

**STATISTICAL COMMISSION and
ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**

**COMMISSION OF THE
EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES**

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

EUROSTAT

**Joint ECE/Eurostat Work Session on
Statistical Data Confidentiality**
(Thessaloniki, Greece, 8-10 March 1999)

Working Paper No. 15 (Summary)
English only

Topic (iii) - Administration and policy of statistical data confidentiality

INFORMED CONSENT: BUZZWORD OR PANACEA

Submitted by Statistics Netherlands¹

Invited paper

Summary

1. The designs used for statistical data collection assume a growing complexity. Panel approaches and the integration of survey data with administrative data are two currently popular examples of this development. At the same time the results of such data collection efforts are communicated in novel forms. Amongst these is the release of microdata files for research purposes. Both kinds of innovation complicate the relation between statistical offices and their respondents since they do away with the familiar stovepipe conception of statistical survey processing, from the initial paper questionnaire to the final publication in print. In the traditional approach the obligation/promise of statistical confidentiality was fairly easy to keep. Under the strategic innovations mentioned above maintaining statistical confidentiality becomes a problem that requires further thinking and research.

2. The concept of “informed consent” is often invoked in attempts to keep the relation between statistical offices and their respondents clear and clean. In my paper I describe the concept, and its implications for the strategic innovations mentioned above. Specifically I will elaborate the perspectives of the respondent and the registree, the national statistical office, the holders of registrations, the users of microdata, and the legislation.

¹ Prepared by Joris Nobel.