three of the users, the evaluators will request the national statistical office to organize, if possible, a work session with users considered top-priority to convey the importance of their participation and the elements to be addressed with the instrument.

A large share of users of official statistics from national statistical offices are also producers of official statistics; therefore, their selection to participate in the process takes into account both roles and their importance in each one. If there is an important producer of official statistics in the country that is not also a user, they must also participate in this process, including when the peer evaluation is not focused on the national statistical system as a whole, to better understand their interaction with the national statistical office and its role in the national statistical system. Among these other institutions, the central bank is usually a key actor (in some cases, it is the main producer of official statistics in Latin American countries, instead of the national statistical office); therefore, an in-person meeting should be held with its personnel during the visit.

The questionnaire is sent to users at least one month before the visit. Only the evaluators can examine the results.

2. Visit

The main aim of the visit is to maintain direct contact with the different national statistical office teams, from management to technical and cross-functional teams that, together, produce official statistics following the principles of the Code of Good Practice in Statistics for Latin America and the Caribbean. The visit focuses in particular on the processes and standards presented in the supporting information that raise doubts, and the possible opportunities for improvement discerned by the evaluators, in line with the

analysis of responses and information provided both in the self-evaluation instrument and the user evaluation. The objective is for the information to be as wide-ranging and clear as possible, and that subsequently, it allows the formulation of recommendations in line with the work of the national statistical office and the creation of an improvement plan for developing and fine-tuning official statistics.

(a) Pre-visit activities

Following selection of the country to be evaluated and the peer countries conducting the evaluation, and their agreement with the selection, the national statistical office will be requested to designate a focal point. The focal point of the national statistical office under evaluation will serve as the national coordinator and will communicate with the ECLAC expert, who will lead the evaluation team. The focal point will also organize the activities carried out by the national statistical office relating to the self-evaluation and the visit.

Once the focal points of the countries conducting the evaluation are known, the first meeting of evaluators will take place, during which ECLAC will present the activities and responsibilities of team members, the overall timeline of the evaluation and the instructions for applying the tools to be used in each phase of the process. From that moment on, the following activities, which are part of the peer review, will be carried out with the countries under evaluation:

- (i) First meeting of the evaluation team with the national coordinator determined by the national statistical office.
 - Introduction of the evaluators and the national peer review coordinator, by the national statistical office.
 - Presentation of the main stages and tasks of the peer review, both for the national statistical office under evaluation and the evaluation team, by the ECLAC expert.
 - Request for a list of statistics produced by the national statistical office, which must be sent to the evaluators so that they can select those to be analysed during the evaluation.

In the selection of statistics produced by the national statistical office, which will underpin the evaluation, the following criteria will be taken into account:

- Relevance: statistics that meet current decision-making needs.
- User demand: statistics highly requested by users or frequently used in media and research.
- Coverage and representativeness: statistics that cover most of the country's territory and provide historical series for trend analysis.
- Technical viability: statistics that are produced regularly and that rely on sustainable human, physical and technological resources.

Before providing information, the evaluation team must share with the national statistical office the statistics selected to verify compliance with the good practices of the Code of Good Practice in Statistics for Latin America and the Caribbean. It is important to specify that the national statistical office can request the evaluation team to prioritize statistical operations of special interest so that they can be included in the list of operations subject to analysis. This request must be made when the list of statistics produced is presented.

- Request for a list of the main users of statistics from the national statistical office, including contact information (name, position, entity and email) to be sent to the evaluators so that they can select the users who will participate in the peer review, in line with previously established criteria.
 - Establishment of an overall timeline for the peer review and setting of dates for the different phases, especially the visit, as the national statistical office under evaluation as well as expert peers and the ECLAC expert must begin procedures and request permission from their institutions for the trip.
- (ii) Second meeting of evaluators with the national coordinator of the national statistical office and one person from the institution selected by the latter.
- Presentation of statistics generated and the organizational structure of the entity (from management to technical and cross-functional teams), by the national statistical office. The aim is to ensure that evaluators have a better understanding of the institutional context so that they can conduct a more coherent and relevant analysis of the self-evaluation and of supporting information.
 - Request for the institution's organizational chart detailed in the presentation. Both the organizational chart and the presentation will be useful for proposing and defining, together with the national statistical office, the participants in the different meetings to be held during the visit.
- (iii) Signature by members of the evaluation team of confidentiality agreements, which will determine the information accessible through supporting information or during the visit to the national statistical office, and which will establish exclusive use for the evaluation. The agreements can be prepared directly by the national statistical office under evaluation, according to the format used by the institution and in keeping with the national regulations in effect regarding secrecy, confidentiality and sanctions in case of non-compliance. These agreements will remain under the custody of the national statistical office under evaluation and ECLAC.
- (iv) The Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC sends the self-evaluation questionnaire to the national statistical office; it includes the date by which the completed questionnaire must be submitted, with all supporting information. The country under evaluation must complete it within two months of reception.
- (v) The Statistical Conference of the Americas sends the evaluation questionnaire to users; it includes the date by which the completed questionnaire must be submitted. Along with the questionnaire, users receive a letter that outlines the objectives of the peer review, its development and the importance of their participation in the process.
- (vi) Receipt of the completed self-evaluation instrument with supporting information and the user evaluation instrument.
- (vii) First overall evaluation by evaluators. This stage involves a general analysis of the evaluation presented by the national statistical office in relation to compliance with principles and verification of the existence of supporting information—and its types—in the cases with the lowest and highest scores or that draw the attention of the evaluators. Evaluators have two months from receipt of the completed instrument with supporting information to carry out the evaluation, organize the timeline and formulate questions to be raised during the visit.

(viii) First evaluation meeting of evaluators.

- Evaluators share their initial impressions of the overall evaluation by each evaluator.
- Principles are divided among the evaluators to be examined in further detail and ensure that each member of the team has an equal workload. Distribution depends on the profile of each evaluator (position and theme they cover in their national statistical office) and on their preferences regarding specific themes.
- For the detailed evaluation of each assigned principle, an evaluator review model is used as a grading instrument, with different fields completed for each evaluated criterion, including:
 - Existence of sufficient information to evaluate the criterion.
 - Type of information missing if existing information is insufficient.
 - Evaluation of criterion by the national statistical office.
 - Level of compliance of the criterion determined by the evaluator (according to self-evaluation and supporting information).
 - Observations as applicable.
 - Strengths and opportunities for improvement relating to each principle (summary of criterion analysis, by principle).
- If doubts arise from this detailed evaluation, the evaluator formulates questions on each principle, to serve as a guide for work to be carried out by teams during the visit and help to resolve concerns and obtain additional information. The leader of the evaluation team will combine questions in a single document, and these questions will be reviewed throughout the process to avoid duplication.

(ix) Second evaluation meeting of evaluators.

- The analysis of each principle is shared, along with questions arising from this analysis.
- Users' responses are analysed to incorporate the information into the evaluation and generate specific questions to be addressed during the visit.
- A preliminary timeline is prepared for the visit and will subsequently be reviewed with the evaluated country. Although the preliminary timeline aims to address all principles, work will focus on those offering more opportunities for improvement or for which evaluation remained unclear given the information presented.
- Activities are established according to specific roles for in-person meetings, and include the following:
 - The team leader begins each work session with a brief introduction during which they introduce the evaluation team and explain the peer review process and its objectives. They also emphasize that the ultimate goal is to prepare recommendations to help the national statistical office to establish an improvement plan to comply with the principles of the Code of Good Practice in Statistics for Latin America and the Caribbean, and therefore, the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics.
 - Each evaluator leads the work session that analyses the principles that they have been assigned and the other evaluators raise questions and make additional comments.

(x) Third meeting of the evaluation team with the national coordinator determined by the national statistical office.

- The preliminary timeline is reviewed with the national statistical office; it includes participants in the different sessions and users. If any user cannot attend the session, efforts will be made to determine if there is time to hold individual meetings with the evaluation team, as requested.

(xi) Submission of agreed timeline and questions to guide work with the teams. Questions are expected to be shared with work teams so that they can prepare ahead of the in-person meetings.

(b) Activities to be carried out during the visit

The visit to the national statistical office under evaluation will last three days. The first meeting of the visit will be held with management of the national statistical office, the national coordinator and other officials designated by management to explain the work methodology to be used during the three days. This will be followed by working groups with the technical teams of the national statistical office and users. The information from the preliminary report and that obtained from direct work with the various teams will be used as a basis for a follow-up meeting with national statistical office authorities on the final day, in which an initial overview of the main strengths and the areas for improvement identified will be provided. The competent authority will also be expected to comment on the peer review process carried out in their institution by the evaluation team.

As mentioned above, the purpose of the visit is to resolve doubts arising during the review of documentation on the level of compliance with the principles of the Code. Meetings with teams during the visit also enable the identification of innovative practices that make a difference in the implementation of codes of good statistical practice and that can be replicated in other countries.

In general and practical terms, the timeline shall be as follows:

Day 1 (morning):

- First meeting with management, the national peer review coordinator and the units designated by management. Presentation of the evaluation team and the work plan for the visit (one hour).
- First work session with internal teams. The units that may participate in this session, which is more institutional in nature, include those responsible for planning, legal affairs, human resources, administration and finance, and communications, as well as other units with delegated responsibility according to the organizational structure of the national statistical office.

The principles covered include:

- Principle 1: Professional independence
- Principle 2: Coordination of the national statistical system
- Principle 5: Adequacy of resources
- Principle 8: International cooperation and participation

Day 1 (afternoon):

- Second work session with internal teams. The units that should participate in this session include those responsible for quality control, regulatory affairs and methodologies or information and communications technologies, as well as other units with delegated responsibility according to the organizational structure of the national statistical office.

The principles covered include:

- Principle 3: Statistical mandate for data collection
- Principle 4: Statistical confidentiality
- Principle 6: Quality commitment
- Principle 7: Impartiality, objectivity and transparency

Day 2 (morning):

- Meeting with users. This item is proposed tentatively, and may be exchanged with any other session depending on the availability of the users invited to the meeting. The principles to be discussed are the ones included in the user evaluation questionnaire.

The principles covered include:

- Principle 2: Coordination of the national statistical system
- Principle 4: Statistical confidentiality
- Principle 14: Relevance
- Principle 16: Timeliness and punctuality
- Principle 18: Accessibility and clarity

Day 2 (afternoon):

- Third work session with internal teams. This session will bring together the substantive areas both technical and operational, including units responsible for censuses and surveys, for demographic, vital, economic and environmental statistics, for regulations and methodology and for data processing, as well as other units with delegated responsibility according to the organizational structure of the national statistical office.

The principles covered include:

- Principle 9: Sound methodology
- Principle 10: Appropriate statistical procedures
- Principle 11: Non-excessive burden on respondents
- Principle 12: Cost-effectiveness
- Principle 13: Use of secondary data sources

Day 3 (morning):

- Fourth work session with internal teams. In this session, alongside the substantive areas, units responsible for planning, administration and finance, data processing (if outside the technical areas) or communication units should participate, as well as other units with delegated responsibility according to the organizational structure of the national statistical office.

The principles covered include:

- Principle 14: Relevance
- Principle 15: Accuracy and reliability
- Principle 16: Timeliness and punctuality
- Principle 17: Coherence and comparability
- Principle 18: Accessibility and clarity

Day 3 (afternoon):

- Final meeting with management, the national peer review coordinator and the units designated by management. The results of the evaluation and the next steps are presented orally.

The timeline shall be broadly structured with issues organized according to groups of principles and the relevant units or departments that should participate in each session. However, the final version of the timeline should factor in the official statistics produced by the national statistical office, the national governance and organizational structure under review, the self-evaluation and supporting information submitted and the preliminary conclusions of the evaluation team. The timeline may be modified to take into account differences in the characteristics of each national statistical office and in the evaluation of the principles and the need for clarifications thereon.

If the Statistical Conference of the Americas deems it appropriate, the opportunity to conduct the peer review virtually will be offered, subject to agreement between the national statistical office and the evaluation team, using the timeline proposed above as a reference.

Conducting satisfaction surveys after each session with the internal teams will help to continuously improve the process, both in real time (between sessions) and for future peer reviews, and will help to measure the performance of the evaluation team during the visit. They may include aspects related to the clarity of the concepts explained by the evaluation team —contained in the self-evaluation instrument—, the dynamics of the discussions during the visit and the usefulness of the topics discussed for their regular work, among others. ECLAC shall be responsible for circulating the satisfaction survey to the teams and technical departments of the national statistical office that participated in the various work sessions. ECLAC will also support the undertaking by processing, documenting and archiving the results of the survey, which will serve as input for the relevant adjustments.

Following the work with the national statistical office teams, the evaluation team shall convene to document and summarize the outcomes of each day's discussions to prepare subsequent meetings and consolidate the draft of the final report to be submitted to the country. The report will highlight the strengths and the opportunities for improvement identified in the evaluation and presents recommendations for advancing compliance with the principles of the Code of Good Practice in Statistics for Latin America and the Caribbean.

(c) Post-visit activities

After the visit, the evaluation team will have one and a half months to conduct various activities in order to consolidate the final evaluation report and, subsequently, to send it to the evaluated country. The activities will include the following:

- (i) Provision of complementary input in preliminary report, with each evaluator elaborating on the corresponding principles based on the information gathered during the visit.
- (ii) Submission of information to the ECLAC expert for consolidation in one report that will be sent to the evaluators.
- (iii) Review by each evaluator of the complete preliminary report, with comments and changes as necessary. At this stage, comments or changes may refer to the specific principles assigned to the evaluator or to other principles or parts of the report.
- (iv) Consolidation of the new version by the lead evaluator and circulation to evaluation team.
- (v) Meeting of evaluation team to finalize the report to be sent to the country, which will have the opportunity to comment.
- (vi) Transmission of the report to the country by the Statistical Conference of the Americas.

F. FINAL REPORT

At the conclusion of the peer review, the final report is prepared containing the main findings from before and after the visit. The findings may be categorized as follows:

- (a) Strengths: these refer to specific situations in the implementation of principles or good practices which are not only in compliance with the Code but go well beyond requirements and stand out as distinguishing features.
- (b) Opportunities for improvement: these refer to aspects that need to be improved or areas that national statistical offices must strengthen in order to fully comply with the principles of the Code of Good Practice in Statistics for Latin America and the Caribbean.
- (c) Recommendations: these are specific actions that may be taken by the national statistical office to advance compliance with the principles of the Code. The recommendations are related to the opportunities for improvement described.

The final report summarizing and finalizing the activities carried out during the peer review shall follow a standard structure, consisting of at least the following parts:

- (i) Executive summary: overview of the general conclusions for each principle evaluated during the peer review.
- (ii) Background: information on the context of the peer review mechanism and the review team.
- (iii) Description of the national statistical system: insofar as possible, includes a short description of aspects such as legislation, organization, the national statistical office, statistical programmes, resources, coordination of the system (including information on the other authorities invited to the peer review visit), access to data, relations with users, and the dissemination of statistical products and services

- (iv) Findings from the consultation with participating users of statistics: key conclusions on users' perception of the role of the national statistical office as the governing and coordinating body of the national statistical system, based on the user evaluation questionnaire administered by the evaluation team and discussions in the in-person work sessions with users.
- (v) Summary: organized according to the principles of the Code of Good Practice in Statistics for Latin America and the Caribbean, this section summarizes the information obtained from the review of documentation, user evaluations and meetings held during the visit. The following information is presented for each principle:
- Details of the principle evaluated: must include the name and description, as set forth in the Code of Good Practice in Statistics for Latin America and the Caribbean.
 - Convergence table of the national statistical office's self-evaluation of compliance on each criterion of the principle and the evaluation team's review.
 - Brief summary of the causes of any divergence and the various observations made on the principle during the peer review process.
 - Strengths: actions or situations that may help to achieve the objectives of the principle being evaluated. Strengths include innovative practices that aim to advance compliance with the principle and that can be replicated in other countries of the region.
 - Opportunities for improvement: these refer to actions or tasks that are partially undertaken or not undertaken at all, thus representing non-compliance with the principle established in the Code of Good Practice in Statistics for Latin America and the Caribbean.
 - Recommendations or suggestions: these are related to the opportunities for improvement and are actions that can be carried out to advance compliance with the principles of the Code. Recommendations should be specific, measurable, achievable and relevant.
- (vi) Final observations: these refer to the main observations on the level of compliance with the Code. Subsequently, these observations provide the basis for general recommendations on opportunities for improvement.

This report is termed the draft final report, as it is the final report of the review following the visit, prepared by the evaluation team. It is also shared with the country under evaluation for comment. Where comments pertain to errors or inaccuracies, these will be corrected in the final report. However, where comments reflect a position that diverges from that of the evaluation team, these will be recorded in the final report as reflecting the views of the country under evaluation. If the national statistical office has no comments, this must be indicated in writing so that the draft final report may be considered final and circulated as such.

G. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

1. Preparation of an improvement plan by the national statistical office

The preparation and follow-up of improvement plans are not part of the peer review process. However, it is expected that, after the review, the national statistical office will prepare an improvement plan based on the results presented by the evaluation team. The following aspects should be taken into account in the improvement plan:

- (a) Actions should be based primarily on the opportunities for improvement and recommendations contained in the final peer review report. However, other improvements that are not included in the report but are considered important by the national statistical office may also be incorporated.
- (b) Improvements should be specific, measurable, achievable and relevant. The timeline for implementing each improvement should be feasible and should take into account the complexity of the actions and the actors involved. Some improvements do not depend solely on the national statistical office. For example, a five-year deadline has been set for updating statistical legislation, but the definition of the responsible entity stipulates that this also depends on external factors.
- (c) It is suggested that a lead entity—which may be one or more units— be designated for each action to allow for appropriate follow-up by the national statistical office. Where more than one unit is involved, the specific role of each unit in the improvement or how each will participate should be specified to facilitate monitoring.
- (d) The development and implementation of the improvement plan should take no longer than six months in order to address the opportunities for improvement identified and ensure compliance with the principles set out in the Code. Furthermore, the national statistical office should develop the plan and review it on an ongoing basis, as it will be responsible for ensuring compliance within the established deadlines.

2. Regional review of progress in compliance with the Code of Good Practice in Statistics for Latin America and the Caribbean

The number of peer reviews conducted each year is limited both by the available budgetary resources of the national statistical offices wishing to be evaluated and by the available human resources in the offices under evaluation and those conducting them.

It is therefore not possible to monitor the regional implementation of the Code of Good Practice in Statistics for Latin America and the Caribbean within a defined short- or medium-term period. As a result, a modified version of the self-evaluation instrument will be used as a regional monitoring mechanism, to be completed by countries every two years.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. (2023). *Code of Good Practice in Statistics for Latin America and the Caribbean 2023* (LC/CEA.12/4).

Eurostat. (2020). *European Statistical System Peer Reviews. Third round: 2021-2023. Overall methodology for the third round of peer reviews.*

Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century. (n.d.). *Guide Pratique à L'attention des Participants à un Examen par les Pairs.*