EUROPEAN FREE TRADE ASSOCIATION

Connecting the EFTA National Statistical Institutes to the Common European Data Spaces

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Summary

This publication focuses on the development of the Common European Data Spaces (CEDS) within the European Union and the use of high-value datasets (HVDS) to inform the data spaces. The research aims to describe how statistical data in the HVDS will be made available for use and reuse by the National Statistical Institutes (NSIs) and how this will connect to the CEDS. The study outlines the legislation that governs the use of open data and the CEDS, reviews how existing CEDS operate, and explores how this can translate into the field of official statistics. This study finds that existing open nature of statistical data renders the creation of a data space solely for official statistics redundant. Rather, the designation of HVDS and the availability of this data will be open for creators of data spaces to utilise. Therefore, NSIs may assume different roles within the CEDS such as data stewards and advisory entities.

Disclaimer: This paper should not be reported as representing the views of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) or the EFTA States. The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of EFTA.

Introduction

In February 2020, the European Commission introduced the European strategy for data. With the aim to create a single market for data, this strategy has paved the way to "harness the value of data for the benefit of the European economy and society"[1]. This has also led to the establishment of Common European Data Spaces (CEDS) across various strategic fields, including health, agriculture, manufacturing, energy, mobility, financial, public administration, skills, the European Open Science Cloud. Subsequently, data spaces in other significant fields such as media and cultural heritage have been developed. Over time, these

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[1] European Commission (13 March, 2024). Common European Data Spaces. Retrieved from https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/data-spaces.

data spaces will be linked to create a single market for data[2]. Concurrently, the European Commission has taken steps to define certain datasets that are recognized to offer significant societal, economic, and environmental benefits as high-value datasets (HVDS). These are to be made available to the public, free of charge to boost the use and reuse of data.

The aim of this research paper is to explore how statistical data in the HVDS be made available for use and reuse by the National Statistical Institutes (NSIs) and how this will be connected to the CEDS.

Background and context

The Data Spaces Support Centre defines a data space as "[a] distributed system defined by a governance framework that enables secure and trustworthy data transactions between participants while supporting trust and data sovereignty. A data space is implemented by one or more infrastructures and enables one or more use cases"[3]. All European data spaces share a common data infrastructure and governance framework as well as several distinctive features: they are open to all organizations and individuals, and they maintain a secure, privacy-preserving infrastructure for pooling, accessing, sharing, processing, and using data. These data spaces offer a clear and practical structure for data access and usage, characterized by fair, transparent, proportionate, and non-discriminatory access rules, thanks to well-defined and trustworthy data governance mechanisms. They adhere to EU rules and values, particularly regarding personal data and consumer protection, as well as competition law. Furthermore, they enable data holders to grant access to or share certain personal or non-personal data, and empower data holders to make their data available for reuse either for free or against compensation[4].

The Data Spaces Support Centre (DSSC) assists the public sector and companies in creating sovereign data spaces[5]. The development process involves two phases: (1) researching and identifying common characteristics and standards within the relevant field, and (2) deploying the data space. While data spaces share certain characteristics, their governance structures can vary, determining access permissions. Consequently, some data spaces are more open than others (e.g., green deal data spaces are likely more open than financial data spaces due to

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[2] Ibid.

[3] Data Spaces Support Centre. Blueprint v1.0: DSSC Glossary. Retrieved from https://dssc.eu/space/BVE/357073006/Data+Spaces+Blueprint+v1.0.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Data Spaces Support Centre. Mission. Retrieved from https://dssc.eu/space/Mission/45285499/Mission.

sensitivity). Data providers participate voluntarily, and national authorities' involvement depends on their capacity. Smaller countries and staffs may have limited capacity for voluntary data space projects. Overall, data space creation and data provision operate on a voluntary basis.

To date, there are several pieces of legislation that have been adopted within the EU that further the goals of the European Strategy for Data. Together, they provide a comprehensive and clear framework for the development and functioning of CEDS. As of July 2024, these are all under scrutiny by EEA EFTA, and are therefore not applicable in the EEA EFTA States. During the assessment for incorporation into the EEA Agreement, it is crucial for the EEA EFTA States and their NSIs to stay informed about the legislation and its implementation in the EU to prepare for potential incorporation. The following section provides a brief overview over the relevant EU legislation. Notably, this overview is restricted to providing information that proves relevant for the topic of this paper and the field of statistics. Therefore, the reader should note that the acts that are mentioned do cover additional areas of expertise, but that for the purposes of this paper this is omitted.

The Data Act

The Data Act, which entered into force in the EU on 11 January 2024 and will be applicable from 12 September 2025, provides clarity on who can derive value from data and under what conditions. Its primary objective is to make more data accessible for the benefit of companies, citizens, and public administration[6]. This is to be achieved through several measures:

1. Increasing legal certainty for companies and consumers involved in data generation by setting clear rules on the permissible use of data and the associated conditions. This also maintains incentives for data holders to continue investing in the generation of high-quality data[7].
2. Mitigating the abuse of contractual imbalances that hinder equitable data sharing[8].
3. Implementing rules that enable public sector bodies to access and use data held by the private sector for specific public interest purposes[9].

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[6] European Commission (4 April, 2024). Data Act. Retrieved from https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/data-act.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid.

4. Introducing new rules to establish a framework for customers to effectively switch between different providers of data-processing services, thereby unlocking the EU cloud market. This will contribute to an overall framework for efficient data interoperability[10].

Ultimately, these measures encourage broader participation in the data economy while safeguarding fair data access and usage.

The Data Governance Act

The Data Governance Act (DGA), which came into force in the EU on 23 June 2022, and has been applicable since September 2023, aims to enhance trust in voluntary data sharing among businesses and citizens[11]. This act aims to address and take advantage of the immense economic and societal potential of data, while tackling current obstacles to reach this goal, such as "low trust in data sharing, issues related to the re-use of public sector data and data collection for the common good, as well as technical obstacles"[12]. To do so, the DGA aims to control the re-utilization of public and protected data. This is achieved by promoting data sharing via the regulation of new data intermediaries and by advocating for data sharing for benevolent reasons. The DGA encompasses both personal and non-personal data. When personal data is involved, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is applicable. Alongside the GDPR, inherent protections will enhance confidence in data sharing and re-use, which is a necessary condition for making more data accessible in the market[13]. Thereby, this act advocates a trust-building model in data sharing centred on the neutrality and transparency of data intermediaries, empowering individuals and companies to retain control over their data.

The Digital Markets Act

The Digital Markets Act (DMA) establishes clear criteria to identify large online platforms as "gatekeepers", ensuring their fair operation online to foster competition. Gatekeepers are defined as major digital platforms offering specific core services like search engines, app

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[10] Ibid.

[11] European Commission (27 February, 2024). European Data Governance Act. Retrieved from https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/data-governance-act.

[12] European Commission (25 January 2024). Data Governance Act Explained. Retrieved from https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/data-governance-act-explained.

[13] Ibid.

stores, and messaging apps. They exhibit significant economic influence across multiple EU countries and act as intermediaries between users and businesses with a stable market position. On 6 September 2023, the European Commission designated six companies as gatekeepers: Alphabet, Amazon, Apple, ByteDance, Meta, and Microsoft. These gatekeepers provide a total of 22 designated core platform services. The DMA came into effect on 2 May 2023 in the EU. This act aims to regulate and ensure fair practices among dominant digital platforms, promoting a competitive and balanced online ecosystem[14].

The Digital Services Act

The Digital Services Act (DSA) regulates various online intermediaries and platforms, including marketplaces, social networks, content-sharing platforms, app stores, and online travel and accommodation platforms. Its primary objective is to combat illegal and harmful activities online, such as disinformation, while ensuring user safety, protecting fundamental rights, and fostering a fair and open online environment. The DSA safeguards consumers and their fundamental rights by implementing clear and proportionate rules. It promotes innovation, growth, and competitiveness, facilitating the expansion of smaller platforms, SMEs, and start-ups. The roles of users, platforms, and public authorities are realigned based on European values, prioritizing citizen interests. Since 17 February 2024, the DSA rules have applied to all platforms in the EU. This act aims to create a safer, fairer, and more accountable online ecosystem[15].

The Artificial Intelligence Act (AI Act)

The AI Act is designed to establish clear requirements and obligations for AI developers and users, while minimizing administrative and financial burdens. It forms part of a broader strategy to promote the development of trustworthy AI, alongside initiatives such as the AI Innovation Package and the Coordinated Plan on AI. These initiatives collectively aim to safeguard the safety and rights of individuals and businesses in relation to AI, while also stimulating adoption, investment, and innovation in AI across the EU. It ensures that AI systems uphold fundamental rights, safety, and ethical principles, while addressing risks

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[14] European Commission (n.d.a). The Digital Markets Act: ensuring fair and open digital markets. Retrieved from https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/europe-fit-digital-age/digital-markets-act-ensuring-fair-and-open-digital-markets_en.

[15] European Commission (n.d.b).The Digital Services Act. Retrieved from https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/europe-fit-digital-age/digital-services-act_en.

associated with highly impactful AI models. This initiative is intended to set a standard for responsible AI development and deployment[16]. The Act passed in the European Parliament in March 2024, was approved by the EU Council in May 2024, and will enter into force in the EU on 1 August 2024.

Open Data Directive

In June 2019, the Directive (EU) 2019/1024 on open data and the re-use of public sector information, commonly referred to as the Open Data Directive, came into effect. This directive is grounded in principles of transparency and fair competition, aiming to make public sector and publicly funded data more accessible for re-use. Specifically, the directive encourages the publication of data, restricts exceptions that allow public bodies to overcharge for data re-use, and enhances transparency requirements for public–private agreements involving public sector information. Additionally, the Open Data Directive laid the groundwork for an Implementing Regulation that identifies a list of HVDS to be made available free of charge[17].

Implementing Regulation laying down a list of HVDS

In 2022, the European Commission published the Commission Implementing Regulation 2023/138, which lays down a list of specific HVDS and the arrangements for their publication and re-use[18]. These publicly-held datasets are considered to be "particularly interesting for creators of value-added services and applications and have important benefits for society, the environment and the economy"[19], thereby making it important for these to be made available to the public, free of charge. The Regulation "defines six categories of such high-value datasets: geospatial, earth observation and environment, meteorological, statistics, companies and mobility. This thematic range can be extended at a later stage to reflect technological and market developments"[20]. As this Regulation holds specifically outlined relevance for NSIs

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[16] European Commission (6 May 2024). AI Act. Retrieved from https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/regulatory-framework-ai.

[17] European Commission (21 February 2024). European legislation on open data. Retrieved from https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/legislation-open-data.

[18] EUR-Lex (20 January 2023). Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2023/138 of 21 December 2022 laying down a list of specific high-value datasets and the arrangements for their publication and re-use (Text with EEA relevance). Retrieved from https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32023R0138&qid=1718618270299.

[19] European Commission (20 January 2023). Commission defines high-value datasets to be made available for re-use. Retrieved from https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/news/commission-defines-high-value-datasets-be-made-available-re-use.

[20] Ibid.

and official statistics, this paper will return to this Regulation below to explore and outline how the data outlined in the Regulation will be made publicly available by the NSIs and the connection between the HVDS and the CEDS.

The use of data spaces in EU dedicated strategic fields

This section will present a sample of the existing data spaces that exists under the funding of the European Commission. The data spaces exist in other categories than that of statistics, such as health, tourism, and agriculture. However, by looking into specific and practical applications of data spaces, this paper gathers insights into the practical use of data spaces.

European Cancer Artificial Intelligence for Medicine (EUCAIM)

EUCAIM (European Cancer Artificial Intelligence for Medicine) is a digital platform for clinicians, researchers, and innovators to develop a digital federated infrastructure of cancer-related images that will be used for advancement of AI tools in the field of medicine. Specifically, it aims to create a pan-European infrastructure that will facilitate the development and validation of AI tools that can improve Precision Medicine. Thereby, this infrastructure will provide validated clinical decision-making systems that support cancer diagnosis, treatment, and predictive medicine benefiting patients across Europe[21].

The momentum behind this project, comes from the challenges posed by the distributed and fragmented nature of health data within Europe. AI technologies offers a shift towards medical decision-making through data-driven insights that can increase the accuracy and reliability of diagnosis and treatment. However, there is often a gap between algorithm design and real-world performance, leading to ethical and safety concerns. EUCAIM seeks to bridge this gap by deploying a federated research infrastructure that harmonizes and consolidates health data and medical images across Europe.

The envisioned EUCAIM platform will provide a unified ecosystem for developing and validating AI tools tailored to enhance cancer diagnosis and treatment, ultimately benefiting patients. This initiative builds upon existing fragmented repositories of cancer images established through the AI4HI (Artificial Intelligence for Health) initiative. Additionally, EUCAIM aims to establish legal frameworks that accommodate the diverse data management

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[21] EUCAIM (n.d.). Navigating The Future: Our Vision and Mission. Retrieved from https://cancerimage.eu/who-we-are/.

regulations across European countries, prioritizing data sovereignty for the contributing entities[22].

PrepDSpace4Mobility

The PrepDSpace4Mobility is an initiative that contributes to the development of a single market for mobility data. The project includes mapping existing data ecosystems across Europe, identifying gaps and overlaps, and proposing common building blocks and governance frameworks derived from established data space architectures. The project underscores the underutilization of vast amounts of mobility data generated daily by Europeans, highlighting the potential of data spaces to enhance safety, sustainability, and inclusivity in European mobility. Once operational, the envisioned common European mobility data space promises numerous benefits, including improved monitoring and planning capabilities for transport authorities, enhanced efficiency in freight logistics, seamless multimodal mobility options, optimized vehicle charging infrastructure, and more. This initiative represents a transformative step towards leveraging mobility data to drive innovation and improve mobility services across Europe.

By mapping existing mobility data ecosystems, identifying gaps, and proposing common building blocks and governance frameworks, PrepDSpace4Mobility contributes to the harmonization and integration of data across European mobility sectors. The insights derived from PrepDSpace4Mobility, such as understanding the types and quality of mobility data across diverse ecosystems, are instrumental in enhancing the quality and relevance of official statistics related to transportation, logistics, and urban mobility[23].

Crack Sense

Crack Sense focuses on mitigating fruit cracking – a phenomenon where fruit surfaces develop cracks often resulting in yield loss. The objectives of the project include leveraging advanced sensing technologies to monitor fruit cracking in real-time to estimate yield loss and assess the risk of cracking incidence. This data-driven approach, integrated with edge computing and web-based platforms for model generation and dissemination, aims to

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[22] EUCAIM (n.d.). Navigating The Future: Our Vision and Mission. Retrieved from https://cancerimage.eu/who-we-are/.

[23] PrepDSpace4Mobility (n.d.) Laying the foundation for a common European mobility data space. Retrieved from https://mobilitydataspace-csa.eu/.

revolutionize cracking risk assessment and management strategies in diverse climatic regions and commercial orchards.

By integrating advanced sensing technologies, data analytics, and decision support systems, the project exemplifies how data spaces can enhance the quality and relevance of official statistics, ultimately supporting evidence-based policymaking and fostering cross-sector collaboration across Europe[24].

Gaia-X

Gaia-X aims to establish a trustworthy ecosystem where data sharing is facilitated while ensuring that users retain control and sovereignty over their data. This is done through a federated system that links multiple cloud service providers and users together[25].

Gaia-X aims to introduce standardized data-exchange mechanisms that prioritize trust and interoperability, addressing challenges posed by dispersed data that is difficult to consolidate in one location. Gaia-X intends to establish a framework rooted in European values to facilitate informed data exchange decisions, breaking down barriers to cloud adoption and fostering innovative solutions within a secure and trustworthy environment that supports a flourishing European digital economy[26].

HVDS

The emphasis by the EU on open data aims to leverage its potential for economic growth, innovation, and social benefits through transparent, accessible, and reusable public sector information. Importantly, the increased availability of data supports (1) economic growth and innovation, (2) addressing societal challenges, (3) evidence-based policymaking, (4) the development of new technologies like AI, and (5) citizen participation in political and social life[27] [28].

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[24] CrackSense (n.d.). Cracking data to combat fruit cracking. Retrieved from https://cracksense.eu/.
[25] Gaia-X (n.d.). What is Gaia-X? Retrieved from https://gaia-x.eu/what-is-gaia-x/.
[26] Ibid.
[27] European Commission (18 March 2024). Commission defines high-value datasets to be made available for re-use. Retrieved from https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/news/commission-defines-high-value-datasets-be-made-available-re-use.
[28] European Commission (22 April 2024). Open data. Retrieved from https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/open-data.

Recognizing the increasing significance of data, the European Commission adopted an implementing act on HVDS on December 21, 2022. According to the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union, these datasets offer substantial benefits to society, the environment, and the economy. Their high value lies in their potential to create value-added services, applications, and high-quality jobs within the EU. Identifying and defining these HVDS marks a significant shift in open data, as they will be made available in standardized technical formats to enhance their reuse and impact[29].

As a result, a specific and limited group of datasets was identified to offer maximum value to users, available without technical, legal, or financial barriers. These datasets are detailed in the Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2023/138 of 21 December 2022 and categorized into six high-value themes: geospatial, earth observation and environment, meteorological, statistics, companies and company ownership, and mobility (European data, 23 November 2022). As of May 2024, this Regulation is under scrutiny by the EEA EFTA States. As regards official statistics, areas mentioned in the act include (but are not limited to) Industrial production (Regulation (EU) 2019/2152); Tourism flows in Europe (Regulation (EU) 692/2011); National accounts (Regulation (EU) 549/2013); Harmonised Indices of consumer prices (Regulation (EU) 2016/792); Population, Fertility, Mortality (Regulation (EU) 2019/1700). These specific datasets were selected in consultation with a broad range of stakeholders representing both data holders and users. Stakeholder interviews helped create a preliminary 'wish list' of datasets deemed to be of high value from an economic, societal and reuse perspective. Concurrently, an Impact Assessment Support Study was conducted to map all relevant legislation at the European level to identify data fields already covered by EU rules, and subsequently assess the degree to which each dataset could be considered to be of 'high value', in line with the assessment criteria outlined in Article 14(2) of the Open Data Directive[30].

The Open Data Directive establishes the legal framework for open data, grounded in the principles of transparency and fair competition. It introduces the concept of HVDS, which are defined as data offering significant societal and economic benefits when reused. These datasets are governed by more demanding regulations in order to lower entry barriers to the

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[29] European data (23 November 2022). High-value datasets – an overview through visualisation. Retrieved from https://data.europa.eu/en/publications/datastories/high-value-datasets-overview-through-visualisation.
[30] European Commission (20 December 2023). High-value datasets: Questions and Answers. Retrieved from https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/faqs/high-value-datasets-questions-and-answers.

European data-driven market and boost the reuse of datasets[31]. This includes that, as from 9 June 2024, the datasets must be made available for reuse:

- Free of charge.
- Under the conditions of the Creative Commons BY 4.0 licence or any equivalent or less restrictive open licence.
- In a recognised open, machine-readable format.
- Through application programming interfaces (APIs) and bulk download.
- In their most up-to-date version[32].

As of June 2024, a variety of HVDS can be accessed through the official portal for European data (data.europa.eu). This portal is the most comprehensive resource for open data, hosting 1.6 million datasets from EU institutions, agencies, and Member States. However, the availability of statistical data is currently limited, with contributions from only four countries: Germany, France, Denmark, and Sweden. The availability of datasets on the portal relies on the extent to which public authorities have made them available, and their findability depends on the quality of the metadata provided. Consequently, not all open data may be accessible via the portal[33].

As the Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2023/138 of 21 December 2022 laying down a list of specific high-value datasets and the arrangements for their publication and re-use is currently under scrutiny by the EEA EFTA States, it is important to consider the impact of this act on the EFTA States, their NSIs, and other national authorities. Importantly, the statistical datasets outlined in the Regulation, is data the Member States already collect and transmit to Eurostat. The HVDS does not require any amending of the format of these datasets, simply that they should be machine readable and consist of open data. Additionally, the metadata for the HVDS should be annotated as such in order for the datasets to be catalogued correctly when published on data.europa.eu. In order for the Member States to comply with the abovementioned Regulation, the HVDS simply need to be openly available to the public. This means it could be available through national portals (such as the websites of the NSIs) or through international portals (such as the Eurostat database or data.europa.eu).

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[31] European Commission (23 April 2024). Open data and high-value datasets: step-by-step access guide. Retrieved from https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/factpages/open-data-and-high-value-datasets-step-step-access-guide.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid.

In informal consultations between the EFTA Statistical Office and DG Connect in July 2024, it was made clear to ESO that there are no intentions to create a data space within the realm of official statistics. Firstly, this is due to the lack of demand of such a data space, which means no private company would take it on themselves to create it. Secondly, statistical data is already openly available to the public through numerous national and international portals, rendering the idea behind a data space redundant. Rather, what was made clear was that statistical data and the HVDS that will be made available through different portals, will be used by other data spaces if so needed.

Operational considerations of the HVDS for the EEA EFTA NSIs

In practice, the implementation of the HVDS in the EEA EFTA States comes with some operational considerations. Firstly, the HVDS are based on existing, available data sets that the EEA EFTA Member States already produce. Therefore, the NSIs will not be required to collect and transmit data on any topics that they do not already do. However, what is required for the HVDS is to annotate the metadata for the accompanying datasets as HVDS. This is to facilitate efficient and correct categorization of the datasets on the portals where they will be available. Secondly, for the HVDS to be available on data.europa.eu, the NSIs simply need to have made the datasets available in open, machine-readable formats. This could be on their national statistical portals or via the Eurostat database. Hence, the NSIs do not need to transmit their HVDS directly to data.europa.eu. In summary, the only notable consideration for the EEA EFTA NSIs in regard to the HVDS, is the importance of annotating the metadata correctly.

Potential roles of NSIs within the CEDS

With the development of the CEDS as well as legislation complementing its implementation and regulation, it is clear that NSIs and official statistics at both national and international levels can capitalize on the current advancements.

The roles that may be assumed by NSIs and other statistical agencies at the present stage are twofold: (1) data stewards and (2) advisory entities. As the CEDS are developing and tested, NSIs and other statistical agencies may be assigned new or different roles. However, for the

purposes of exploring the current envisaged roles, a short clarification of what they entail follows.

The Conference of European Statisticians defines data stewardship as "ensuring the ethical and responsible creation, collection, management, use and reuse of data so that they are used for public good and benefit the full community of data users"[34]. This entails responsibilities in overseeing data assets and resources from a strategic standpoint, namely ensuring that data processes, from creation to management, align with the legislative and regulatory requirements of various stakeholders including consumers, organisations, and governments[35]. It is important to distinguish this term from that of a competent body as outlined by Article 7 of the DGA: "The competent bodies may be empowered to grant access for the re-use of the (…) of data"[36]. Therefore, a competent body is authorized only to grant or refuse access to the reuse of data. In contrast, a data steward has broader authority, overseeing the entire data process from creation to management, including granting or refusing access to data reuse. Thus, while there is some overlap between the roles, the role of a competent body is considerably narrower than that of a data steward. Consequently, a data steward can encompass the role of a competent body, but a competent body cannot assume the role of a data steward.

In the 55th meeting of the European Statistical System Committee, February 2024, it was taken note that "several NSIs would be prepared to assume this new role – as data stewards - in the data ecosystem"[37]. Reflected in the current discussions on the topic of data stewardship, is a shift in the operations of NSIs; from solely producing statistics, to also providing data and related services. Hence, data stewardship holds a service-oriented role within the data ecosystem, emphasising support rather than control[38].

Another role that NSIs may take within CEDS are that of advisory entities. NSIs and the broader European Statistical System (ESS) possess extensive experience and capabilities that

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[34] United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (2023). Data Stewardship and the Role of National Statistical Offices in the New Data Ecosystem. White Cover Version. Geneva.
[35] Ibid.
[36] https://www.european-data-governance-act.com/Data_Governance_Act_Article_7.html
[37] 55th Meeting of the European Statistical System Committee. Item 9 of the agenda. ESS contribution to the Common European Data Spaces. 11.
[38] United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (2023). Data Stewardship and the Role of National Statistical Offices in the New Data Ecosystem. White Cover Version. Geneva.

can significantly enhance the development and maintenance of effective data frameworks within the CEDS, especially concerning the following fields (1) quality frameworks, (2) metadata documentation, (3) governance models that uphold data confidentiality, security, and ethical standards, (4) peer relationships and collaboration that emphasise transparency and promote harmonised approaches, and (5) capacity building and training that empower stakeholders within CEDS to effectively utilise data resources. By leveraging NSI experience, CEDS can enhance the reliability, accessibility, and utility of shared data assets, thereby advancing data-driven innovation and policy development across Europe.

Hence, NSIs may assume different roles within the CEDS as well as assisting with the development of CEDS. With the experience and competence of NSIs, they can assist in the integration of CEDS with existing statistical frameworks. This means that data held by NSIs, and other statistical agencies can lead to real-time monitoring, cross-border data sharing, and sector-specific insights.

Conclusion

In summary, this study sheds light on the intersection of HVDS and CEDS within the European Union. By examining the role of NSIs and the existing open nature of statistical data, it finds that a dedicated data space solely for official statistics may be redundant. Instead, the designation of HVDS and their availability for creators of data spaces offers flexibility. NSIs can assume diverse roles within the CEDS, serving as data stewards and advisory entities. Moving forward, collaboration and strategic utilization of HVDS will be crucial for an effective and interconnected data ecosystem.

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The **European Free Trade Association (EFTA)** is the intergovernmental organisation of Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland. The EFTA Secretariat has three duty stations:

- Geneva in charge of EFTA Convention and Free Trade Agreements with third countries
- Brussels in charge of the European Economic Area Agreement
- Luxembourg in charge of Statistical Cooperation

The objective of the EFTA Statistical Office in Luxembourg is to sustain and promote the participation of the EFTA States as full members of the European Statistical System (ESS) which contributes to a European culture of evidence-based policymaking and monitoring.