

Statistical information and evidence based decision-making

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Modern decision-making is rooted in quantitative and qualitative knowledge, with scientific evidence and reliable statistical information as key components. Especially in the process of public policy setting and monitoring, a good quality evidence base is a pre-requisite for transparent and credible decision-making. This process requires official statistics, which means statistics closely linked to sciences of the ‘state’ (in particular social and economic sciences), hence the stat-etymology. A basic assumption here is that relevant statistical data are indeed available, guided by the imperative "If it matters, measure it!" The institutional setting of official statistics ensures a particular level of information quality, which in turn leads to some limitations as regards the scope of this information branch. So, limits to measurement – such as for prices without a market or when only opinions are gathered - might lead to disadvantages of areas since they are not fulfilling the expectations regarding evidence based decision-making. Some however say that it is possible to try to solve this dilemma by going even further in the application of the above-mentioned principle so as to "Measure the immeasurable!" But this does not provide a real way out. Information that is not robust and reliable will not survive a tough decision-making process, at least not on the long run.

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