



HELLENIC REPUBLIC



HELLENIC STATISTICAL AUTHORITY

ELSTAT Revision Policy

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The Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT) adopts the current revision policy defining standard rules and principles for data revisions, in accordance with the European Statistics Code of Practice and the principles for a common revision policy for European Statistics contained in the Annex of the European Statistical System (ESS) guidelines on revision policy.¹

1. OVERVIEW REGARDING REVISIONS IN THE ESS

Revisions are broadly defined as any change in a value of a statistic released to the public in printed or electronic form. They can occur either when new observations (referring to one additional month or quarter) become available and some past values are modified or when the current and /or some past values are modified. Data are generally revised in order to incorporate new, improved information or to comply with new adopted European or international standards and better methodologies.

Revisions are a normal phenomenon and their goal is to increase progressively the quality of statistical data. Quality of statistical information comprises several criteria of which two are worth noting: accuracy and timeliness. Both are of particular importance to ensure that statistical information is relevant, or in other words, statistical information meets users' needs. The need to carry out revisions reflects the commitment of National Statistical Institutes, and of ELSTAT in the case of Greece, of producing high quality statistics that are as up-to-date as possible.

The 6th indicator of principle 8 of the European Statistics Code of Practice requires that *"Revisions follow standard, well-established and transparent procedures"*. In this context, the National Statistical Institutes as members of the ESS are in charge of informing users about their practices on revisions and correction of errors. This public declaration promotes confidence among users and accuracy for data producers.

Confidence in statistics is maintained if the users see that revisions take place within the framework of an overall policy and according to a predetermined schedule. If the policy, procedures, and schedule are published, it will be evident that revisions are not ad hoc and for political interests. When mistakes are discovered, it is critical that the statistical agencies report them to the public as soon as possible and provide satisfactory explanations to reassure users and enable them to distinguish "honest" mistakes from cases of misreporting. The importance of developing a revision policy and performing revision analysis is being increasingly recognised and considerable work has been done in this field over the past few years in the ESS. Revision policy is an important aspect of good governance in statistics.

2. KEY FACTORS UNDERLYING A REVISION

Statistics are generally subject to revisions. The factors determining a revision are the following:

- Inclusion of additional observations;
- More complete reporting by respondents;

¹ In this context, ELSTAT's revision policy as presented here borrows heavily from the ESS guidelines on revision policy. The revision policy of ELSTAT enters into force on the date of its publication.

- Conceptual changes (e.g., changes in concepts, definitions, classifications etc);
- Changes in data sources (e.g., availability of new source data that more closely match the concepts, replacement of survey data with administrative data etc);
- Changes to the base year or reference period of statistics;
- Benchmarking – benchmarking is defined as the adjustment of (generally) higher frequency data to take account of more complete lower frequency results, which become available only later;
- Improvement of the methodology applied for the production of statistics;
- Correction of data initially transmitted by administrative sources;
- Errors in the computation of statistics.

Some revisions may be determined by a combination of the above factors. Also, some revisions are imposed by EU Regulations.

3. TYPOLOGY OF REVISIONS

Taking into account the diversity of revision factors and the different frequencies of computation of statistical variables, revisions are classified as follows:

1. Planned revisions

Planned or scheduled revisions refer to routine revisions and major ones:

- Routine revisions are changes in published data which are related to the regular data production process (e.g. estimated values for missing responses are replaced by reported figures).
- Major revisions are changes in published data, often substantial, which are due to one of the following reasons:
 - Availability of new structural data that are collected at long intervals (usually 5 to 10 years), such as data coming from censuses, input-output tables, labour cost surveys, etc.
 - An update of the weights of the base year of an index series, often every five years
 - A change in the concepts, definitions and/or classifications used to produce the series (adoption of a new classification, changes in international statistical standards, etc.)
 - The enter in force of a new legal act

Usually data producers take the opportunity of a forthcoming major revision to introduce methodological improvements. This is considered as good practice as it avoids revisions occurring too often. Therefore it is common that major revisions are not determined by one single cause but by a combination of them.

2. Non-scheduled revisions

Non-scheduled data revisions are, by definition, not announced in advance either because they are a result of unforeseeable events such as errors or accidents.

4. RULES AND PRINCIPLES OF ELSTAT'S REVISION POLICY

The revision policy of ELSTAT includes the following rules and principles:

- **ELSTAT carries out its responsibilities in respect of revisions by following the current revision policy based on the European Statistics Code of Practice and the ESS guidelines on revision policy in force.**
- **The revision policy is published and maintained on ELSTAT's website.**
- **A schedule for the planned revisions is compiled by ELSTAT and posted on ELSTAT's website. In addition, a relevant text on the planned revisions of statistics is included in the Annual Statistical Work Programs of ELSTAT.**
- **The users are promptly informed on significant errors identified in published statistics, leading to non-scheduled revisions. The revised results are released without any delay in an open and transparent manner. The reason of carrying out the non-scheduled revisions are also published.**
- **Major revisions and non-scheduled data revisions are accompanied at the time of publication by relevant documentation, as well as by updated back data if available. Information on revisions are also contained in survey metadata published on ELSTAT's website.**
- **ELSTAT announces substantial methodological changes in the compilation of statistics before the release to the public of statistics based on the new methods.**
- **ELSTAT carries out revision analysis on a regular basis, by applying internationally recognized best practices depending on the statistical product. The effects of revisions on statistical outputs, which are considered as priorities at a given time by ELSTAT, are monitored, with a view to improving the quality of these outputs.**
- **ELSTAT has periodic consultations with users to elicit views about its revision practices.**