

CONFIDENTIALITY IN THE EUROPEAN STATISTICAL SYSTEM

PHOTIS NANOPOULOS*

Eurostat

Confidentiality and data protection are the counterparts of the obligation for response and the corner stone for confidence building between the national statistical services and the respondents. On this common principle the various national statistical systems among the 15 (and other) European states have been established.

There is a great concern at national and international level on statistical confidentiality. The respect of privacy has led national authorities to develop ad-hoc legislation which, inter alia, prevents national statistical institutes transmitting confidential data to Eurostat. The effect on the quality and completeness of European statistics has been disastrous. Because of this important problem Eurostat undertook a series of actions some of which are as followed:

In the legal framework, a regulation was proposed to the Council of the Union which sets out the conditions for data transmission from national administrations to Eurostat. The regulation was adopted in 1990. On the 17th February 1997 the Council approved a new regulation which completes and enlarges that previously on statistical confidentiality.

Eurostat launched in parallel international seminars on confidentiality which brought together statisticians, academics and other officials and set the milestones for international co-operation in that area. The first seminar was organised in 1992 in Dublin in co-operation with the ISI (International Statistical Institute). The next one was held in 1994 in Luxembourg and this third in Slovenia in October 1996.

*Photis Nanopoulos. Direction A: Systèmes d'information statistique; recherche et analyse des données; coopération technique avec les pays Phare et Tacis. Eurostat. L-2920 Luxembourg.

–Article rebut l'octubre de 1996.

–Acceptat el febrer de 1997.

Methodological work also was encouraged. Through the fourth European framework program on research and development, financial support was given to a multinational team for the development of a software to control statistical disclosure of both micro and tabular data (Waal, Willenborg, 1995).

Eurostat made an inventory of existing methods and started in 93 to explore new techniques in the subject of the microaggregation.

The efforts in this direction will continue in a more intensive way. It is planned to launch other projects for the statistical disclosure control, especially in the field of microaggregation, to explore cognitive aspects of confidentiality and generally to promote research aimed at permitting access to the data without jeopardising confidentiality.