



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
EUROSTAT

ESGAB'S RECOMMENDATIONS AND EUROSTAT'S IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS IN RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS

ESGAB's recommendations and improvement actions in response to the recommendations

Legislation underpinning the recruitment and dismissal of Eurostat's senior management

1. Arrangements for future appointments of Directors-General of Eurostat should be specified in law, and based on open competition¹

Current situation:

Eurostat Directors-General are recruited and appointed following the transparent policy established by the Commission, based on guidelines which are publicly available. The policy and the guidelines correspond to the requirements set out in the Code of Practice.

Improvement action:

N.A.

Timeline:

N.A.

2. Key criteria for selection of a Director-General of Eurostat should be his/her professional reputation in the international statistical community and his/her management capacities¹

Current situation:

The Staff Regulations establishes that recruitment shall ensure "officials of the highest standard of ability, efficiency and integrity" (Article 27). Strong indicators for assessing the competence of Eurostat future Directors-General are established in the Commission Decision on Eurostat. Furthermore, there is no indicator in the Code of Practice related to professional competence, in particular not by any reference to reputation in specific circles or to statistical qualifications as more relevant than other qualifications.

Improvement action:

N.A.

Timeline:

¹ SEE SECTION BELOW "Eurostat's diverging view on recommendations 1 – 4"

N.A.
3. Legislation should specify reasons for an early dismissal of the Director-General of Eurostat. These should not include reasons which compromise his/her professional or scientific independence²
<p>Current situation:</p> <p>The conditions for any dismissal of Commission officials – including Directors-General and other senior management – are set out in Article 5 of the Staff Regulations. The Staff Regulations, in combination with the Commission Decision on Eurostat, correspond to the Code of Practice indicator on having the conditions for dismissal specified in a legal framework.</p>
<p>Improvement action:</p> <p>N.A.</p>
<p>Timeline:</p> <p>N.A.</p>
4. The recruitment and dismissal of Eurostat senior management, other than the Director-General, should be public and transparent with strong emphasis on statistical qualifications²
<p>Current situation:</p> <p>The Staff Regulations establishes that recruitment shall ensure "officials of the highest standard of ability, efficiency and integrity" (Article 27). The Commission has established a Senior Officials Policy based on transparency. The conditions for dismissal of Commission officials in senior management are set out in Article 5 of the Staff Regulations.</p>
<p>Improvement action:</p> <p>N.A.</p>
<p>Timeline:</p> <p>N.A.</p>

² SEE SECTION BELOW “Eurostat’s diverging view on recommendations 1 – 4”

Implementation of the legal architecture

5. Future European statistical legislation should adhere to the legislative architecture adopted in 2013 with its three-layer approach, making in particular a distinction between the 'What' in framework regulations and the 'How' in delegated and implementing acts.

Current situation:

Eurostat is currently discussing with ESS stakeholders four different framework regulations which are intended to adhere to the layer approach of the legislative architecture, namely the Framework regulation integrating business statistics (FRIBS) in the domain of business statistics, and three Framework regulations in the domain of social statistics: the Integrated European Social Statistics (IESS) Framework regulation for the existing social surveys, a second Framework regulation on population statistics (including population and housing census) and a third Framework regulation on mainly administratively-based statistics and accounts). Since the level of ambition is high, notably in terms of distinguishing the 'What' and the 'How', extensive and time-consuming consultations are required. The complexity of the files also justifies concentrating on only a few framework regulations at this point in time, with a view to benefit from the experiences in other domains later on. The timetable of FRIBS has been expanded to align it with the timetables of important elements (SIMSTAT- Single Market Statistics, statistical units). Progress on both FRIBS and IESS framework regulations has also been hampered by the adaptation period needed to acquire experience of the new decision-taking procedures introduced by the Lisbon Treaty. It is clear that the legislative architecture as adopted in 2013 cannot be achieved unless a good balance between flexibility and certainty can be found, notably in the way powers are delegated to the Commission to adopt either delegated or implementing acts.

Improvement action 5.1:

Work on FRIBS will continue in accordance with the established planning.

FRIBS:

- early 2015: Impact Assessment report
- mid 2015: decision on the scope of the exchange of micro-data
- mid 2016: consultation of the BSDG on the draft legal text
- September 2016: consultation of the ESSC on the draft legal text
- end 2016: adoption of proposal by Commission

Timeline:

FRIBS: adoption of the proposal by the Commission: end 2016

Improvement action 5.2:

Work on IESS will continue in accordance with the established planning.

IESS:

- 2015: Consultation of the ESSC
- 2015(Q4) or 2016(Q1): adoption of the Commission proposal
- 2017 or 2018: Adoption of IESS by the European Parliament and the Council (with adoption of implementing measures by Commission shortly afterwards)

Timeline:

IESS: adoption of the proposal by the Commission: end 2015 – 1st Q 2016

Coherence of European statistics – quality, methodology and procedures

6. Instances where the implementation of legally stipulated and agreed methodologies or tools is being significantly delayed in some Member States should be reviewed and analysed with a view to identifying and implementing necessary systemic corrective measures.

Current situation:

Eurostat is regularly monitoring the compliance of Member States with the legislation in force, the implementation of recommendations in the different thematic and horizontal areas and the use of agreed tools. Those countries in which the implementation is considerably delayed are systematically addressed on the relevant issues, through bilateral contacts and/or within the thematic area governance (working groups, directors' groups) and required to provide plans and roadmaps for the implementation.

Improvement action 6:

Implementation and reinforcement of quality assurance frameworks (inventories, quality reports, compliance reports, metadata reports) combined with a dedicated follow-up of the identified issues at country level by the thematic responsible entities in Eurostat.

Different instruments will facilitate these actions: dedicated training, supporting actions (e.g. ad-hoc projects supported by Commission grants), meetings of expert groups and centres of excellence.

Timeline:

12/2017

7. Harmonisation of methodologies for data processing and for the calculation of quality indicators should be rigorously pursued in cooperation with Member States.

1) Harmonisation of methodologies for data processing ... should be rigorously pursued in cooperation with Member States.

Current situation:

Several modernisation activities have been activated in the ESS to streamline and improve statistical production processes. The ESS, and the global statistical community, are aware of the need for harmonisation of methodologies for data processing and promote the development and implementation of standards for statistical data processing based on harmonised information models, process descriptions and articulation, reference statistical methodologies and implementing tools.

Improvement action 7.1:

The strategic goals of the modernisation of the ESS explicitly take into account the need for harmonisation of methodologies for data processing within the general approach for the enhancement of the integration and interoperability of production processes. The implementation of the corresponding ESS Vision 2020 enabling actions, according to the ESS Vision 2020 implementation roadmap, further facilitates and enhances harmonisation of data processing in the ESS according to the collaborative approach with Member States that is at the foundation of the ESS Vision 2020 implementation.

Timeline:

Intermediate milestones will be identified in the business cases of ESS.VIP that will be discussed and endorsed by the ESSC up to February 2016.

12/2017

2) Harmonisation of methodologies ... for the calculation of quality indicators should be rigorously pursued in cooperation with Member States.

Current situation:

Standard ESS quality and performance indicators (QPI) have been developed and recently updated. These QPI are defined in the ESS Quality Handbook. Their implementation is continuously promoted and encouraged at all possible fora (e.g. at UNECE level). They are implemented via the standard ESS quality and metadata report structures (Single Integrated Metadata Structure-SIMS: ESS Standard for Quality Reports Structure-ESQRS) which are used in more and more statistical domains.

Improvement action 7.2:

With the increasing use of the ESQRS and Euro-SDMX Metadata Structure (ESMS), the ESS quality and performance indicators will be

produced and published in more and more statistical domains. Promotion action will be organised starting from 2015 onwards. Around half of the main statistical domains should be covered by 12/2016. All main statistical domains should be covered by 12/2017.

Timeline:

50 % of the main statistical domains covered by 12/2016;

All main statistical domains covered by 12/2017

8. Assessments should be carried out regularly and systematically to ensure that consistency checking practices take place across statistical domains in a comparable way.

Current situation:

Consistency checking practices are not taking place across statistical domains in a comparable way. This is due partly because of the specificities of each domain, partly to the different level of maturity of the consistency checking approaches by statistical area and partly because of legacy of existing systems and frameworks. The ESS acquired progressive awareness of the issue and started dedicated and horizontal actions to address it.

Improvement action 8:

In the context of the ESS Vision 2020 implementation strategy, the project on Validation aims at ensuring the systematic and harmonised approach to consistency checking across statistical domains. The project promotes a harmonised methodological framework for validation, validation architecture, related governance and operational solutions. The systematic scrutiny of consistency checking practices in different statistical domains against the framework proposed by the project will foster and reinforce the overall harmonisation. The approach is based on a systematic dialogue at thematic area level (in thematic directors', working and expert groups).

Timeline:

Intermediate milestones will be identified in the business case of ESS.VIP Validation to be discussed and endorsed by the ESSC in February 2015.

12/2017

9. The quality management and assurance practice should be further harmonised and streamlined. The basic common standard for user and producer orientated quality reports should be used for every statistical operation and domain. This will ensure that these reports provide similar information and that quality can be equally appraised in the different domains.

Current situation:

The Single Integrated Metadata Structure (SIMS) encapsulates in a harmonised way both the producer oriented ESS Standard for Quality Reports Structure (ESQRS) and the user oriented Euro-SDMX Metadata Structure (ESMS). Both metadata structures are increasingly implemented in statistical domains. ESQRS and ESMS structures are used by Eurostat and by Member states. In the ESS Vision 2020, agreed

by the ESSC in 2014, the ESS re-affirmed the importance of data and metadata quality not only for products and processes, but also for overall management, organisation and governance.

Improvement action 9.1:

Eurostat is developing a plan for full coverage of all ESS statistical domains in terms of production and dissemination of Eurostat and national ESMS and ESQRS reports. It is worth noting that both ESMS and ESQRS include metadata related to quality management. This plan needs to be adopted by the DIME/ITDG in 2015.

Timeline:

The plan should be fully implemented by 12/2017.

Improvement action 9.2:

Eurostat also intends to pursue work on a quality management system with the MS in the context of the ESS Vision 2020, taking into account general quality management principles, which should contribute to harmonising and streamlining quality practices in the ESS.

Timeline:

The plan should be agreed and in implementation phase by 12/2016.

Dissemination – release calendar and pre-release rules

10. Eurostat should aim at publishing a full release calendar and at joint publication of Eurostat and NSI statistics.

Current situation:

Eurostat publishes a full release calendar for Euroindicators for a full calendar year in advance. The results of the 2014 User Satisfaction Survey for Media showed that "journalists were very positive about the Euro-indicator Releases calendar, as already in 2013, 87.1% of participants stated the calendar was relevant and sufficient for their needs and none found the calendar irrelevant and/or insufficiently informative."

Eurostat also announces on its website the forthcoming (paper and PDF) publications for the current quarter and the two next quarters. Moreover, the update planning of each section of the Yearbook is announced in Statistics Explained (at the top of each article).

Improvement action 10.1:

Eurostat will complement the current release calendar with a weekly release calendar comprising all news releases and other publications (paper and PDF) for the week to come.

Timeline:

The setting up of the weekly release calendar is scheduled for January 2015.

Improvement action 10.2:

Moreover, Eurostat intends to propose to the Member States to open Statistics Explained to NSIs so that articles from NSIs' staff can be released on this electronic dissemination platform. These articles would provide a more in-depth analysis at national level and would complement the Eurostat articles. This will lead to NSIs-Eurostat joint publications.

Timeline:

As regards possible joint publications in Statistics Explained, a first pilot project will be launched in 2015 depending of the interest of the Member States.

11. Eurostat should fully investigate the potential impact of a full pre-release ban and ways to manage risks if a strongly limited pre-release is maintained for individual news agencies.**Current situation:**

Eurostat currently has a policy of restricted pre-release under embargo. On 2 September 2014, the Eurostat's Directors Meeting decided on a further restriction of pre-release, in particular as regards Commission staff, NSIs and the media.

Improvement action 11:

Eurostat will investigate the potential impact of a full pre-release ban. In particular, Eurostat will address the issue of pre-release access

- with the Cabinet when establishing working arrangements with the new Cabinet
- with other Commission services, whenever respective MoUs are being updated
- with news agencies at a dedicated meeting with their representatives

Timeline:

New pre-release policy introduced with all parties by October 2015.

Communication and users

12. Eurostat should review and revise its communication strategy to ensure that it is effectively reaching its target audiences in today's media landscape and make optimal use of modern communication tools for different user segments.

Current situation:

Eurostat's aim is to continuously adapt its dissemination and communication policy to user needs. For that reason, Eurostat has been developing since a few years a number of different and complementary tools which give an up-to date representation of our user needs and behaviour: annual user satisfaction surveys, monthly reports from web analytics, monthly information on Eurostat's e-reputation (provides a precise knowledge of Eurostat users on blogs or social media as of Eurostat impact in the media), feedback from user support network and direct communication with user groups.

For example, the launch of the new Eurostat website has been perceived as a good opportunity to strengthen Eurostat's user orientation. During the preparation phase of its new website, Eurostat organised ad-hoc focus groups to allow an exchange of views on the current website's strengths and weaknesses. The outcome of the focus groups is being integrated in the design and structure of the new website.

Concerning the media, the 2014 User Satisfaction Survey for Media showed the following: "Users expressed a very high level of satisfaction with all aspects of the "News Releases" produced by Eurostat. 84.8% specified that the interest of the releases was "very good" or "good", as 82.0% did concerning their clarity and 78.4% for the range of topics covered." Eurostat is using Twitter almost on a daily basis to communicate main results and interesting charts.

Improvement action 12.1:

In order to prepare relevant improvement actions towards the media, the press office of Eurostat will carry out interviews with a series of media representatives in order to evaluate possible changes to the current communication strategy. These interviews will run until mid- 2015. Based on the results, the press office of Eurostat will devise a respective action plan. The results of these interviews will be presented to the DM.

Timeline:

Mid-2015

Improvement action 12.2:

The review of Eurostat's dissemination and communication strategy is part of a continuous process. Eurostat is already complementing its current offer of visualisation tools with the development of info-graphics, to provide support to less experienced users. In order to assess the usefulness of the different visualisation tools proposed by Eurostat and to identify possible improvements, interviews will be organised with a selection of representative users. The results of these interviews will be presented to the DM

Timeline:

Mid-2015

Coordination

13. Eurostat should support the coordination role of the NSIs in relation to the ONAs by accepting only Code-compliant data transfers from an NSI or authorised ONA. The cut-off date for unauthorised data deliveries should be widely communicated one year in advance. Should unauthorised or non-Code compliant data transfers to Eurostat continue after the announced date, Eurostat should reject the data.

Current situation:

Currently ONAs which are not in the official list of ONAs as requested by Regulation 223/2009 can also transmit data to Eurostat.

In 10/2014 the Edamis and Validation Services User Group discussed the improvement actions listed below with the aim that, within the framework of European statistics, only authorised/registered ONAs can transmit data/metadata to Eurostat.

Improvement actions discussed by the Edamis and Validation Services User Group:

Improvement action 13.1:

NSIs should automatically be notified when data/metadata are sent by an ONA to Eurostat upon reception of the data

Improvement action 13.2:

Eurostat shall progressively refuse to accept data/metadata sent by entities which are not in the official ONA list (published on the Eurostat website). National coordinators will be notified well in advance with the aim of ensuring that NSIs have a possibility to request the entities' inclusion in the ONA list, if deemed appropriate, and in order to avoid unnecessary conflicts.

Timeline:

Improvement actions 13.1 and 13.2 should be fully implemented at the latest by 12/2015

Improvement action 13.3:

The Edamis reports should be revised in specifying the data sets transmitted by each ONA

Improvement action 13.4:

The mandate of the national transmission coordinators should be revised reflecting the tasks mentioned above

Improvement action 13.5:

A list of contact points in the ONAs will be produced and kept updated.

These improvement actions will be implemented in 2015 which implies also an improvement of Edamis per se.

Timeline:

Improvement actions 13.3, 13.4 and 13.5 should be implemented at the latest by 06/2015.

14. Eurostat must establish clear mechanisms for its coordination role within the European Commission and develop an inventory of existing statistical activities.**Current situation:**

Following the adoption of the Commission Decision on Eurostat in September 2012, Eurostat has created a formal Commission interdepartmental group on the coordination of statistics gathering all DGs with an interest in statistics and has started to formalise commitments with key DGs through Memoranda of Understanding. A first pilot inventory of statistical activities in the Commission has been conducted in 2013-14.

Improvement action 14:

A proposal for a structured approach to increase the transparency of the coordination mechanisms will be presented to Eurostat's directors.

The proposal will cover the following aspects: bilateral agreements between Eurostat and DGs (Memoranda of Understanding), meetings involving Eurostat DGs and NSIs (stakeholders meetings) as well as the inventory of existing statistical activities in the Commission.

Timeline:

DM document with a proposal for a structured approach to increase the transparency of the coordination mechanisms: 06/2015

Full implementation of the mechanisms: 12/2015

15. The ESS and the ESCB should focus on working pragmatically within the given division of labour and proceed with practical cooperation. It would be beneficial if the ESCB were to adopt verifiable quality assurance procedures similar to those of the ESS in order to enhance this mutual understanding.**Current situation:**

In this regard, the Committee on Monetary, Financial and Balance of Payments statistics (CMFB) set up during its plenary session on July 2014 a CMFB Technical Group (TG) on a generic template for national reports providing information on statistics underlying the Macroeconomic Imbalance Procedure (MIP) indicators. The CMFB TG is mandated to design a "generic template" for national reports providing information on quality, sources and methods together with information on statistical processes used for the compilation of the statistics underlying the MIP

indicators.

Such template would foster a further alignment of the quality monitoring framework between ESS and ESCB and contribute to the overall quality assurance framework of the MIP related statistics. On the basis of the work of the CMFB TG, a proposal for a generic national template and the concrete example of a national report for Balance of Payments (BoP) and the International Investment Position (IIP) statistics will be presented to the CMFB at its January 2015 plenary meeting.

The Council Working Party on Statistics (CWPS) started the discussion of the Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EC) No 184/2005 on Community statistics concerning balance of payments, international trade in services and foreign direct investment at its meeting on 16 October 2014. The Commission's proposal addresses two elements. Firstly, the alignment of the Regulation to the decision-taking procedures introduced by the Lisbon Treaty. This means that the powers already given to the Commission in the Regulation have been identified as being either powers to adopt delegated acts or powers to adopt implementing measures. Secondly, the streamlining of the governance structure within the European Statistical System. It is proposed that the European Statistical System Committee should be the committee to assist the Commission in comitology matters concerning the statistical domain of BoP., replacing the BOP Committee.

Improvement action 15.1:

An ESS-ESCB communication/work programme has been proposed by the CMFB and endorsed by the European Statistical Forum (ESF) in September 2014. The work programme defines a concrete set of actions to set up the quality monitoring framework for MIP relevant statistics, duly taking into account already existing quality monitoring frameworks. This will contribute to the alignment of the quality frameworks of the ESS and the European System of Central Banks (ESCB);

Improvement action 15.2:

In order to ascertain the necessary contribution of the ESCB to the legislative process relating to BoP statistics, the ESS and the ESCB agreed that the CMFB will be consulted on all proposals. The European Statistical Forum, in its meeting of 17 September 2014 has formally committed to such consultations.

Timeline:

12/2017

16. A principle and corresponding indicators addressing the need to coordinate the development, production and dissemination of European statistics should be developed during the next revision of the Code of Practice.

Current situation:

For the peer review exercise a separate questionnaire on the coordination role of the National Statistical Institutes has been prepared. The information gathered from this exercise will be used as an input for the next revision of the European statistics Code of Practice (CoP), including the aspect of coordination.

Improvement action 16:

Once the peer review exercise has finished the CoP will be amended in consultation with the Member States. A Task Force with Member States will be created in the first quarter of 2016 in order to prepare the revision of the CoP. Adding a new principle on coordination with its corresponding indicators will be looked into in this context.

Timeline:

12/2017

Eurostat's diverging view on recommendations 1 – 4

Eurostat Directors-General as well as all other senior managers are recruited and appointed following the transparent policy established by the Commission, based on guidelines which are publicly available. The policy and the guidelines correspond to the requirements set out in the Code of Practice. More specifically, the essential requirement for appointing the Director-General, according to the Code, is his or her professional competence, not that the arrangements for the appointment are specified in law. Moreover, the indicator related to professional competence is not defined in the Code, in particular not by any reference to reputation in specific circles or to statistical qualifications as more relevant than other qualifications. The assessment of competence should remain with the appointing authority, both at national and Union level. Strong indicators for assessing the competence of Eurostat future Directors-General are established in the Commission Decision on Eurostat. Recommendations 1, 2 and 4 thus go beyond the Code as regards the appointment procedures.

The conditions for any dismissal of Commission officials – including Directors-General and other senior management – are set out in Article 5 of the staff regulations. The staff regulations, in combination with the Commission Decision on Eurostat, correspond to the Code of Practice indicator on having the conditions for dismissal specified in a legal framework. Recommendation 3 is thus without subject.